

Esteemed President,

Esteemed Secretary General,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I would like to start my words by extending my deepest regards to each and every one of you.

At the outset, I wish to thank, in the person of Justice Minister of Greece, all those who have exerted efforts in organizing this conference.

Being one of the founding members of the Council of Europe, Turkey attaches a great importance to the works of the Council.

Our Country provides active contribution to further develop the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law underpinning the Council of Europe.

I am pleased to learn that the concepts of “Independence of Justice and the Rule of Law”, which are sine qua non for the states governed by the rule of law, are selected as the main theme of this conference.

Independence of justice and the rule of law are undoubtedly important indicators of the level of development of the societies and living standards of the people.

Likewise, judicial independence is the main guarantee of the human rights and freedoms as well as it is the very heart and core of a state, governed by the rule of law.

As clearly stipulated in our Constitution, the Republic of Turkey is a state governed by the rule of law, and judicial power shall be exercised by independent courts. The tenure of judges is secured by our Constitution with a view to protecting the judicial independence.

Our judicial institutions carry out the duty of delivering justice in an independent and impartial manner without being subject to any influence or pressure.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to give information on some of the recent steps we have taken to improve the judicial independence and rule of law.

With the Third Five-Year Judicial Reform Strategy Document unveiled by our President last year, we have been materializing significant reforms in the fields of strengthening judicial independence and impartiality, improvement of the right to defense, easing access to justice, and extension of alternative dispute resolution methods. We resolutely follow up the implementation of this document.

Distinguished Participants;

Consolidation with ethical principles of the independence and impartiality of the practitioners of the system is as much important as the functioning of the system independently.

For this very reason, we have unveiled the “Declaration of Ethics for Turkish Judiciary” which, for the first time, has laid down in writing the code of conduct for the members of the judiciary.

In the light of this Declaration, our members of the judiciary keep on serving everyone, knocking on the gates of courthouses seeking for “justice”, by cherishing their independence and impartiality and without making any discrimination.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We resolutely continue our years-long fight against PKK terrorist organization, which does not shy away from murdering even children and also against FETÖ, with an insidious structure which attempted a coup.

Failure of execution by the Council of Europe member states of our legal assistance requests on this matter, especially our extradition requests, erodes the fundamental principles and values of the Council of Europe in the field of counter terrorism. In essence, Turkey’s effective fight against terrorism also ensures the security of Europe.

In our struggle, we expect your support without discriminating between terrorist organizations.

Last but not least, I would like to talk about xenophobia and islamophobia, the two notions which should never ever exist in a state governed by the rule of law.

We especially witness that Islamophobia is spreading like a plague in European countries. Workplaces, houses, places of worship and schools belonging to Muslims are attacked by different groups.

The Judiciary should take necessary action against such attacks as soon as possible. It is evident that acting contrary would not be in line with democracy, independence of justice and the rule of law.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I attach significance to this conference held under the Greek Chairmanship for its contribution to the principles of “Independence of Justice and the Rule of Law”.

While concluding my words, I would like to thank you all for your attention, and once again, greet you with respect and warmest regards.