

To: His Excellency the President
of the Turkish Republic
Mr. Abdullah Gül

Your Excellency,

On behalf of all Imbrian associations from around the world, we welcome you and thank you for your keen interest in our home island that you manifest with your presence.

We also take the opportunity to congratulate you on the on-going efforts of Turkey to become a member of the European Union which we observe and endorse with all our strength. Moreover, we may not forget your personal contribution to this course since your term as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We welcome the favourable reply to the request of our community to reopen a Greek minority school as well as the opening of a customs office on Gökçeada (*Imroz*). Both these requests had been included in our letter addressed to the Prime Minister Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2005 when he first visited our island. We rejoice, in particular, at the fact that the wind of modernisation and protection of minorities that blows throughout the country has finally also reached our island.

It is this high political judgment and perspicacity that you have manifested in drawing the road towards Europe to which we hereby appeal, so that your visit may set out similar initiatives for addressing also the rest of the issues of concern for our members and the Imvriotes generally which would entail a wide range of benefits for both the image of Turkey abroad and the development of the island itself.

In particular, we urge you and the entire political world of the Turkish Republic to reconstitute the rights of the Greek population of Gökçeada (*Imroz*) who, after having been obliged to leave their homes and scatter around the world as a result of the mistakes of the past that Prime Minister Mr. Erdoğan himself has so bravely acknowledged, now rank among the first to respond to the invitation of the Turkish Government to the return of its citizens from abroad. We seek the assurance of those conditions that would allow us to maintain our bonds with our birthplace always in accordance with the laws of the Turkish Republic and the international treaties to which Turkey is a party. We seek the opportunity to assist with the planning and work required for making the most of the natural beauty and the rich cultural heritage of the island; and to contribute to the tourist and commercial development of Gökçeada (*Imroz*).

The specific points of concern that need to be addressed without delay are the following:-

1. Full and unconditional recognition of the right to inherit to all descendants of the initial landowners regardless of citizenship in accordance with the repeated rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Depriving from children the property of their fathers and grand fathers may not be tolerated in a country where the rule of law prevails. Insofar as the citizens of Greece and Australia

are particularly concerned who constitute the vast majority of our members, suffice a simple administrative act that would *permanently* place the aforesaid countries in the list of countries with which reciprocity applies in the acquisition of land by citizens of these countries and Turkish citizens respectively.

2. Unfortunately and in addition to the fact that the rights to inherit are not recognized as aforesaid, purchase or registration of land on Gökçeada (*Imroz*) in the names of Turkish citizens of Greek origin is not recognized either or is subject to many difficulties, contrary to our Muslim fellow citizens, due to the fact that, as the country's public opinion was recently informed, the authorities responsible for the country's security consider ourselves as "foreigners" and "missionaries". Village houses and land that up to 40 years ago were inhabited and cultivated respectively exclusively by citizens of Greek origin have been registered in the name of the State Treasury at rates of 70%, 80% or even 90%. The injustices observed in the course of the cadastral process can and must be restituted immediately and, until then, the ten years' period provided for the completion of the process should be suspended so that our community could be convinced that justice would be served for re-establishing in the land of its ancestors.
3. Return of Turkish citizenship to all native Invriotes and their descendants who would so wish under specific incentives and exemptions –since they lost the citizenship against their will.
4. Return to the original owners of expropriated land that was never used or ceased to serve the purposes of expropriation.
5. Return of schools and other buildings owned by the Greek religious foundations of Gökçeada (*Imroz*) which unfortunately do not fall in the field of the recent legislative act of the Premiership Office since, according to the General Directorate of Foundations, no 1936 declarations seem to exist in respect of any of them which would have given ground to immediate return of their property.
6. Specific immediate measures for the protection and preservation of natural environment and the cultural heritage of our island.
7. Improvement of infrastructures and living conditions in the Greek traditional settlements of Gökçeada (*Imroz*).
8. Ensuring in general all such conditions as may be necessary for allowing Invriotes living abroad and especially those of the younger generation to return and re-establish in their homeland.

We hope, Your Excellency, that our expectations and requests will be duly considered and will contribute to the adoption of efficient and immediate measures and the inauguration of a new era of creativity and progress. We further hope that Your Excellency will personally assist these efforts with your experience, prestige and commitment to justice and democratic ideals.

Our Associations are ready and willing to work together with all state entities to this effect and remain at your disposal for an in-depth information of Your Excellency and your staff in respect of the technical details of the aforementioned issues at your earliest convenience.

Gökçeada (*Imroz*), 28 April 2012

Yours respectfully,

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