



Athens, July 13th, 2020

Mr. Donald Tusk
President of the EPP
Rue du Commerce 10
1000 Brussels

Dear President Tusk,

Europe has been built on the respect of our common history and values. Today, unfortunately, both are under threat in the East Mediterranean region due to the Turkish provocations.

Last Friday, despite the international warnings, the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan ordered the status conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque for the promotion of his domestic political agenda.

The presidential decree came minutes after the Turkish Supreme Court announced that it had revoked Hagia Sophia's museum status, which since 1934 had been a monument of cultural heritage and a symbol of harmony and tranquility connecting the East and the West. Erdogan's decree transferring the control of this sacred ecumenical site to the Religious Affairs Directorate constitutes a direct attack against the common values of the democratic world.

Hagia Sophia is a cultural and religious monument recognized by the European Union and protected by UNESCO since 1985 as part of world's cultural heritage. By clearly breaching its UNESCO status, the Turkish government has chosen its cultural isolation.

In this context, such a decision can only be perceived as a distancing of Turkey from the European values, a new violation of international treaties and a sad proof of lack of respect to the world's heritage, international community and inter-religion dialogue.

I would like to remind that this unfortunate event comes after the attempt of Turkey to violate the Greek-Turkish borders at Evros, by illegally pushing immigrants, its active involvement in the Libyan civil war, despite the Berlin agreement, and the declared intention of President Erdogan to proceed to oil and gas research in Greek waters.

Nea Demokratia strongly believes that this decision of turning Hagia Sophia into a mosque is disrespectful. We call all European and international organizations to protect its ecumenical character and defend our common principles of tolerance and respect of international law and agreements.

Yours sincerely,

Tasos Chatzivasilieou

Member of the Hellenic Parliament
International Secretary of ND