

Murat Bilhan, Chairman of the Centre for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, proposed that the recent policy adopted by Canada of directly involving its citizens in shaping its foreign policy be adopted by the countries in Southeastern Europe as well. He noted that the recent tensions between Greece and Turkey are not shared by the two peoples. Today, Greece is the most ardent supporter of Turkey's accession to the European Union, despite some of their disagreements. One key area where the two countries cooperate is Southeastern Europe.

Regarding Turkey's involvement in the region, Mr. Bilhan said, several policy principles should be mentioned. Turkey is a Southeastern European country, sharing the geography and history of the region. It encourages the region's integration into the EU and NATO, considering that sub-groupings such as the Stability Pact should also be supported. Moreover, Turkey has always been a multiethnic and multi-religious country, thus promoting, through its very existence the principle of peaceful cohabitation between different groups in the region.

Colonel Michael Snell, Director for NATO Policy at the National Defence Headquarters, Department of National Defence of Canada, pointed out that NATO enlargement was not a one-time event and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would remain engaged in Southeastern Europe. He mentioned that Albania, Croatia and FYR Macedonia are working intensively on the tasks they have to complete before being invited to join NATO, similarly Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro. Colonel Snell argued that Canada could play an important role in assisting with the reform process in the defence and security fields of these countries.

According to Colonel Snell, while the EU and NATO enlargements are separate processes, they are mutually reinforcing, as markets go hand in hand with security provisions. NATO has certain responsibilities in Southeastern Europe and enlargement will not signify an end to its attempts to intensify security cooperation in the region; on the contrary, it will only deepen NATO's commitment, he noted.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General

1.1 Canada should continue its policy of promoting European integration to secure both stability and prosperity of the region; accession of the countries of Southeastern Europe to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will strengthen these organizations and trans-Atlantic links, thus promoting some of Canada's fundamental interests.

1.2 Canada should collaborate with the European Union and its member states to identify areas of common concern and possible joint action in Southeastern Europe.

1.3 Canada should continue to encourage cooperation between the countries of former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); Canada should urge ICTY to assist the process of institution-building in the Yugoslav successor states by being a partner with their judicial branches.