



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 2 February 2009

5908/09

LIMITE

PE-QE 94

**PRELIMINARY DRAFT REPLY TO WRITTEN QUESTION
P-0207/09 put by Vural Öger (PSE)**

from : General Secretariat of the Council

to : Permanent Representations of the Member States

Subject : **"Gaza War - Turkey's role and negotiations with Hamas"**

1. Delegations will find attached:

- the text of the above Written Question;
- a preliminary draft reply prepared by the General Secretariat.

2. If no comments have been received from delegations **by 17.00 on 19 February 2009**, this preliminary draft reply will be submitted to the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) and to the Council for approval.

Any comments received will be examined by the Working Party on General Affairs.

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0207/09

by Vural Öger (PSE)
to the Council

Subject: Gaza War - Turkey's role and negotiations with Hamas

Turkey has traditionally been one of Israel's strategic partners. At the same time, however, it is also the only NATO country to maintain contacts with Hamas. In view of the war in Gaza, Turkey has put itself forward as a potential leader of an international peace-keeping force. The EU's foreign policy representative Javier Solana has said that Turkey has a key role to play. The Egyptian-French ceasefire initiative also depends on Turkish support.

What role can Turkey play in this conflict? What consultation and coordination mechanisms has the Council set up within the framework of the Troika with a view to cooperating with Turkey in this crisis area? To what extent can the Council actively involve Turkey, as a partner and EU candidate country, with a view to a peace or donor conference for Gaza? What is the Council's standpoint on the possibility of a Turkish-led UN force?

Does the Council believe that a ceasefire for Gaza can be achieved without holding a dialogue with Hamas? Can the Council take up a position on calls for Hamas to be removed from the terror list? To what extent would Hamas, which is on the EU terror list, be acceptable to the Council as a negotiating partner? Could the channels that currently exist between Turkey and Hamas prove useful with a view to a ceasefire in Gaza?

REPLY

to Written Question P-0207/09

put by Vural Öger (PSE)

The important role played by Turkey in the Middle-East was underlined by the participation of Foreign Minister Ali Babacan at the dinner on Sunday 25 January 2009 hosted by the Presidency with the Foreign Ministers of the EU together with those of Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Norway. It would be inappropriate for the Council to speculate at this stage about further involvement by Turkey in efforts to resolve the Middle-East conflict, such as the "possibility of a Turkish-led UN force" or Turkey's involvement in a "peace or donor conference for Gaza", as suggested by the Honourable Member.

As far as the role of and contacts with Hamas are concerned, the Council maintains its position that respect for the principle of the peace process and readiness to engage in negotiations with Israel leading to the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security remain preconditions.
