TURKISH MARTYRS’ DAY – 18 MARCH 2015

REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR BABUR GİRGİN

General Reshad Mehmood, Chairman of the Chiefs of Joint Staff Committee,

Senator Mushahid Hussein Syed, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Senate,

Excellencies Ambassadors, Generals, Admirals,

Değerli vatandaşlarım, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Salam-o Alaikum,

Thank you for attending the Turkish Martyrs’ Day Ceremony. I want to first explain the significance of today’s date, 18 March. During the First World War, on 18 March 1915, the warships of the Western Powers attacked the Strait of Çanakkale. Their expectation was to cross the strait with minimal resistance, occupy the Ottoman capital Istanbul and knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war. Instead they found heavy resistance both at sea and later on land.

A hundred years ago today marked the beginning of a legendary victory against the most powerful countries of the time. The Ottoman Navy ship “Nusrat” had mined the entrance to the straits in the dark of the night. When the mighty fleet of the foreign invaders entered the Strait of Çanakkale, many of their battleships were sunk by the mines and coastal artillery. The combined English and French fleet had to retreat. A month later they landed troops on the Gelibolu Peninsula to crush the Turkish defences. After eight months of fighting they had to retreat again. The martyrs of the Çanakkale Battles delayed the invasion by three years. Immediately following the invasionof their homeland, Turkish resistance against the occupying powers started in 1919. Led by the great leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the resistance lasted for more than four years, leading to the defeat of the occupiers and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

18 March is today commemorated as Martyrs’ Day in Turkey. We do not only remember the martyrs of Çanakkale, but all martyrs of all times. If we just look at the past one hundred years, the Ottoman Empire faced several wars on different fronts between 1911 and 1923 for twelve consecutive years. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, we have had martyrs in the Korean War while helping the Korean people maintain their freedom; in Cyprus to prevent the Turks of Cyprus from being massacred; and in the past thirty five years while fighting terrorists who wanted to divide Turkey. Martyrs are not only during wars; they are from all the security forces, from civil servants like teachers, diplomats and others. Today we remember all of them and before the end of this ceremony we shall pray for all of them.

Having the privilege of being in brotherly Pakistan, we are remembering also all the martyrs of Pakistan as well. We shall pray for them as well.

Today we also remember the martyrs of the forefathers of Pakistani brothers and sisters who embraced martyrdom while they were fighting alongside their Turkish brothers. They were fighting to rid the homeland of their Turkish brothers from foreign invaders. We will never forget them. They are in our hearts and in our school books in Turkey.

One of these martyrs was Abdur Rasheed, son of Hafiz Abdul Latif. I had the honour to meet his nephew in Lahore some months ago. He could not be with us today due to an illness. Abdur Rasheed was a university student. He was only nineteen. He secretly left this land to fight alongside his Turk brothers. He was martyred on his way when discovered by the enemy.

We do not know whether Ata Muhammed son of Muhammed Ismail Merkum from Punjab became a martyr. We have documents that he arrived in Istanbul and requested a uniform and weapons to join the war.

It is hard to find the names of all the martyrs whose children later established Pakistan. But let us also remember the names of those who fought alongside their Turkish brothers and who were able to tell their stories.

Zafer Hasan Aybek, was a native of Punjab and an officer of the Punjab Regiment. Upon hearing the azan at the front he realized that he was brought to fight his brothers. And together with many others joined the Turkish side. After the war Zafer even compiled a Turkish-Urdu dictionary.

Abdurrahman Peshaweri is another one. Born in Peshawar, his family had also origins in Kashmir. He studied at Aligarh in 1910. He went to Turkey in 1912 with the famous medical mission which provided medical services to the Turkish troops during the Balkan War. He stayed in Turkey. He fought during the Çanakkale battles, exactly one century ago. Abdurrahman Peshaweri later became the first member of the Turkish Anadolu News Agency. He further became the first diplomatic representative of Turkey to Afghanistan.

Just like the medical mission of 1912, Pakistani doctors volunteered to go to Turkey during the Cyprus operation in 1974. They stayed in Turkey and tended to the Turkish wounded. Some of them are today with us. We are grateful to them. They have continued our tradition of solidarity.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to two young Turkish men who became martyrs in 2005. ... and ... were two engineers who cam to Pakistan following the earthquake of 2005. They died in an accident while trying to help their Kashmiri brothers and sisters. I consider them Turkish-Pakistani martyrs just like those who went to Turkey a century ago.

Now allow me to say a few words in Turkish for our citizens among you: .....

Once again, thank you for attending the martyrs’ day ceremony.

Turki Pakistan dosti zindabad.