



A Tangled Case – Turkey’s Status under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement

Michael Schneider, ICCG Visiting Scholar

A Tangled Case – Turkey’s Status under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement

Michael Schneider, ICCG Visiting Scholar

Abstract

In a press conference after the G20 summit in Hamburg, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that Turkey would be less inclined to ratify the Paris Agreement. Erdoğan conditioned the ratification of the climate treaty on continued financial and technological support for Turkey under the Paris Agreement. This statement might be linked to the ongoing diplomatic tensions between Turkey and Germany as an attempt to undermine the successful image of the G20 meeting. More likely, however, is that this strategy has to be seen in light of the intricate relationship of Turkey and the UNFCCC. As an OECD founding member, Turkey was burdened with considerable obligations in 1992, when the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted. Thus, Turkey has undertaken diplomatic efforts to achieve a re-classification under the UNFCCC. These have been partly successful and seem to be justified to a certain extent considering Turkey’s state of development. However, the present request for continued support contradicts the usual rhetoric of Turkey and seems questionable in light of the low ambition of the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Turkey.

Introduction

Despite joining the position of all G20 members, except that of the US, to designate the Paris Agreement as “irreversible”,¹ shortly after the summit in Hamburg Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that Turkey would be currently less inclined to ratify the Paris Agreement.² Erdoğan linked this statement directly with the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, which would endanger the provision of sufficient funding for developing countries. Only if Turkey is eligible for funding under the Paris climate accord – as promised by the French Presidency in Paris at COP21 in 2015 –, the Turkish parliament will provide for the ratification of the Paris Agreement, Erdoğan said.³ Laurence Tubiana, who was a high-level member of the French delegation in Paris, confirmed that Turkey was indeed assured to obtain continued support from international agencies.⁴

The real reason behind this statement is, nevertheless, unclear. For instance, it has been speculated that it was merely a rhetorical move to undermine the successful image of the G20 meeting lead by German chancellor Angela Merkel, due to ongoing diplomatic tensions between Turkey and Germany.⁵ However, the basis of Erdoğan’s claim also builds on the history of Turkey under the UNFCCC and hence under the Paris Agreement. This spans from the role of Turkey during the Cold War to its complicated status during the climate negotiations of the past 25 years.

The classification of Turkey within UNFCCC

Back in 1992, when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted, countries were classed into three basic groups: Annex I countries, Annex II countries, and countries that were not listed in any of the both annexes (the so-called “non-Annex I” countries). Annex I includes industrialised countries as well as many states of the former Soviet Union (the Economies in Transition, or EIT). Annex II is a further subset of Annex I: it includes only countries that were members of the OECD at that time. Thus, non-Annex I countries, which are the large majority, mostly correspond to developing countries (see Figure 1 below).⁶

Annex I countries are obliged by the Convention to “adopt national policies and take corresponding measures on the mitigation of climate change”. These Parties are supposed to take the lead in fulfilling the objective of the Convention (that is, to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system). Moreover, countries included in Annex II “shall provide new and additional financial resources”, including for the transfer of technology, to support developing countries in their climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. In contrast, non-Annex I countries only have to communicate national inventories of GHG emissions and removals and to “formulate, implement, publish and regularly update national [...] programmes containing measures to mitigate climate change”.⁷

Turkey was a strategic state during the Cold War. In order to counterbalance the Soviet Union’s influence, the Western block was eager to form close ties with the country since after World War II. In 1952, Turkey (as well as Greece) became a member of NATO and was admitted to several

¹ G20, 2017.

² Dekimen and Evans, 2017.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Wagstyl and Clark, 2017.

⁵ In June 2016, the German federal parliament (‘Bundestag’) recognised the Armenian genocide by Ottoman Turks in 1915, which led to the first serious tensions between the two countries (Smale and Eddy, 2016). As a consequence, the Turkish government blocked repeatedly Bundestag delegations from visiting German troops stationed at Incirlik in Turkey, which served as air base for German soldiers for their participation in the fight against the Islamic State. In June 2017, the German government finally decided out of this reason to move the troops to a base in Jordan (DW, 2017). Already before In February, the prominent German journalist Deniz Yücel was arrested in Turkey, as he is suspected of having made propaganda for a terrorist organisation (Gumrukcu and Nienaber, 2017). Around the same time, German authorities denied Turkish politicians to make speeches in Germany as part of the campaign for the constitutional referendum that took place in April 2017. Thus, Erdogan accused Germany of “Nazi practices” (Oltermann, 2017). Finally, the German government denied Erdogan to talk to his compatriots in Germany at the edge of the G20 summit (Krug, 2017).

⁶ UN, 1992.

⁷ *Ibid.*

“common but differentiated responsibilities” due to the early stage of industrialisation. This arrangement basically would have made Turkey’s duties and entitlements similar to those of the EIT countries. The proposal was forwarded to the next summit to take a decision.⁹

In 2001 at COP7 in Marrakesh, Morocco, an agreement was achieved. With Decision 26/CP.7, Turkey was deleted from Annex II to the Convention. However, the text only “invites [emphasis added] the Parties to recognize the special circumstance of Turkey, which place Turkey [...] in a situation different from that of other Parties included in Annex I to the Convention”.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Turkey accepted the arrangement and ratified the Convention in 2004.¹¹ In 2009, the country also became part of the Kyoto Protocol. Despite its classification as Annex I country, Turkey has no emission reduction commitment under the Protocol, which certainly facilitated its accession.¹²

At COP16 in Cancun, Mexico, in 2010, Parties formally recognised Turkey’s “special circumstances” and confirmed its eligibility to obtain support under the framework of the UNFCCC.¹³ Considerations of the issue continued at COP17 in Durban, South Africa, at COP18 in Doha, Qatar, and at COP20 in Lima, Peru.¹⁴ In Doha and Lima, Annex II countries were urged to provide support to countries in Annex I with special circumstances like Turkey.¹⁵

As a result, Turkey has been able to receive funding from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which has served as the main financial body under the UNFCCC. In total, 14 in-country climate change-related projects or concepts have been approved so far, with direct funding from the GEF of over USD 50 million and about USD 515 million in additional co-financing. Additionally, five regional or global projects have been approved, in which Turkey will be one of the recipients.¹⁶ In comparison, the Republic of Korea has been a recipient in one regional climate-related project only.¹⁷ In contrast, Mexico exhibits 26 approved or completed climate change-related projects with GEF funding of more than USD 268 million and almost USD 2.35 billion in additional co-financing.¹⁸

Due to its membership to Annex I, Turkey has not been eligible to host any projects under the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism. However, the country was among the top ten recipients of bilateral climate finance in 2014, according to data of the OECD DAC statistics. In 2015, Turkey received even more bilateral climate finance, but the increase was less steep compared to several developing countries. According to the OECD DAC data, Turkey also received substantial funding from European institutions, such as the ERBD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) or the EIB (European Investment Bank).¹⁹

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ UNFCCC, 2002.

¹¹ UNFCCC, 2017.

¹² UN, 1998.

¹³ UNFCCC, 2011a.

¹⁴ UNFCCC, 2012; 2013; 2015.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ GEF, 2017a.

¹⁷ GEF, 2017b.

¹⁸ GEF, 2017c.

¹⁹ OECD, 2017.

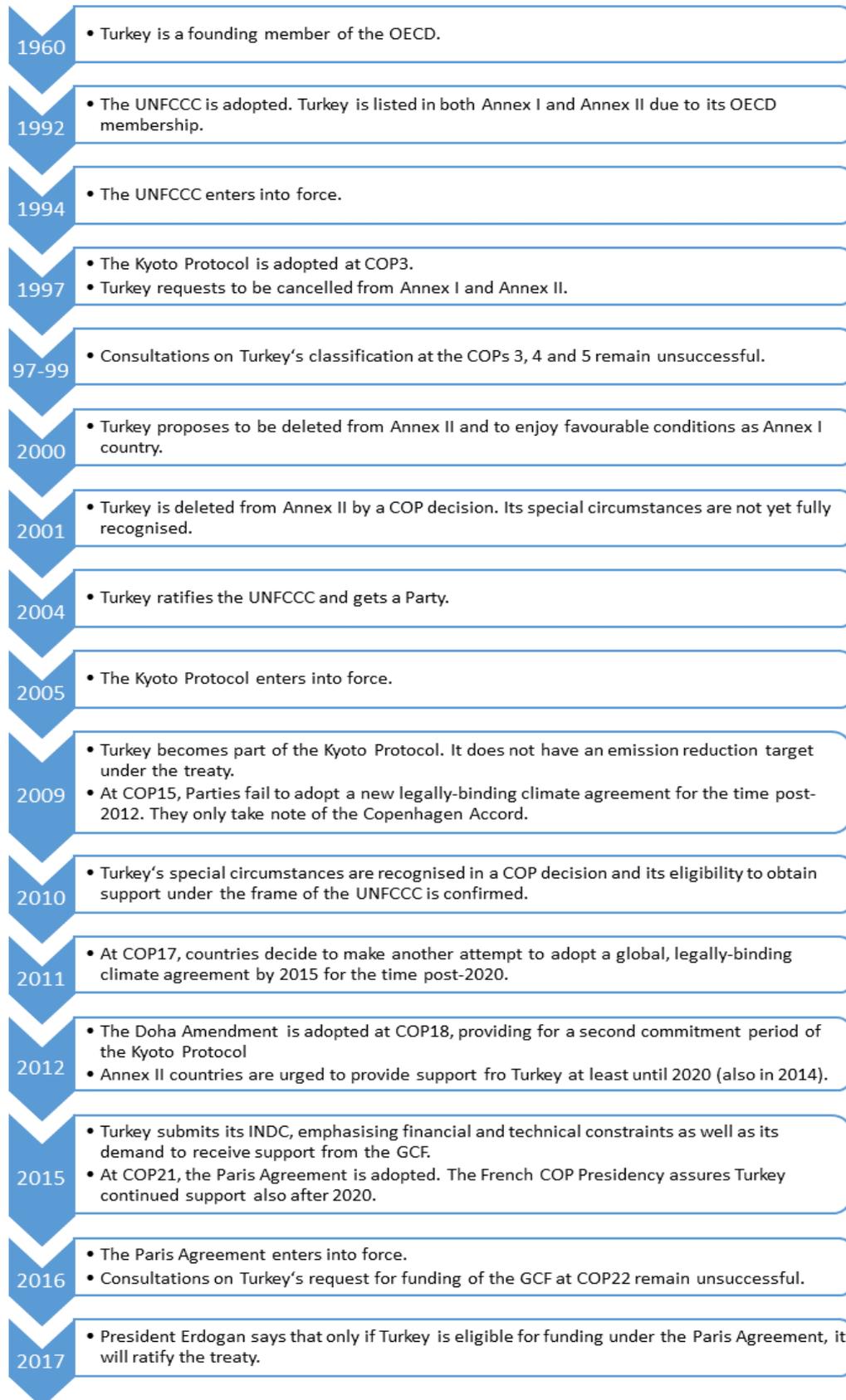


Figure 2: Timeline of the proceedings relevant for the status of Turkey under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

Turkey's request to remain eligible for funding after 2020

According to the decisions in Doha and Lima, the guarantee for support from UNFCCC bodies (such as the GEF) was limited to 2020.²⁰ Turkey is now making provision for remaining eligible under the Paris Agreement as well, after 2020. Turkey's INDC highlights that "Turkey experiences financial and technical constraints in combating climate change". Accordingly, it "will use domestic sources and receive international financial, technological, technical and capacity building support, including finance from the Green Climate Fund [GCF]".²¹ Whether Turkey is granted continued support under the framework of UNFCCC, is now the point of contention. It seems that Turkey "wring[s] financial concessions from richer nations to stay in the pact", as the Financial Times writes.²² Indeed, already at COP21 in Paris during the final hours before the adoption of the Agreement, different explanations circulated about the reasons why delegates were waiting in the Plenary Hall for hours. One reason was that Turkey was expressing its concerns over its atypical position within the UNFCCC. In the end, the issue did not prevent the deal from being adopted.²³ Moreover, at COP22 in Marrakech in 2016, a meeting took place at the invitation of the COP Presidency in relation to Turkey's eligibility to access support from the GCF and the CTCN (Climate Technology Centre and Network) under the Paris Agreement. However, the consultations were not concluded and are expected to continue at COP23 this year in Bonn.²⁴

The Green Climate Fund was established in 2009 at COP15 under the umbrella of UNFCCC. Its objective is to provide "support to developing countries to limit or reduce their [GHG] emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change".²⁵ Considering its Annex I status, Turkey would not be eligible for funding under the GCF and the GCF registry does not list a Turkish National Designated Authority (NDA) or focal point²⁶ (even though there is a document of 2016 that lists a Turkish NDA²⁷). However, the distinction between developed and developing countries is not a formal divide in the fundraising and funding procedure of the GCF, which has so far received contributions also from several developing countries, including the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Indonesia and Vietnam.²⁸

When looking at Turkey's GDP and GHG emissions, especially in terms of per capita, its demand can be considered legitimate. Turkey is an upper-middle-income country according to the classification of the World Bank, just as Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa but also Russia.²⁹ On the other hand, the request for financial assistance and for being classified as a developing country somehow contrasts with the usual rhetoric of Erdogan about Turkey being a major regional (if not even global) power.³⁰

Turkey's climate pledges under the Paris deal seems not ambitious enough to justify such urgency in requesting for funds. The Climate Action Tracker has rated the Turkish INDC target of reducing emissions up to 21 percent compared to business as usual by 2030 as "inadequate", indicating that it is not in line with the 2°C target, let alone 1.5°C.³¹ Despite Turkey's great potential for renewable energies (e.g. highest hydropower and wind energy potential among European countries³²), the country's targets for renewables do not imply significant efforts. The goals defined in the INDC include 10 GW solar power and 16 GW wind power by 2030, while the National Renewable Energy Action Plan already foresaw a capacity of 5 GW solar power, 1 GW geothermal power and 20 GW

²⁰ UNFCCC, 2013; 2015.

²¹ Republic of Turkey, 2015.

²² Wagstyl and Clark, 2017.

²³ Pashley et al., 2015.

²⁴ GCF, 2016a; UNFCCC, 2016.

²⁵ UNFCCC, 2011b.

²⁶ GCF, 2017a.

²⁷ GCF, 2016b.

²⁸ GCF, 2017b.

²⁹ World Bank, 2017.

³⁰ For instance, the political vision of Erdogan's AK Parti for 2023, the hundredth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, includes the target to become one of the ten largest economies in the world in terms of GDP (AK Parti, 2012).

³¹ CAT, 2017.

³² Kucukali and Baris, 2011.

wind power.³³ In case of hydropower, both the INDC and the 2023 plans envisage to harness the full hydroelectric potential in the country,³⁴ a goal that has been questioned due to potential negative side-effects on ecosystems and local population.³⁵ According to the plans, almost no renewable capacity would be added between 2023 and 2030. In contrast, Turkey reportedly aims to more than triple its capacity of coal-fired power plants³⁶ and to open several coal mines to use domestic lignite reserves.³⁷ Turkish carbon intensity is on the rise and the country performed worst in comparison with other G20 countries in 2014 with an increase of 4.4 percent between 2013 and 2014.³⁸

³³ Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2014; Republic of Turkey, 2015.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Richert, 2016.

³⁶ End Coal, 2017.

³⁷ Carrington, 2015.

³⁸ PwC, 2015.

References

- AK Parti, 2012, [Political Vision of AK Parti \(Justice and Development Party\) 2023 – Politics, Society and the World](#).
- Carrington, D., 2015, [Is it too late to stop Turkey's coal rush?](#), The Guardian.
- Climate Action Tracker, 2017, [Turkey](#); Climate Analytics; Ecofys; New Climate Institute.
- Dikmen, Y. and Evans, D., 2017, [Erdogan says U.S. stance stalls Turkish ratification of Paris climate deal](#), Reuters.
- DW, 2017, [German cabinet recommends moving Bundeswehr from Incirlik base](#), Deutsche Welle.
- End Coal, 2017, [Global Coal Plant Tracker](#).
- G20, 2017, [G20 Leaders' Declaration – Shaping an interconnected world](#).
- GCF, 2016a, [Report on the activities of the Co-Chairs](#), GCF/B.15/02, Green Climate Fund.
- GCF, 2016b, [Green Climate Fund – National Designated Authority \(NDA\) and focal point designations 3 August 2016](#), Green Climate Fund.
- GCF, 2017a, [Country Directory](#), Green Climate Fund.
- GCF, 2017b, [Resource Mobilization](#), Green Climate Fund.
- GEF, 2017a, [Turkey – Country-At-A-Glance](#), Global Environment Facility.
- GEF, 2017b, [Republic of Korea – Country-At-A-Glance](#), Global Environment Facility.
- GEF, 2017c, [Mexico – Country-At-A-Glance](#), Global Environment Facility.
- Gumrukcu, T. and Nienaber, M., 2017, [Turkey jails reporter from Germany's Die Welt Paper: court witness](#), Reuters.
- Krug, C., 2017, [Germany bans Erdogan from giving G20 speech to supporters](#), Politico.
- Kucukali, S. and Baris, K., 2011, [Renewable energy policy in Turkey](#), World Renewable Energy Congress 2011 – Sweden, Policy Issues, Linköping, Sweden.
- Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2014, [National Renewable Energy Action Plan for Turkey](#), Republic of Turkey.
- OECD, 2017, [Climate Change: OECD DAC External Development Finance Statistics – Climate-related development finance data visualisation portal](#), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Oltermann, P., 2017, [Erdogan accuses Germany of 'Nazi practices' over blocked political rallies](#), The Guardian.
- Pashley, A., Darby, M. and King, E., 2015, [As it happened: 195 countries agree Paris climate deal](#), Climate Home.
- PwC, 2015, [Conscious uncoupling? Low Carbon Economy Index 2015](#), PricewaterhouseCoopers.
- Republic of Turkey, 2015, [Intended Nationally Determined Contribution](#).
- Richert, S., 2016, 'Turkey: Great Potential, Missing Will', in: Roherkasten, S., Thielges, S. and Quitzow, R. (eds.), [Sustainable Energy in the G20 – Prospects for a Global Energy Transition](#), IASS Study, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam, Germany.
- Smale, A. and Eddy, M., 2016, [German Parliament Recognizes Armenian Genocide, Angering Turkey](#), The New York Times.
- UN, 1992, [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), United Nations.
- UN, 1998, [Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), United Nations.

- UNFCCC, 2002, [Decision 26/CP.7 – Amendment to the list in Annex II to the Convention](#), FCCC/CP/2001/13/Add.4, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2011a, [Decision 1/CP.16 – The Cancun Agreements: Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2011b, [Green Climate Fund – report of the Transitional Committee](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2012, [Decision 2/CP.17 – Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2013, [Decision 1/CP.18 – Agreed outcome pursuant to the Bali Action Plan](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2014a, [Parties and Observers](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2014b, [Proposals to Amend the Lists in Annexes I and II of the Convention](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2015, [Decision 21/CP.20 – Parties included in Annex I to the Convention whose special circumstances are recognized by the Conference of the Parties](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2016, [Provisional agenda and annotations](#), FCCC/CP/2016/1/Add.1, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- UNFCCC, 2017, [Status of Ratification of the Convention](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Wagstyl, S. and Clark, P., 2017, [Turkey push for climate funds adds to concerns about Paris accord](#), The Financial Times.
- World Bank, 2017, [Upper middle income](#).