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SPEECH BY THE GOVERNOR OF ÇANAKKALE

Mr. President,  
Mr. Governor General,  
Prime Ministers,  
Ministers,  
Veterans,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are assembled here to commemorate the 75 th anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign, to pay our respects and to express our gratitude to those soldiers who fought gallantly and fell for their countries at a young age as well as those veterans of the Campaign.

I have great pleasure to see that the representatives of the countries that have taken part in one of the fiercest battles of history, have united here with feelings of mutual friendship, respect and affection.

I have further pleasure to express here, also as behalf of the people of this historic and beautiful corner of our country which is protected as a "National Park" as it carries most vivid memories for all of us here and especially for the veterans among us, our deep appreciation to have the opportunity of hosting this meaningful ceremony.

With these sentiments I would like to welcome all our distinguished guests and especially all the veterans who are present here.

SPEECH ON BEHALF OF THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES

Governor General, Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, Heroes and Veterans, Members of the Armed Forces of Allied and friendly countries. It is my great pleasure to extend to you all a most heartfelt welcome.

Today we live through the pride and happiness of remembering for the first time in such a glorious manner, those who have lost their lives and reached the ranks of martyrdom by fighting heroically to defend the ideals they believed in. The presence among us, in such a friendly and brotherly atmosphere of those of you belonging to nations which at the time were taking part in these wars and which are now all, our friends, even allies, provides a great and particular contribution to the meaning of this day.

When we take a look at the world political conjuncture reigning at that time, we will all recall that, the race of armaments between the blocks and the balance of power which accompanied it at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century-enabled Europe to live through a period of "armed peace" for a while. But afterwards confrontations among nations due to economic and other reasons strained their relations and the war of 1914-1918 ended up with changes of a considerable scale on the political map of Europe.

As a result of these developments and changes some empires in Europe ceased to exist and a number of new states have been created. Çanakkale wars which took place within the framework of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, affected the destiny of this war and caused it to procrastinate.

The Turkish straits consist of a region which include the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles along with the sea of Marmara. They constitute a link between the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the warm waters, they are a crossing point of sea and land lines of communication and as such, are one of the main arteries of the world's trade and transport roads. Throughout history, the Turkish straits have been an active element affecting continuously the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Balkan region

strategies and policies of many nations and consequently played and important role on the national economies, foreign policies, the military activities and power displays of these nations directed to the region. For the Black Sea countries, the Turkish straits constitute a naval exit, but also a barrier against the external threat to these same countries.

Because they affected the interest of many countries, the Turkish straits for centuries, have continuously carried a strategic importance.

In this context the point which should not be forgotten is the fact that the Turkish straits are the exclusive waterway between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and are in a position to constitute a bridge linking Europe and Asia.

The straits of Istanbul and Çanakkale are, for Turkey, a matter of existence, integrity, sovereignty, and security. Consequently, in the course of the historical evolution the straits of Istanbul and Çanakkale have often become a stage for political rivalries and conflicts. The cost of being the stage, once again, for such conflicts in 1915 during the first World War, was the loss of nearly half a million adult lives. Despite all this, however, in terms of their effects and historical consequences, the Çanakkale Battles have not only changed the fate of the Turkish nation, but also affected the general course of the events in the 20 th century and constituted an important turning point in the histories of the participating nations.

The two important consequences of the Çanakkale battles have been their role in the emergence of the New Republic of Turkey, and their contribution to the foundations of the friendship amongst the participant countries.

Distinguished Guests,

In the first instance, Çanakkale Battles constitute the clear proof of the continuation of the Turk's power which was believed to be exhausted. This battle, while proving to the nations of all the world that moral power and patriotism were assets more valuable and more efficient than all sorts of financial power and armed strength, it also constituted the start of the struggle for liberation and independence all around the world.

The great success that the Turkish nation achieved in Çanakkale by restituting the confidence of the nation and by strengthening its moral has played an important role in preparing the psychological atmosphere and in winning the victory in the Turkish independence war.

Another important aspect of the Çanakkale battles for us and for the nations of the world is the emergence of Atatürk, as the great commander and statesman who changed the course of the battle, and who registered his name on the pages of history with this battle.

Although 75 years have passed, the importance and the magnitude of Çanakkale battles have not diminished, on the contrary; they paved the way for scientific studies of the future generations in historical, military, social and political areas.

When building up a friendship, a harsh and difficult struggle is required so as to create a strong relationship. Thus, with this difficult struggle, we were involved in 1915, we succeeded to create the present with the nations we fought.

These feelings of friendship developed between foes determined to kill each other and more particularly their emergence on the battlefield in Gallipoli carries an extraordinary importance. The two parties who, in those days have fought each other in the most gentlemen like manner, had laid the foundations of a strong friendship which would develop later. In this respect the Çanakkale battles present and importance of their own. Scenes like the Turkish officer who while trying to dress his own wound used half of his bandage to dress the wound of the seriously wounded French officer, cooperation between the two sides in digging mass graves, chatting with each other, exchanging cigarettes, badges, and other similar gifts during the lulls, served to form the first foundation of this friendship.

With casualty figures reaching 500 per killometer square, Çanakkale wars are one of those with heaviest losses in the history. However, these battles which have now become legends and taken their distinguished place in the history, have also proved that those nations which possess sons who are determined to shed their blood, to sacrifice their lives when necessary to defend their country, its independence, its freedom and the ideals they believe in; will be entitled to live for the eternity, honourably and in dignity.

The monuments which are here, keeping alive the memories of the heroism of the soldiers who have fought valiantly in a narrow field in Çanakkale, rise today as a symbol of pride and honour. The immortal spirits of 500.000 young men who fought heroically against each other, rest side by side in a deep silence and peace against the breeze of the Aegean sea. I would like to remind once again the words of great Atatürk about the feelings of the Turkish Nation for the soldiers of allied forces who lost their lives in Çanakkale battles.

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmeds to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours.... You, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."

With these feelings, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Turkish armed forces, I commemorate with great respect those who lost their lives in these battles wish god's mercy to all martyrs and express my gratitude to war veterans alive.