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Remarks On 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International, a non-governmental organization combatting corruption worldwide, released the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index ("CPI") on January 25, 2021. As a composite indicator, the Index combines various sources to measure the perceptions of businesspeople and country experts, on corruption in the public sector. Accordingly, it ranks 180 countries/territories by their perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Due to its credible methodology, the CPI is widely regarded as the key reference point in this field.

The CPI implies little to no progress globally for 2021, where only 25 countries increased their overall score. Same as the last year, Transparency International refers to the Covid-19 outbreak and human rights issues as inhibitors of anticorruption efforts. Concerns over democracy are also counted among the factors with significant impacts on the outcomes of the CPI. Given all these, it is no surprise that Turkey, struggling with the economic consequences of the pandemic and being highly criticized for human rights violations, has faced a striking decline in the CPI 2021. Turkey's score has been cut from 40 to 38, ranking the country 96th out of 180, compared to last year's 86th. Turkey Office of Transparency International addresses the reasons behind the continuous slide of the country that has lost 12 points and 43 ranks in the last 9 years and calls for adherence to the rule of law, freedom of media, and decisive fighting with corruption. Executing effective judicial proceedings against allegations of corruption will be vital for any progress to ever happen. Lack of accountability and transparency in public spending also accounts for the degradation.

CPI is not the only benchmark reflecting Turkey's poor performance in such areas. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global watchdog, grey listed Turkey in October 2021 underlining the ineffectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms against money laundering and terror financing. In the same line, the OECD Working Group on Bribery has also evaluated Turkey's compliance with

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the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and expressed in the press release after a high-level meeting with Turkish officials that Turkey's compliance with the Convention has remained low. The Working Group has not been satisfied by the recent amendment to the Turkish Code of Misdemeanor, which, along with an increase in sanctions, eliminated the necessity for the prosecution of a natural person to initiate proceedings against a legal person for acts of bribery and the Group highlighted the need for effective demonstration of its application in practice. Group of States against Corruption under the Council of Europe (GRECO) concluded that Turkey implemented satisfactorily seven of seventeen recommendations contained in the Third Round Evaluation Report and three of the twenty-two recommendations in the Fourth Round Evaluation Report. The reports relate to the transparency of party funding and corruption prevention in respect of members of parliament, judges, and prosecutors, respectively.

What the above-mentioned reports and evaluations tell about Turkey's situation is that the country has been in a downward trend for more than a decade in its fight against corruption. This is partially due to the legislative ground that still needs to be improved. However, the major part is due to practical deficiencies and lack of enforcement. Turkey has enacted many laws, regulations, and communiqués against corruption in the last decade, and particularly, in the last few years; yet the acceleration in legislative activities has failed to reflect on their effective enforcement. Turkey went down to the 7th place among the Eastern European and Central Asian countries it used to lead in 2013. Notwithstanding the rules that prohibit and sanction it, 8% of public service users in Turkey claimed to have paid a bribe in the previous 12 months. Unless an aggressive focus is put on, corruption poses a threat to become an element of daily life in Turkey. Ensuring judicial independence and independence of investigations, adapting effective legislative and enforcement tools in the fight against corruption by safeguarding the fundamental elements of democracy would be vital to reconstruct people's trust in public institutions and to reverse this downward trend.