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Dear friends, distinguished colleagues,

A month ago, we discussed in Berlin the possibilities of international dialogue in post-genocidal situations, in particular in the case of the people, living in or originating from Asia Minor. Justice and democracy were further key-words. At this conference, we reflect on the commonalities in history and on common rights in dialogue. Both are not easy to gain. In post-genocidal situations, conflictive views on history prevail. Common rights and dialogue are difficult to achieve under the growing threat of authoritarianism and massive human rights violations.

Let me please start with some self-reflection as a moderator or perhaps even mediator of these discussions: It is believed that in reconciliation and dialogue projects mediators are more trusted if they do not take a position or if they at least pretend to be neutral and equidistant. For example, during the years 2009 until 2016, the German Foreign Office financed a project on Turkish-Armenian adult education as a measure of reconciliation only under the pre-condition that the project mediators did not use the word genocide and pretended to be neutral in this matter. But as one of the German mediators later wrote in conclusion, it may be more important that no participant in a reconciliation measure is forced to take any position and that this has to be guaranteed by the mediator no matter what position the mediator takes him or herself.

For me as a scholar and human rights defender neutrality and equidistance are impossible positions in the context of genocide. After genocide, an acknowledgement of the factual truth is a precondition for reconciliation. Or to say it in the words of Chum Mey, a former inmate of the Tuol Sleng Orture Prison in Cambodia: "First comes justices, then comes reconciliation."

History is the common ground that all people of the previous Ottoman space share. It may be an excellent starting point for joint exploration, resulting in dialogue and perhaps even justice and reconciliation, if official narratives and mainstream 'truths' are left aside, at least temporarily, and oral history, unheard or even silenced stories, post and post-post memories are listened and researched. There is an intersect of commonalities to be discovered whose scope and dimensions are still unknown.

On the other hand, reconciliation projects should facilitate dialogue on conflictive issues and not ignore if a profound conflict exists. Reconciliation projects that avoid conflictive situations are doomed to fail. Post-genocide reconciliation cannot be based on the exclusion or minimization of a difficult past. Furthermore, projects for justice and reconciliation must not ignore the fact that genocidal responsibility involves not only governments, administrations and specific agencies created for the massive destruction as it was the case with the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, the killing squads, in the Ottoman Empire. Genocide also involves large parts of majority population who materially benefit from the crimes by remaining either bystanders or becoming even participants in the crimes. For the heirs of Ottoman history it may be painful or shameful to discover the fact and degree of

involvement of their ancestors, whereas descendants of victims may tend to ethno-centric, sweeping judgments and condemnations for the entire Sunni Muslim populaces of today's Turkey. Yet history is not jurisprudence, and we must never forget that legal condemnation is always applied to individuals, never to national or ethnic collectives. Any ethnization of historic responsibility is contra-productive to the aims of dialogue, fact-finding and reconciliation. We must not and cannot hold responsible the Sunni Muslims of Turkish nationality of today for crimes that occurred more than a century ago, neither collectively, nor individually. What we can expect, however, is their personal position towards these crimes. But again, we have no right to impose our own position on our partners in dialogues.

Let me please end with some remarks on unity and solidarity. "United in Rights" was and is the slogan of the Berlin and Paris conference. But are we ourselves prepared for unity? In this context let me remind you, that the term 'Armenian identity' covers a wide range of perceptions about this particular identity. Hrant Dink, to whom we related during the Berlin Conference, used to criticize too narrow views of Armenianness, for example, its limitation to linguistic and/or denominational affiliation. Therefore, when speaking about "Armenian principles", we must bear in mind that these principles may be different for Armenians in and from Armenia, or for those in the various Diasporas of the Near East, of Turkey and Europe including Russia and Northern America.

When discussing "Greek principles", we must not reduce them to the regional genocide in the Pontos area. During the last decade of Ottoman rule, Greeks of Ottoman nationality fall victims to the repressions, persecutions and extermination policy of their government throughout the entire Empire, starting with Eastern Thrace, followed by Ionia. Finally, the Aramaic speaking Christians until today find it difficult to self-identify under one common denominator, be it Syriac, Aramean, Assyrian or Chaldean. Furthermore, the destruction of members of the Syriac churches occurred not only in the Ottoman realm, but also, in 1914 and 1918, in the Ottoman occupied territories of Iran. By the way, the same goes for the Armenian population of these Northwest Iranian areas.

Finally, expressing ourselves about principles in history, rights and dialogue, we should articulate whom we represent.