

**Joint Comment of the Armenian National Committee of America, American Hellenic Institute, and Hellenic American Leadership Council**

**Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**

**Docket Number USTR-2013-0019**

**May 10, 2013**

We welcome the opportunity to share our views regarding U.S. negotiating priorities and proposals for the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the European Union.

Our concerns relate primarily to the Turkish government's stated interest in joining this agreement, despite the fact that Turkey is not a full member of the European Union, as well as public comments by Turkish leaders and others regarding a possible U.S.-Turkey Free Trade Agreement. In the course of any talks or negotiations related to such agreements, we call on the President to be guided by the Trade Act of 1974 which affirms our nation's commitment "to establish fairness and equity in international trading relations," a principle that the government of Turkey regularly violates.

More specifically, we call upon to the Obama Administration to ensure that the TTIP, related agreements, and any bilateral agreements that may directly or indirectly involve the Republic of Turkey require, as a statutory precondition, that the Turkish government fully withdraw its unlawful and brutal military occupation of Cyprus, where human rights and religious freedom are routinely violated, unconditionally lift its illegal economic blockade of Armenia, and immediately end all obstacles to trade, investment, and other forms of commerce it currently imposes on Cyprus and Armenia. The blockade of a landlocked and largely impoverished nation, which has been in force for more than two decades and prevents an important East-West trade route, is among the longest-standing in modern history. Turkey's act of economic aggression is targeted against the very Armenian people that Turkey's predecessor state, the Ottoman Empire, nearly exterminated during the Armenian Genocide.

We are particularly concerned about Turkey's unwillingness to comply with previous trade agreements. Since its 2005 Customs Union Agreement with the European Union, Turkey has refused to implement the requirements of beginning to normalize relations with the Republic of Cyprus and opening its ports and airports to Cyprus. Turkey must demonstrate that it no longer flagrantly violates trade obligations before being granted preferential treatment under TTIP.

The implementation of any provision of such agreements related to Turkey should be conditional upon official annual certification by the President and subsequent confirmation by the Congress that Turkey has, over the past twelve months, fully complied with these conditions. These requirements, if enforced, will support and strengthen U.S. leadership in promoting a multilateral

rule-of-law based trading system, and, more broadly, in encouraging compliance by Turkey and other countries with international agreements to promote trade.

We welcome, as a general principle, the U.S. Trade Representative's commitment to the expansion of U.S. trade and investment based on "fairness and equity in international trading relations" that require respect for the rule of law. We hold, however, that, in the case of Turkey, we would not advance our national interests, further our economic prosperity, or promote our core values by rewarding a nation that so egregiously and flagrantly undermines the integrity of the global trading system by occupying a European Union member state and refusing to end its two decade blockade of landlocked Armenia.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the U.S. Trade Representative to discuss our priorities and proposals on this matter in greater detail.