

**Joint Statement by the Constitution Platform Initiative:**

***“We are reinitiating the Constitution Platform for a new Constitution”***

***“Turkey Talks for the New Constitution will be launched with the Istanbul Workshop in April”***

Turkey needs a new Constitution built on universal principles, which will in turn lay the basis for the country’s democratization.

In contemporary democracies, the power and legitimacy of constitutions stem from public support and the collective will. For this reason, it is of vital importance that Constitutional amendments are built on wider social consensus. The New Constitution should be established through a participatory process which targets the widest consensus possible.

There is a widely accepted and long voiced consensus that Turkey needs a new Constitution. We, as TOBB, TİSK, TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, KAMU-SEN, TESK and TZOB<sup>1</sup>, with the endorsement of our organizational setup throughout Turkey, represent this consensus on the need for a new Constitution for our country.

We established the Constitution Platform in 2007 in order to create a common ground for debate on the fundamental principles of the prospective Constitution, the main code to represent the collective will.

During the national workshop held in Ankara, 250 people from 83 different NGOs agreed on 35 principles that should form the basis of the new Constitution. The common ground found at the workshop took as achievements the non-amendable articles of the Constitution and the Constitutional amendments introduced since 1995 throughout the EU harmonization process and identified a number of principles that the new Constitution should be based upon. This experience has demonstrated that a Constitution that will mark cohesion rather than differentiation can be drafted under a participatory process.

We see that the Constitutional amendment package on the agenda of the Parliament includes certain steps that were long overdue in the context of the European Union harmonization process. Nevertheless, as we have stated before, the need for a democratic and civilian Constitution prevails. Turkey, with a participatory approach, should transform the existing consensus in this regard into a new democratic, civilian, egalitarian, and emancipatory Constitution.

Unfortunately, the efforts to launch a new Constitution have failed in the past. But we must succeed this time. We should finalize this process, make the societal consultation process work, and establish a new Constitution.

This we can achieve should an open debate be established. Open debates are the core of democracies. And democracy is the prerequisite for a strong economy and solid social system.

It is both necessary and possible for Turkey to establish a new Constitution via a participatory process. Turkey does have the democratic credentials and the background to pursue a peaceful debate on its own future.

What we need is to establish a platform for open debate all around the country to find the common ground. As we seek the common ground, we will be in need of an information infrastructure that will enrich the overall wisdom. It is evident that a democratic milieu of open debate will be solidified and intensified with information. On the other hand, a healthy platform of debate will also contribute to the collective wisdom and experience of Turkey.

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<sup>1</sup> TOBB: Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey; TİSK: Confederation of Employers Unions of Turkey; TÜRK-İŞ: Confederation of Workers Unions of Turkey; HAK-İŞ: Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions; KAMU-SEN: Confederation of Trade Unions for Public Employees of Turkey; TESK: Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen; TZOB: Union of Agricultural Chambers of Turkey

In this context, we have gathered under the Constitution Platform Initiative Group. We represent different perspectives and societal segments. We do not have the same stance vis-à-vis numerous social issues. However, we unanimously agree that Turkey needs a new Constitution.

In line with these facts, we, as the Constitution Platform Initiative, have decided to

- a. Launch a platform of open debate via national and local workshops under the general title 'Turkey Talks for the New Constitution',
- b. Establish the common ground as to how the new Constitution should be shaped,
- c. Communicate our findings to the Parliament, and
- d. Contribute to the democratization process in this context as civil society organizations.

As the initiative group, we hope that, as was the case in 2007, the Constitution Platform will expand with the participation of all NGOs organized around Turkey and we hereby call on everyone to participate in and contribute to this process.

"It always seems impossible until it is done".

It is possible to write a new Constitution designed upon participatory processes and tailored to eliminate the fundamental problems of Turkey.

It is possible to write a Constitution that does not confine Turkey to the status quo.

It is possible to write a Constitution that promises inclusion and cohesion.

It is possible to write a Constitution that allows us to live peacefully together.

It is possible to write a Constitution that will pave the way for an advanced democracy and a stronger economy.

It is possible to achieve holistic democratization in Turkey.