



TURKISH INDUSTRIALISTS' AND BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

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Distinguished Guests,

It gives me great pleasure to share with you some of my views on Turkey's role and place in the European security.

The end of Cold War created a unique opportunity to bring about a Europe whole and free. But, it has also brought about new, unpredictable and lethal challenges including regional conflicts and civil wars. Doubtlessly, September 11 2001 marked another milestone in this changing security environment.

To respond effectively to these fundamental changes in the international scene NATO had undergone to a transformation process. Alliance's adaptation to a new security environment involves on the one hand enlarging its membership and on the other hand progressively transforming its main function from waging war to enforcing peace.

Turkey's role and place within the Alliance has also transformed parallel to these changes. During the Cold War Turkey was a crucial pillar in defending the Alliance's southern flank against the threat of the Warsaw Pact. By the end of the East-West divide Turkey found herself being located at the center of the triangle formed by the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East where the new threats and risks are concentrated. In today's security environment, Turkey is no longer in the southern flank it is on the front line given that 13 of the 16 potential crisis scenarios identified by NATO are in Turkey's geographic vicinity.

With the NATO's second largest army Turkey's contribution becomes potentially more vital than ever especially with regard to reducing tension in crises by preventing the conflicts from transforming into armed conflicts or by restricting the aggressor. So far, we observe that Turkey took part in the international peace keeping forces formed to deal with the conflicts erupted in Somali, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

However, I believe that Turkey's contribution to European defense is not confined to her capacity in terms of deployable and useable forces. Though Turkey has often been perceived by her allies either as a "bridge" to project forces abroad because of her unique geostrategic situation or as a combat force that could be used in the defense of European interests. Turkey's role in European defense is more varied and complex than that.

With her strong historical, cultural and economic links to Central Asia and the Middle East and with her peaceful approach Turkey is capable of playing a "catalyst" role providing intellectual and political energy to trigger initiatives aimed at developing democracy and development in the surrounding regions. She could also contribute to European security assuming as a "facilitator" role building coalitions around various issues. Thirdly, she could help the development of confidence-building measures and conflict resolution efforts to alleviate misunderstandings through liaison efforts, shuttle diplomacy and the use of alternative formal or informal fora.

Finally, I would also like to underline the fact that Turkey's successful integration to the EU per se would be contribution to EU's peace building capacity by destroying the myth of inevitable cultures and by showing that democracy and pluralism, the rule of law, political modernity are not exclusively Western characteristics.

I hope this will be a fruitful occasion with many mutually beneficial exchanges of opinion. I wish you all a lively and a productive discussion.