



TURKISH INDUSTRIALISTS' & BUSINESSMEN's ASSOCIATION

TÜSİAD

SPEECH

given to the

40th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

by the

PRESIDENT of the BOARD of DIRECTORS

Ms ÜMİT BOYNER

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Esteemed Founders, Presidents and fellow TÜSİAD members,

I should like to begin by expressing on behalf of my fellow Members of the Board of Directors and myself, our sincere appreciation to all of you for having given us the honor and privilege of election to serve on TÜSİAD's Board of Directors.

We have been handed the baton by the predecessor Board, of which I was also a member, that has served during a tumultuous period in Turkey's history. I would like to express my profound appreciation to our President Ms. Arzuhan Yalçındağ for the leadership she has shown during this time.

Over the next 2 years, my colleagues and I are committed to do our utmost to fulfill this duty with honor and enthusiasm; we shall work together to further the aims and objectives of our Association.

Before detailing the main lines of our 2010 – 2011 program, I would like to share with you what being board members of an association like TÜSİAD means to us – an organization devoted and attentive to Turkey, propagating ideas, creating new business opportunities, striving to create positive differences having already fostered great expectations amongst its members as well as public opinion, and to share with you also the objectives and beliefs that we hold dear.

TÜSİAD is Turkey's most effective, intellectually consistent, independent civil society organization. TÜSİAD is not an interest group, but Turkey's most important pressure group. That is why, in spite of being commended so highly over the years by governments and opposition alike, 'TÜSİAD doesn't mind just its own business'.

TÜSİAD is not some 'random' association. TÜSİAD is not a conformist association.

In decade-long periods throughout its nearly 40-year history, TÜSİAD is an organization that has undertaken very significant work and has often striven to set Turkey's agenda. Its visionary analysis and advice have often been judged as being 'before their time' or utopic, but TÜSİAD has always been ready to run this risk and share its knowledge with public opinion.

During this time, the agenda that TÜSİAD has presented to the country has frequently ended up becoming Turkey's road-map.

In the 1970's, not that many people were willing to understand us when we expressed the need to move to a market economy and align ourselves to the world. Yet the great economic advances of the 1980 were largely due to the realization of the ideas that we had put forward during that time.

While almost everyone said we should avoid shaking the status-quo during the 1990's, this association put forward differing advice.

After the end of the Cold War, TÜSİAD robustly stated that Turkey's peace and prosperity depended upon its integration into the world economy, and democratization.

The association consistently argued that in order to attain these objectives, great importance needed to be attached to the EU membership process, and constantly pursued this issue.

The Democratization Report prepared by the late Bulent Tanor was published in a year when Turkey was experiencing the stresses of an oppressive period internally as well as reaching the brink of a collapse in its relations with the EU.

I regard myself as duty bound to recall that TÜSİAD was at the forefront of the struggle for liberalization and democratization during the 1990's.

Because I believe that a sound future can only be built upon a true understanding of the past.

That is our history. Likewise, our future. That is how it has to be.

From today, at the cusp of a new decade, we must design TÜSİAD's forward-looking mission and begin to implement our action plan.

During the 2007-2009 period alone, TÜSİAD formed nearly 200 technical appraisals on the request of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and our civil service and sharing these with concerned bodies and public opinion. I am talking about a repertoire of views so wide that it encompasses studies on issues ranging from 'emergency decrees' and 'energy security' to 'financial reporting' and 'social security'. So it is that this society and this infrastructure that actually makes the organization, has elevated TÜSİAD beyond the level of a mere representative body into what the late Vehbi Koç termed a factory churning out ideas - a think tank.

To be a TÜSİAD member is to be a supporter of a process of development and progress, a modernization project. To be a TÜSİAD member is to aim for Turkey to be integrated into the world as a top ranking competitor and a power at the top of the league of democracies.

The innovative essence of entrepreneurship finds life in TÜSİAD, an indispensable requirement for change and renewal. TÜSİAD competes only with itself for dynamism and innovation.

Distinguished members, colleagues,

Our desire for this period is to move forward with a 2-year program. That is to say, we have devised a plan to institutionalize an understanding of which basic issue or issues to prioritize, and which issues we shall systematically address. I am referring to a structure to which you will be able to contribute without difficulty, and will be able to follow and evaluate, which we shall present to you with our program in February. It is a transparent, concrete and accountable structure.

We shall realize all our government, bureaucracy and international interactions within the framework of the thematic prioritization in the program.

The member interaction programs begun in the previous period will be made deeper and more varied; we aim to achieve the comprehensive participation of all of you, our valued members.

Our objective is to make our program for the coming period a little more issue-focused, with a structure bound to measurable criteria. Without doubt, we shall continue to work on the

fundamental economic, social and political issues and to represent our business world both at home and on the international stage.

We shall achieve a greater focus and intensity of work on certain issues, as and when required.

In the past decade, Turkey has undergone a period of radical change that is continuing. The structure of government in this country has rapidly transformed.

We changed course after the 2001 crisis, the effects of which remain in everyone's memory.

Both economically and politically, most of the agenda points that TÜSİAD argued for in those years have come to pass. As always, we spoke out whenever we saw errors or wrongdoing.

Distinguished friends,

All the signs are that the period following the global crisis will be one on which the competitive race hardens throughout the world. In this regard, we shall concentrate on subjects such as the need not to perceive infrastructure sectors like energy and communications as public revenue sources, on effective and genuine measures to counter the 'informal' economy, and the development of innovation capacity. We must work on industrial and service sector strategies focusing on increasing our competitive power and reducing unemployment, which has become a serious social blight. At the same time, the regulatory weaknesses throughout the world that caused the global crisis, continue. In our view, a G-20 country's lack of a proper strategy to base its economic future and the failure to create an atmosphere for productive discussion on such issues, is unacceptable. We shall certainly be highly focused on this subject in the coming period.

As entrepreneurs, the basic investment decisions are ours, we are the creators of production and employment. Growth and economic activity are a process formed by all the entrepreneurs throughout the length and breadth of Turkey, the result of a chain of decisions and risks. In the end, any business organization's demand of the government is cooperation and political stability. Growth and prosperity is our business; emerging from the crisis is our responsibility. We should be able to share this understanding better with all parts of society.

Distinguished Members,

Turkey is now the world's 17th largest economy. No significant economic barriers to our EU accession process are foreseen. In 2007, the government enunciated the 2014 full membership target that TÜSİAD had made its own. These days almost no one talks of this date and the voices speaking out for the goal of EU membership are faint indeed. Yet the EU project is the manifestation of an approach based on the totality of the preferred values of one and a half centuries of Turkish history.

We cannot accept the fact that while technical conformity to EU laws and regulations could be concluded with one or two years' work, pro-EU orientation and a belief in the 2014 target date are now widely regarded as illusory and a subject fit mainly for humor and ridicule.

My sincere belief in the EU project rests on two reasons. The first is well known; our place is there, we are obliged to crown our economic integration with political and social integration. The second is that with the EU project, we are establishing irreversible organic bonds in the field of democratization. Up to now we have taken huge strides on the road to a civil society and we continue to do so. We have to focus on the separation of powers, transparency, accountability, social reforms, and the development of personal rights and freedoms. Sometimes it seems as if all of these are reforms that have a chance of realization only with the EU membership process.

Yet even as European leaders use Turkey as a tool of a populist and inward looking policy, and consequently the EU process recedes in Turkey's agenda, I have not observed any slowing of our democratic evolution.

At this point I would like to touch on perhaps the most important issue on today's agenda.

The Democratic Initiative is a totality, a process. A haphazard process in which steps are not planned, the strategic totality is lost and there is an immature approach towards engagement with social stakeholders could further increase social instability and polarization, with very severe consequences.

Remember how we were a bridge? A counter-example to the Clash of Civilizations, a cradle of tolerance and of thousands of cultures. What happened to us? What is holding us back?

Why is it that somehow we can't reach the premier league? Instead of solving our problems together, we are divided into camps. We are suspicious of everyone and everything, we don't talk, we shout, we don't listen, we are listened to. Instead of confronting reality we create conspiracy theories. What has become of us? Why do we look on our differences not as a source of wealth, but as a weakness?

We all long for tranquility and peace. We are all tired of living as a high tension society. All of us desire a better off Turkey. We want a Turkey where our young people feel more secure about their lives and their future, where work and the basics of a good life can be readily found. We miss a self confident Turkey free of its fears and doubts.

Yes, Turkey is always going through yet another special period, because there are always these opportunities that somehow we can't evaluate, barriers we can't overcome, and problems we stubbornly won't solve. We are trying to run at speed without solving our problems.

A white man and a native American are galloping along together. Suddenly the native American stops. Surprised, the white man asks why have we stopped, why are we waiting? The native American replies, we were going so fast that our souls got left behind.

We have unsolved problems; really deep down, problems that have been swept under the carpet for years. And we will not solve these problems without getting together, unclenching our fists and shaking hands. Our souls will not be at ease. While TUSIAD elects its second female President, can we forget the women who fall victim to 'honor killings' in one part of our country? Can we forget young people when nearly 30% of those aged 18-30 are unemployed? I dream of a TÜSIAD that shares and communicates more with the whole of society.

The wealthy and fortunate of this country cannot race ahead while leaving the rest behind. In today's fast moving world we can't afford to stop and wait, but we can go forward hand in hand, without leaving anyone behind.

The day we learn to listen to each other, understand each other and accept each other as we are, we shall deserve the richness of this part of the world, and the social, cultural and ethnic wealth within us and our history. And then, we won't just be going through yet another special period - we shall become a special country.

We are disturbed by the existence of various deficiencies that still hobble our democracy. We cannot digest the fact that 30 years after the establishment of the 12 September regime, we are still governed by the constitution of that era's coup d'etat.

We want to see the immediate lifting of the 10% electoral hurdle that makes a mockery of the concept of representative justice.

We object to the transformation of political parties into oligarchies, the political party and election laws that prevent the development of organic links between them and different parts of society, and the mentality that will not countenance change of these things on any account.

While wanting more democracy, we really have difficulty comprehending the failure to remedy these flaws in our system of representation.

One of the conditions for increasing prosperity is to have an economic vision. Now, we regard the strengthening of our democracy as a precondition of our ability to increase our prosperity.

As the Board of Directors, we want TUSIAD proposals that we make in the coming period in respect of all our work, to be discussed in as wide a social spectrum as possible.

We hope we shall be able to collaborate with other effective civil society organizations in Turkey. With that end in mind, we wish to strengthen the ties we have developed throughout Turkey.

Distinguished Members,

In short, we are entering another period of progress. And we are confident in the knowledge that Turkey has greatly benefited from this organization's accumulated experience, wisdom and creative energy, and shall continue to do so.

There is no question that in working towards these goals, we need the support of you, our valued members. And we know that you will not begrudge us that support.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, I thank you all for the trust and confidence that you have shown in us.