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TÜSİAD

YÖNETİM KURULU BAŞKANI

ARZUHAN DOĞAN YALÇINDAĞ'IN

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FOR EUROPEAN UNDERSTANDING - 2008

TÜSİAD DIŞ POLİTİKA ÖDÜLÜ”

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Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our annual ceremony for awarding TUSIAD's Bosphorus Prize for European Understanding.

Instituted six years ago the Bosphorus Prize is awarded to those individuals or public or private institutions from the European Union that have contributed to Turkey's membership bid and to the development of mutual understanding, common values and cooperation between Turkey and the EU.

In the past five years five distinguished European citizens from five different countries were awarded and accepted the Prize. They immensely contributed to its establishment as a widely recognized and respectable European award and we are grateful to them for their immense help in institutionalizing it.

This year's recipient, the first woman to receive the Bosphorus Prize, is a pioneer. It is my distinct pleasure and privilege to recognize Honorable Emma Bonino, currently the vice-President of the Italian Senate, as the recipient of the Bosphorus Prize this year.

It is inadequate to describe Emma Bonino through her official work. She is much more than the offices she held, the responsibilities she bore and the duties she carried through. Still one can be out of breath just citing the initiatives she undertook, projects that she initiated and the sheer expense of her interests and commitments.

As a politician and as a community activist though what defined Emma Bonino's bright and successful career is her commitment to worthy causes. From the proliferation of civil liberties during the Cold war and after to the fight against gender discrimination to a search for a better understanding between peoples of different cultures what we observe is a truly global citizen.

I cannot think of very many people who, after they had established themselves on the global scene, would go through the difficult process of learning Arabic so as to follow news from the Arab world in the original language. In this way she could fight bigotry, misunderstandings, enmities and polarization that might result from the so-called clash of civilizations. Yet this kind of dedication is typical of Emma Bonino's style.

A great friend of Turkish democracy and democrats she has been a tireless campaigner for the admission of Turkey to the European Union. She understood and appreciated the singularity of Turkey and the Turkish experiment in these polarized times. Through her work she contributed immensely to better understanding between the two sides. In a period when Turkey-EU relations are in a coma, her work, commitment to integration and imagination are more precious than ever.

Emma Bonino was a member of the Independent Commission on Turkey headed by this year's Nobel Peace laureate Martti Ahtisaari that prepared the report *Turkey in Europe: More than a promise*. To date the observations, analyses and evaluations of that report remain unsurpassed in my judgment.

In the future too Turkey's quest for EU membership will seek aspiration and assistance from Emma Bonino. We know that she will be by our side fighting the right cause.

Ladies and Gentlemen, now let me invite and give the floor to Foreign Minister and the Chief Negotiator Ali Babacan firstly for his speech, then for the awarding ceremony.