



**THE OPENING SPECH  
DELIVERED BY  
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I would like to welcome you for your participation to the third annual seminar of Institut du Bosphore in Istanbul. As TÜSİAD, by creating Institut du Bosphore, we aimed to open a new chapter of dialogue between France and Turkey. Establishing a Franco – Turkish institute that will foster ongoing, free and objective debate on geopolitical, economic, and cultural issues has turned out to be both unique and significant.

We have to underline the progress that the Institute has achieved since its establishment in 2009. Through its wide range of publications, its comprehensive visits to different regions of France, its substantial networking strategy and most importantly through momentous Annual Bosphorous Seminars, Institut du Bosphore successfully managed to fill an important gap in France. In a very short period of time, the Institute has become an essential point of reference related to France – Turkey bilateral relations in particular and Turkey's relations with the European Union in general. I believe that the deliberations in our annual seminar entitled “*Europe and the Planet of G-20*” will provide us new theoretical insights to elaborate the course of the world in a period when the political, economic even scientific certainties that we attached ourselves are shaken.

The world, particularly since the crash of 2008, forces us to rethink many of our assumptions and to imagine innovative ways of organizing our economies taking into account the new constraints and opportunities. Political relations are not immune from this massive change.

Today, it is not quite easy to talk about the focal point of the global economy as it used to be the transatlantic one nearly a decade ago. Economic and political endeavors are inevitable on the global scale compared to the previous arrangements in order to cope with the tremendous changes in the world. This will go in tandem with the institutionalization of multilateralism at the expense of unilateral actions. The rising importance of G-20 is a crucial step in this direction, through which new economic powers of the globalized world, like the BRICS, are represented in the decision-making structures of global governance, albeit in a simple form.

We have to say that G-20 is the right step for the institutional multilateralization of the management of the globalized system that was previously steered through national or regional policies. It should not be seen only as a mechanism of global coordination but as a paradigm shift in the course of globalized world system. And as an emergent power, Turkey is definitely not an exception to this rule.

On the other hand, Turkey's lingering membership process to the EU, we can say that the accession negotiations are in full coma due to the reasons from both sides. What we expect from the European governments is to endorse a more constructive approach within the EU platforms that underlines the necessity of the continuation of the enlargement for the survival of the EU in the competitive global world of 21st century. On the other hand, for the EU in order to retain its international credibility and assert itself as a global actor, it should not forget the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* vis-à-vis Turkey on the enlargement issue.

On the issue of customs union Turkey asks to participate in the decision making process concerning the common market. Furthermore, the free trade agreements that are signed by the EU with third parties without consideration of Turkey's interests are likely to hurt Turkey economically.

This is all the more regrettable since Turkey's strong growth, expanding market and deepening economic engagement with its surrounding regions make it an even more attractive partner for the EU.

In more ways than one Turkey is implementing the EU's neighborhood policy both in political and economic terms with the regions around itself. This is a condition that the EU can use to its own advantage as well. We believe that Turkey's high profile in the Middle East and Southern and eastern Mediterranean is not contradictory with its European perspective. The reverse is true: A Turkey that does not have strong networks with and influence on its neighbors may not be eligible for the European accession within the parameters of today's world.

Here, I would like to quote a meaningful passage from the New York Times published this Monday: *"...in an Arab world where the United States seems in retreat, Europe ineffectual and powers like Israel and Iran unsettled and unsure, officials of an assertive, occasionally brash Turkey have offered a vision for what may emerge from turmoil across two continents that has upended decades of assumptions. Not unexpectedly, the vision's center is Turkey."*

We maintain to say that the accession of Turkey to the EU will signify the positive interest of the EU to a larger Eurasian region and enhance its capabilities and cooperation potentials with the Balkans and the Middle East. Our similar positions vis-à-vis the future of Europe, G-20 and the transatlantic system should bring us closer in the efforts of the future construction of Europe.

In a period when the democratic ideals gain ground in the Middle East and North Africa, the well-known transformative, democratic soft-power of Europe barely exists. While Turkey, with its many unresolved political problems is shown as a liberal and secular democratic example to be inspired in the region, the EU which used its soft-power during the transition periods to democracy in Greece, Spain and Portugal is out of the agenda in the streets of Arab Spring.

The EU should think about the erosion of its soft-power and attractiveness. An EU that fails in enlargement to Turkey and in having a coordinated single voice will definitely have less soft-power and influence in its region and become irrelevant in an unstable surrounding region. That's why the EU should immediately reinforce its forward-looking cooperation with Turkey.

We believe that unless Europe consolidates itself and expands, she will shrink. Europe, with its record of political diversity, economic liberalism and cultural tolerance should be one of the main facilitators of the process of EU's enlargement to Turkey instead of opting for the views of "Fortress Europe" and Euro-fatigue coupled with the rejection of multiculturalism and the recent Euro debt crisis, all of which signify an introverted view of Europe.

This is also the same for the rise of protectionist discourses on the field of economy. Economic cooperation and integration with the conditions of free market underlie political cooperation and supra-national conduct of the world affairs in a pacific way. Protectionism will definitely lead us to the opposite way of confrontation.

It is true that the periods of the economic crisis are fruitful times for populist discourses. It is easier for the promoters of such discourse to shift the debate from global and complex

economic problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the more visible local cultural sphere where fears can be politically articulated. We also observe the attempts of xenophobic populist political parties across Europe to legitimize themselves with reference to the obsolete theme of the Europeanness of Turkey. We expect the withering away of these obsolete discourses in the next decade and the European politicians and public opinion adopt and rationalize their discourse to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This will entail an optimum combination of both further integration including intra-European convergence of budgetary and fiscal solidarity on the one hand and enlargement policies on the other. Setting a target date for accession will definitely be a smart action for both sides in order to prevent the further derailment of the negotiation process and the ultimate membership.

During the first decade of twenty-first century, Turkey witnessed a robust growth economic performance which allowed her to influence world affairs and become an ambitious force in her strategically critical neighborhood at the nexus of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. We are also aware that the status of Turkey as a candidate country, having an Accession Partnership with the EU and being in the course of accession negotiations contributed at a large scale to the country's reform process.

In Turkey's post-electoral period which will be dominated by a single party government, a platform of multi-party consensus will still be necessary in order to revise the current constitution. The preliminary work on this huge task is underway in the parliament. The strengthening of Turkey's most important anchor, the European Union membership process, on the way to pluralist democracy, high living standards and sustainable economic development will also be very crucial to have a constitution with the democratic standards of Europe.

This year, we, as TÜSİAD, are celebrating our 40th Anniversary. As TÜSİAD, we've endeavored, for forty years, to contribute to the formulation of a vision concerning long term issues, to our society. Our focus, in this special year, is "sustainable development" and this week we published a report entitled "Turkey: 2050 Vision". With this report our aim has been to open new perspectives for the future trajectory of Turkey. In this context, we are well aware that EU membership will be the major driving force to reach a sustainable Turkey in 2050.

TUSIAD has always been the most influential driving force behind Turkey's democratic, social and economic reforms and the EU process. However we are losing our influence on this field because the EU anchor is considered more and more irrelevant. This is due to Cyprus, to short-sighted considerations of some incumbent EU leaders including France, to growing extreme right in some EU countries, and to EU's other internal problems.

Nevertheless, we remain ever determined to recover and move forward with the EU process and we should still be optimistic about a Europe as a continent that is capable of solving its problems with its own dynamics. I am hopeful that some latest electoral trends in the European countries may support this optimism.