



OPENING ADDRESS OF

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PRESIDENT OF THE HIGH ADVISORY COUNCIL OF

TÜSİAD

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Esteemed President, Esteemed Chairs, Fellow TÜSİAD members, and Dear Members of the Media,

On behalf of the High Advisory Council of TÜSİAD, I salute you with my sincere regards.

In my recent talks, I pointed out the chaotic character of the period we are living through, the difficulties of the decision-making processes because of the dizzying speed of the economic and political developments across the world, and the necessity of improving consulting mechanism in order to manage the transformation.

I planned to emphasize the pessimistic and anxious outlook still prevailing both at home and abroad, and the negative impact of this unfortunate situation on the economic performance. I planned to make a number of recommendations in order to prevent the uncertainties and the weak economic performance to create a turbulence that will take us further down.

Last week's developments in the Turkish politics created a need to change completely plan of my speech.

The developments of the last week remind us the crucial importance of three issues: the harmful effects of uncertainties, the institutional structures free from personal influences, and a parliamentary system that works and provides solutions.

Since last week, political uncertainties have risen once again to the top of our agenda. The greatest current uncertainty is not about the names on the list of the ministers of the new

government. There is no doubt that every chair will be filled and Turkey will have a new cabinet. What is important is the healthy working of the Turkish democratic system.

Therefore the most urgent issue is removing the uncertainties concerning the democratic bodies.

Let us not forget that uncertainties are not good for our lives. As the saying goes, soggy days – or uncertainties- are for the wolves.

We wish that at the end of this period we obtain a new constitution adequate for 21st century Turkey. If the institutions work smoothly and efficiently, the person at the head of the institution does not matter much. When the mortals are replaced and the names at the head change, the power of the model maintains the institutions strong and healthy. This is what we the business community call “corporate governance”. Most of the family companies unable to develop their corporate governance structure became history during the lifetime of the third generation. We try to hand down our companies to the next generations by implementing the principles of corporate governance.

Dear guests,

We witness a turning point in the global history. Simultaneously, our country and our region undergo a historical transformation. Any kind of institution unable to understand and to keep pace with this transformation risk its existence.

Rich western countries have difficulties in guarding their past strength. Technologies become obsolete rapidly. The new normal of the world economy make old recipes of economic policies defunct. Giant companies downsize and disintegrate. Managers trying to save the day by using blindly management models of the past fail. Center parties of many countries are wiped off the political maps; old leaders are forgotten.

Apparently, people who work hard to preserve unhealthy feature of the old bodies are eliminated. The ones who are refined by jettisoning their waste, become stronger and more developed at the end of the transformation.

We wish that our country keeps pace with this great process of change and transformation and starts moving upwards when this turbulent era is over.

The old is already in the past and the new is just approaching, and we cannot manage this process of change and transformation with ad hoc measures improvised on a day to day basis.

What we need is a new social contract. The establishment of a complete with all the relevant institutions and rules; a governance structure that is able to further economic development of Turkey in a democratic framework.

We stated our opinion over and over again: the essential features of a constitution is more or less determined in this modern world. A framework that does not conform to the universal standards will be a source of the problem in the long run. We have to make laicism, democracy, human rights, freedom of expression and supremacy of law the common basis of our discussions.

Everybody benefits at the end of the day from acting on long-term thinking, keeping basic principles always in sight and establishing unconditionally the rule of law. Trying to obtain short term advantage by playing around with the political system, with the rules that pull the society together produces always detrimental results and frustration in the long run. Like a boomerang, such attempts always hit the ones who meddle with the wheels of the system.

We must think about the debates on the new constitution in this way. The new constitution cannot be a means of expanding the sphere of influence of a group at the expense of another. The new constitution should serve to enhance our unity and coherence, not our inner conflicts and polarization. It should offer a framework within which we can enjoy our diversity and live in peace. Everybody should act with due generosity and altruism. This is the only way to overcome our current problems and eliminate the uncertainties.

Dear guests,

In spite of apparent difficulties, we are not far from solving our problems. Our history tells us that we are perfectly able to renew our social contract and live together in peace.

Our land is known as the cradle of civilizations. This land has been the home of so many nations; it has been enriched by the culture of so many different people. Historical migrations have been a continuous source of change and dynamism. To live in such continuous change and movements, to keep in touch with such diversity gave the people of this geography a great capability of adaptation and change management. This human capital is our greatest asset in the process of preparing a new constitution. If we use this asset adequately, we will obtain a great opportunity to leap forward. Otherwise either current power struggle will be carried on or one of the parties will be able to impose its social vision to the other: in either case problems will aggravate.

Obviously either we will solve the problems or the problems will dissolve us.

The geostrategic importance of Turkey we like to underline emerges from this historical background. Turkey is between the north and the south, between the east and the west: we shouldn't take this geographically; the deeper meaning of this statement lies in history and philosophy. What made Turkey in the past and what is capable of making it strong now is its soft power. This is also what enables Turkey to develop strong ties and efficient cooperation both in the Middle East and in Europe. What makes Turkey important in the West is its Middle Eastern character, while what makes it important in the East is its European nature.

These twin qualities are also what will give the new constitution its distinctive "Turkish" character.

Let's not forget that a native-born, national constitution cannot acquire this property by conscious design. A model that emerge and develop in time will gradually deserve to be called by these attributes. On the other hand, a model invented and developed on a designer's desk can be nothing but a piece of social engineering. We know from our experience that social engineering is doomed in the long run. Therefore we should be aware of our historical assets and work together to develop a governance model suitable for us. The constitution we will develop will be absolutely "native-born and national" once it reflects our accord.

Dear guests

The only place where we can create this social reconciliation is the Parliament; the only forces to shape it are our political parties.

However, the Parliament that is to solve our problems is up to its neck with its own problems.

Let us take a look at the parliament: one of the opposition parties is suffering pains of changing its leader; there is an ongoing ruthless fight among its current and potential leaders. Another opposition party is completely locked to the debates on lifting the parliamentary immunity. The party in power is trying to manage the governmental change.

Unfortunately, this political blocking is not new. The agenda of the parliament and the government is occupied by unfruitful discussions since 2007. We missed opportunities to implement economic and political reforms. The parliament has been unable to solve the problems.

It is time to end sterile political rivalries and face these problems.

One of the problems unsolved by the parliament is so enormous that it overshadows all the others. All the problems we endure seem insignificant compared to the problem of terrorism. Even the dizzying pace of political developments cannot make us forget the deeply felt grief for our martyrs. The news of martyrs come one after another and they make our hearts bleed. We cannot wait anymore. This is a call to all political parties. Today is the day to come together and unite. Today is the day of reconciliation. Today is the day for our deputies in the parliament to show to the people they represent that they are able to solve our problems.

Callousness, lethargy, and exasperation are the greatest vices today. We should keep our faith in our ability to establish our unity, harmony, and peace and carry on to do all we can tenaciously and relentlessly,

Only talking societies find ways to progress. We will keep speaking out what we know and what we believe on every occasion.

I would like to conclude with these reflections and wishes. I salute you with my sincere regards and I thank you for your kind attention.