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ÜMİT BOYNER'İN

TÜSİAD DIŞ POLİTİKA ÖDÜLÜ'NÜN

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AÇILIŞ KONUŞMASI

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

Instituted in 2003, the Bosphorus Prize is awarded to the individuals, 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.

Since 2003 seven distinguished European citizens from five different countries were awarded and accepted the Prize. Ranging from Jack Straw, Günter Verheugen to Emma Bonino and Frank Walter Steinmeier, they greatly contributed to its establishment as a widely recognized and respectable European award and we are grateful to them for their valuable help in institutionalizing it.

This year's recipient, the fourth German and the first person from the business world to receive the Bosphorus Prize, is a pioneer. It is my distinct pleasure and privilege to recognize Dr. Arend Oetker, currently the President of German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), the Managing Director of Dr. Arend Oetker Holding and the Vice-President of BDI (the Federation of German Industries), as the recipient of the Bosphorus Prize this year.

It is inadequate to describe Dr. Oetker's contributions. As the Vice-President of BDI, he made significant declarations concerning the benefits of Turkey's accession to the European Union and the development of bilateral economic relations between Germany and Turkey. With his dependable and convincing position, he had a very positive effect on the German public opinion and politicians on the launch of accession negotiations with Turkey and rationalization of the debate on Turkey in Germany. In 2008, he supported TÜSİAD's Modern Turkey Initiative in Germany by taking part in the supplement of *Frankfurter Allgemeine* entitled "Why Turkey Belongs to Europe". Moreover, as the President of German Council on Foreign Relations, he put particular emphasis on the conduct of the EU-Turkey relations as a specific research and conference topic.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this year's ceremony coincided with a debate on Germany about the issue of multiculturalism and integration in general and the Turkish origin German citizens in particular. With this occasion, I would like to briefly summarize our views on this debate.

Turkish-German relations embody important differences when compared to the bilateral relations Turkey has with other EU member states. First of all, a Turkish community of approximately 3 million lives in Germany. Around 800.000 of them who are citizens voted in the last German elections. In our opinion, we should see this community as a bridge between two countries, cultures and nations.

This segment of the population in Germany, which sees itself as being both Turkish and German, represents a meaningful bridge not only between our two countries but also between Turkey and Europe. Many in this group, especially the young, provide an example to their relatives in Turkey on how to adapt to European norms and supply valuable information on the benefits and problems of living in the European Union.

We fully appreciate German government's efforts to promote social harmony and the integration of Germans of immigrant origin to their new country. As in the case of all communities of immigrant origin, the Turkish origin German citizens will also become very faithful and patriotic citizens of

Germany while continuing to be proud of their Turkish background. In the world of the 21st century, the multiple cultural, ethnic and patriotic attachments are very common.

In this respect, we constantly observe among Turkish origin German citizens a systematic examination of Germany's policies towards Turkey as a test-case for Berlin's sincerity in its social harmony and integration policies. This is why German politicians who claim that Turkey should be satisfied with a status of a second-class partner rather than being a full EU Member are severely undermining all hopes for successful social harmonization sought by the German government's integration policies.

Current cultural difficulties vis-à-vis the integration of Turkish origin German citizens will be resolved along with the parallel integration process of Turkey in the EU. According to the latest statistical data, among the people of non-German origin that follow the integration courses, Turks rank the first. On the other hand, let me underline the critical message that Turkish origin German citizens will be integrated in German society more easily if Turkey's path to the EU is not derailed and the channels of cultural interpenetration remained open Europe-wide.

Turks have already become a part of Germany in an irreversible manner despite some old-fashioned counter-argumentations about "exclusionary parallel society". With these considerations, we should also underline the populist, islamophobic derailments of the integration debates in Germany and Europe in general. These debates should lead to constructive argumentations about multiculturalism and integration with the contributions of visionary politicians and thinkers. But if this does not happen, the contributions of these debates might be negative to the previous achievements of German society. The prejudiced assumption of the failure of multiculturalist integration perspective and prominence of *Leitkultur* can lead to anxiety in the migrant communities or the citizens from non-German origin.

The inevitable consequences of the negative perspectives on German multiculturalism has their repercussions on the European level with the assumptions of "*fortress Europe*" or "*welfare chauvinism*" accompanying xenophobia or Islamophobia. An introverted Europe coupled with an aggressive uni-culturalism, that gains popularity in many European countries has no positive future within the dynamism of 21st century.

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 21st century that they are not familiar with 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 wish Germany to be a European exception and impervious against this right-wing extremism that intends to undo the achievements of the EU.

Here, in an awarding ceremony, I will not mention the names that poison the debate. But, as a reference to the constructive argumentations on that issue, I would like to quote the op-ed of one of the most prominent thinkers of Germany and Europe, Jürgen Habermas that was published last week in *The New York Times*:

"...the idea of the leitkultur depends on the misconception that the liberal state should demand more of its immigrants than learning the language of the country and accepting the principles of the Constitution. We had, and apparently still have, to overcome the view that immigrants are supposed to assimilate the "values" of the majority culture and to adopt its "customs."

We wish this forward-looking position to be valid both in Germany and in Europe and stimulate the sociological transformation of the migrant communities towards a successful integration.

Dr. Oetker, it is no doubt that in the future as well, Turkey's quest for EU membership and the insightful argumentations against the newly arising trend of *German Euro-skepticism* will seek aspiration and assistance from you. We know that you will be in our side fighting the right cause of future integration and enlargement of Europe against *kulturkampf* politics.

Thank you very much, Ladies and Gentlemen, now let me invite and give the floor to Mr. Cevdet Yılmaz, Turkish State Minister for his speech, then for the awarding ceremony.