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DIŞİŞLERİ KOMİSYONU BAŞKANI

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Dear Guests,

I would like to welcome you all to our joint conference with the Brookings Institution in Istanbul.

The Brookings-TUSIAD program is in its second year and we have already seen in numerous occasions, the impact it had on America's, or at least Washington's perception on Turkey.

I also would like to thank all those who have made this cooperation possible, fruitful and promising; especially President Talbot, Ambassador Paris, our Washington representative Mr. Akyüz and our dear friend Mr. Soli Özel.

Today, the speakers will analyze the different aspects of the possible outcomes and effects of the presidential election in the United States on our bilateral relations. Allow me to briefly touch upon some important topics within these parameters.

Turkey and the US share a sound and deep-rooted partnership going back to the 19th century. Both countries have had a long-standing partnership, characterized by shared values, ideals and objectives, both regionally and globally. These include the promotion of peace, democracy, freedom, and prosperity. There have been controversies in the past over issues of shared concern, but the relationship has remained strong.

We greatly value the relations between the United States and Turkey. These past few years, since just before the Iraq war, have tested the durability of our friendship and the strength of our cooperation. I am happy to say that both sides have come out of this problematic period with a better understanding of each others' concerns.

In this sense, the visit to the White House by Turkish Prime Minister Mr. Erdoğan on the 5th of November was a turning point in our relations. The clear, explicit support of President Bush for Turkey's fight against PKK terrorism and the sharing of intelligence by the American military in Iraq are greatly appreciated by our government and the public at large.

Now, this is a presidential election year in the US. No matter which candidate wins, a new era will begin and we will be watching the direction and the choices in American foreign policy with great interest.

We must look forward to a more comprehensive relationship. This will necessitate a careful and frank assessment of our interests. We must redefine the framework of our common interests, devise new approaches and be respectful of diverging viewpoints.

Turkish-American relations require a special attention as the recent developments in Turkey have led to significant changes in the policy-making framework. The Turkish bid to join the EU, along with the democratization process, has made policy making more complex.

The traditional US-Turkey partnership that was shaped around mutual security concerns isn't what it was a decade ago. A more multi-dimensional partnership has emerged as a result of changing threats and regional conditions. Therefore, new institutions and communication channels are needed to address the challenges of a new era in bilateral relations.

Turkish-American relations in the 21st century must be built on a sound basis. Beyond the obvious strategic interests, the US and Turkey also share common values and as Turkey, we

appreciate the support that the US gives to our efforts to improve our democracy on our way to the European Union.

Besides the issue of the future of Iraq and our accession to the European Union; the promising developments in the long-awaited Cyprus issue, the future of Iran within the broader framework of the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the legislative developments about the Armenian issue at the US Congress, and the future course of American policy on these issues during the next president will be the main areas of interest to us.

Finally, since we are a business association, we attach particular significance to the economic dimension of Turkish-American relations. There are many fields of potential cooperation, energy being the most obvious one.

We hope that the future of Turkish-American relations during the next president will have more room for mutually beneficial business partnerships as well.

I believe that the contributions in this conference will help us clarify our expectations and long-term strategies.

Thank you very much for your attention, now the floor is Mr. Talbott's.