

**ADDRESS by DEİK PRESIDENT ÖMER CİHAD VARDAN
AT UN WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT'S PANEL ON
HUMANITARIAN AID LOGISTICS
İstanbul, May 23, 2016**

Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;

At the beginning of my speech, on behalf of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey, DEİK, I would like to welcome you all to Istanbul on the occasion of UN World Humanitarian Summit.

Welcome to Istanbul, home to numerous civilizations and millions of people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Most of you know that, lying at the crossroad between Asia and Europe, the history of Istanbul was written with glories of different empires that ruled the city.

However how many of you, would know that Istanbul's history has been interrupted many times by natural disasters? By earthquakes, fires and floods?

How many of you, would know that Istanbul, located on historical migration routes, is home to at least 400.000 Syrians, representing 14 percent of the 3 million total Syrians living in Turkey?

Istanbul... home to millions of young, dynamic entrepreneurs, now transforming its features into an economic value and getting ready to assume a new title: an international financial center.

As the citizens of Istanbul, as Turkish people, we all are proud of the dynamism and richness we have inherited from the past; but we are also aware of the problems that we need to live in and practice on daily basis.

Distinguished Guests;

We all are gathered here at the Summit, for one simple reason: to help the people.

Nearly, 5.000 global leaders gathered in Istanbul for the first-ever Humanitarian Summit, have already started to draw the World's attention to the imperative humanitarian work necessary for global peace and prosperity.

Governments, bureaucrats, civil society representatives, academicians, business people... in other words, many of you representing our communities at large have started to work together and to discuss better and sustainable ways to "help the people".

Since this decade began, a record number of people have been forced to leave their homes due to conflict, war, disease and disaster.

It gives us deep sorrow to see it on TV every single day:

Migrants crowding on the ships, risking their lives by crossing dangerous waters.
Floods and fires all around the World eroding homes, families and communities.

Drought, famine, and malnutrition affecting babies and children.

The list goes on.

Therefore it should come as no surprise to all of us that we must be committed to respond to humanity in crises.

We don't have a minute to waste...

After all, this is a matter of life and death!

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am a business man, myself.

I do represent one of the biggest and largest business interest groups of Turkey.

I am sure that some of you would question business-being in a Summit whose purpose is to discuss humanitarian aid.

But be sure;

We, as the business community, do recognize the shared role we need to play in responding to humanity struggling in the face of crisis.

Cause; HUMANITY IS indeed OUR FIRST BUSINESS.

Distinguished Guests;

Emerging as a key player in prevention, response and recovery from crises, the business community is increasingly at the forefront of humanitarian response.

We believe impact investment is the new key model for economic development. This is why we encourage the business community to make more impactful investments and to pursue a win-win model for everyone's interest.

However the motivations for businesses to get involved in humanitarian response remain poorly understood.

Is it for profit? For public relations? Or just to do good?

The critical question is: DOES IT MATTER?

The answer is short: NO IT DOESN'T!

Cause in response to humanitarian crisis citizens, civil society, bureaucracy, private sector, academia... in short we all have an important role to play:

because we are all human and we do share humanity.

Today; national and multinational companies, no matter how big or small, are closely involved in supporting humanitarian objectives, directly or indirectly.

By providing cash and in kind donations or by resuming operations in crisis affected areas, business community's engagement to humanitarian aid has been multiplied and pluralized in recent years.

But we all need new ways of cooperation. We need better solutions to humanity in case of crisis. We need to better deliver our key assets, skills, capabilities, expertise, and innovation to those who are in need.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me explain what I mean:

Imagine receiving thousands of different products and pieces of equipment from hundreds of sources around the world.

Imagine a situation where you don't know what each shipment contains until it arrives at the crisis-area?

It's like standing under a waterfall and trying to direct the water into different buckets. It's like a supply chain nightmare.

BUT IT IS BUSINESS AS USUAL.

Besides complexity, what about the urgent need to ship supplies in response to life-and death situations? The logistics?

And again **IT IS BUSINESS AS USUAL.**

What about the difficulties and problems on directing the good to the right place or person? The management?

IT IS still BUSINESS AS USUAL.

Dear Friends;

As the business community, we stand next to you in sharing and responding the biggest challenges we face today in humanitarian aid.

We believe, together, we can make better choices that translate into clear benefits for humanity.

Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;

Yesterday night, together with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DEİK organized the official Welcoming Reception of the Summit.

H.E. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary General of UN, also honored our evening.

We were together with hundreds of Summit participants from all around the World. And a large number of DEİK members also attended the evening and we all together presented a statement titled "**Humanity is our First Business**" to Deputy SG.

The statement lists commitments by the Turkish business community to humanity struggling in the face of crisis.

And; as Turkish private sector, we will stand behind the commitments we have made.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In closing, I would like to emphasize that we hope all of these efforts will bring a durable solution for those who are desperately in need.

And the last; as we say in Islam, May Allah help all of us to understand the situation of those who are in need of help, and May Allah help us to meet their needs.

Thank you for listening.