



COELA TOPLANTISI
AÇIŐ KONUŐMASI
Ömer Cihad Vardan – DEİK Başkanı
Address by DEİK's President Ömer Cihad Vardan
on COELA's visit to DEİK

Her Excellency;

Dear Members of the COELA Working Group;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon.

I like to start by thanking her Excellency, Ambassador Anna Turenicova for inviting us to this very important meeting between COELA Members and the Turkish business organization representatives.

I believe this would be a great opportunity for all of us to discuss and elaborate on Turkey's relations with the EU, few weeks before the 19th Progress Report of the European Commission on Turkey will be published.

As DEİK, we are so glad to host this event and I would like to welcome you all once again for your participation.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

First of all I would like to start by explaining what DEİK is and what we do.

We already have a good working relation with all EU Embassies in Turkey and abroad; but this is the first time we are contacting you.

Therefore please allow me to use this chance to briefly explain who we are.

DEİK established in 1986, is Turkey's foremost institution entitled to shape our country's trade relations with the rest of the World.

Turkey's leading business organizations and business people are gathered under DEİK's umbrella today. The representatives of the Turkish business community, who are present in here today, are all DEİK's Founding Institutions.

Today DEİK, with its 134 Business Councils, of which 126 of them are country-based, works to improve Turkey's trade relations in a strategic manner.



We always have been a reliable business actor in Turkish business world and will always be.

With our strong and large base of representation embracing all major Turkish business actors;

And with the expertise and know-how accumulated through decades,

DEİK will continue to be a strong partner of yours; and we are willing to cooperate more with you in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Last two weeks, have been full EU weeks for DEİK.

Early on Monday last week, we had a 3 days visit in Brussels.

We have already met with some of you during the roundtable at BRUEGEL.

Coming back from Brussels, we had the honor to participate to the Luncheon organized by the Slovak Embassy to Turkey. Once again I need to thank to Ms. Ambassador for her kind invitation where we had the chance to speak to 27 Ambassadors of EU Member States in Ankara.

And today, we are so much happy to host COELA Working Group meeting with Turkish business representatives in İstanbul.

Now I have the chance to speak to you and convey the 'latest' and 'fresh' gossips from the heart of Europe; of course from a business perspective.

I know, you have the latest gossips; but it is important for us to convey them from a pure business perspective.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Our programme in Brussels has been quiet busy but very interesting experience for all of us.

We have met with a great number of people from different EU institutions; as well as Belgian authorities.

Here I need to underline that we have been warmly welcomed by our counterparts in Belgium.

Just to name a few of those;

We have organized a panel discussion in the European Parliament together with 'Friends of Turkey Group' with the participation of 4 Members of the Parliament and more than 30 EU officials.



We had a closed meeting bringing together Bruegel' members, one of world's leading economic think-tanks together with our delegation.

We met with senior Commission officials, from the Cabinets of Commissioner Hahn and Katainen at Berlaymont Building.

We came together with EP's Turkey Rapporteur Ms. Kati Piri and Dutch MEP Ms. Marietje Schaake and discuss the political situation in Turkey.

We had two separate sessions with journalists based in Brussels; one with Turkish, and another with European.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Mr. Didier Reinders; The President of the Economic and Social Committee Mr. Georges Dassis were also among the contacts we had in the last 2 days.

We had very fruitful discussion with Mr. Stefano Manservisi for international development programs to be implemented in the 3rd and developing countries with the collaboration of TİKA and DEİK.

Last but not the least; we also had the great chance to meet with Mr. Christian Berger yesterday morning, the new head of EU's Delegation to Turkey, before he arrives to Ankara.

Dear Friends;

As said, it has been a full-compact programme with exactly 20 different appointments.

We were tired but we were also very happy to be there and hold the pulse in Brussels, especially after the failed coup attempt in Turkey.

I will try to summarize the impression we got in Brussels in 7 simple points.

Following, I would be very happy to answer all the questions you have upon the completion of presentations.

Number one;

We were extremely happy to see the EU's firm commitment towards Turkey's EU membership.

With no exception, all the persons we have contacted have conveyed a unique message to us:

Turkey is important for the EU and the EU is important to Turkey.



Two;

From very different contacts we heard Ms. Mogherini's message given few weeks ago during her visit in Ankara:

Turkey and the EU need to talk more to each other and a less about each other.

As DEİK, I want to say that, we also stand behind this statement and we are willing to keep communication channels open with Europe at all levels, including COELA.

Number three;

We were happy to see that bilateral trade, business and investments continue to be the engine behind Turkey's EU membership prospect as it has always been.

Four;

We were impressed with the positive climate in Brussels with regards to the potential revision of the Customs Union.

We clearly saw the EU's willingness to take further steps on the 20-years old Turkey-EU Customs Union and the fruitful work on both sides in order to accelerate and speed up the process.

On this point as you do, we are also looking forward to see more political steps to be taken during our Economy Minister's visit to Brussels in few days.

Number five: On Cyprus issue.

As you all know; Cyprus is 'the elephant in the room'.

We were happy to observe the constructive atmosphere surrounding the talks on bringing a durable solution to decades-old Cyprus problem.

As DEİK, we also fully support these efforts and deeply wish the Island becomes an Island of Peace, instead of an Island of Conflict and Separation.

Six: on enhanced cooperation and dialogue.

Yes this is what we need.

Enhanced cooperation and dialogue on economy, trade, investment, politics, strategy, defense and energy.

These are the areas where we can further our relations quickly. With more cooperation on those areas we can create a more favorable climate in Europe.



Last but not the least;

We were extremely impressed to see that the failed coup attempt in Turkey has now been better understood in Brussels, and the EU is much more open to listen, observe and understand what has really happened in İstanbul and Ankara, on the night of July the 15th.

But I also need to emphasize that we also took note of the concerns raised by our counterparts; especially on rule-of-law and the mass arrests after the failed coup attempt.

Dear Friends;

These were the positive impressions we gathered in the last 3 days. But of course, there were some issues that disappointed us, as well.

Among them, prospect for a visa-free travel for Turkish nationals comes on the forefront.

We are convinced that different EU institutions, the Parliament, the Commission, European business world and Belgium is highly in favor for our nationals visa-free travel; but we are sad to observe how this technical issue, turned out to be a humanitarian following the migration crisis; then a political tool between Turkey and the EU.

As DEİK, our stance of visa-free travel, especially for business people, has always been the same. We want visa freedom for our nationals and our business people, cause this is what plus 50-years of economic and strategic partnership deserves.

A study we ran at DEİK shows that Turkish citizen spends minimum 55 million Euros on visa application last year in 2015. Can you believe this?

And this is the minimum cost of visa to Turkish citizens last year! I say minimum cause unfortunately our citizens, our business people have to pay extra costs during application process.

Another shameful statistics: Turkey in 2015 ranked as number 4 country all around the world with application to Schengen. Number 1 is Russia. Number 2 is China; three is Ukraine. Then Turkey. Unfortunately none of these countries listed has a working relation with the EU for more than 50 years.

Therefore we need to do our home works and need to be sincere to each other.

A Second point of disappointment is on accession talks.

Unfortunately during our last visit to Brussels, we have not heard so much about the accession negotiations, which set the fundamental of candidacy to the EU. We wished to hear more about opening up new chapters, closing down some more chapters, lifting existing blockages... but sadly to admit that we have not.



Dear Friends;

As earlier said, this year the European Commission will publish 19th Progress Report on Turkey. 19 Reports... Can you believe it?

Then the question comes: How many new reports does the European Commission need in order to make Turkey a member of the EU?

We have made a calculation... so far 18 reports by the European Commission makes more than 2.000 pages!

This is 8 times longer than the Lisbon Treaty.

Dear COELA Members;

Coming to the end:

Turkey's importance in global matters is expanding and its leadership is valued; yet still is not a member of the EU.

Europe raises concerns about Turkey on the human rights situation, on migration crisis, on fundamental rights....

Europe asks concession from Turkey on foreign and domestic politics... Europe demands from Turkey to accept 10s and 1000s of pages of the acquis, with a vague mentioning of full membership.

This is not a way to treat an ally-nation my friends.

Unfortunately it paves the way for the rise of anti-West sentiments among the people who have been long your friends.

On that front, you, officials in Brussels working on Turkey have a critical role to play; as we do.

It is to bring closer Turkey to your countries; as well as to Europe.

To do so, you need to know the 50+ years history of Turkey's relation with Europe; as well as listen what Turkish people say!

I believe this meeting of ours will be a wonderful opportunity for you to better understand what Turkish people, and what Turkish business people expect from the EU.

No need to remind but: as DEİK, we are always with you and will be so happy to cooperate in case you need any information.

Closing, I would like to thank once again to Madame Ambassador;



And would like to welcome you all once again to this meeting on behalf of DEİK.

Thank you