

DEİK-TAİK-ATC 37th Annual Conference 15 April 2019, Washington DC

**Honorable Ministers,
Representatives of Institutions and Business Communities,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honor to welcome you all, on behalf of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey - DEİK - to the 37th Annual Conference, organized jointly by the Turkish American Business Council (TAİK) and our counterpart organization, the American-Turkish Council (ATC).

Today, we have the opportunity to exchange ideas, on the future relationship between the U.S. and Turkey and the economic benefits we both enjoy when we work together. As I stand here, I am reminded of a quote, from American captain of industry Henry Ford, which I believe, truly describes frame of this conference: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." I look forward to succeeding together, as we lay down a new road map for Turkish-American relations.

For many years, TAİK - our first business council, under the umbrella of DEİK together with 145 Business Councils acting world wide- has played a very important role, in shaping the Turkish-American economic partnership. As the voice of the Turkish business community, I look forward to seeing TAİK, along with our partners in the ATC, continue to work with our American counterparts, to secure a brighter economic future for us all.

While undeniably, the relationship between Turkey and the U.S. has been strained lately, both diplomatically and commercially, it is vital to remember that disagreements are not uncommon among close allies and the ties that bind us are so much stronger than any that may drive us apart. For decades, our nations have been close partners on shared security interests and in advancing mutually beneficial, shared economic growth.

With this year's conference theme, "Back to Business: Maintaining Partnerships in Difficult Times", we hope to overcome these temporary times of strife and strengthen bilateral relations. And, I must mention that, in spite of the tensions, our bilateral trade volume has risen to a level of 21 billion dollars, and I look forward to discussing with everyone here today, how we might reach the target of 75 billion dollars, set by President Erdogan and President Trump.

As the Turkish-American business community, we must ensure the continuation of investment projects, that strengthen 'digital conversion technologies' and highlight the competitiveness of Turkish and American companies within the global arena. In addition, we must work to minimize surtaxes and trade barriers, which are currently impeding our ability to do business together. Indeed, bolstering our economic partnership by enabling free, fair, reciprocal trade, offers major benefits to our economies and workers.

I truly believe that, through mutually beneficial cooperation, our achievements are limitless. We have already seen immense success, when we work together – there are multiple projects made possible by Turkish products and thousands of American jobs that have already been created by Turkish companies. Equally, Turkey is now a regional hub for countless American companies and an export base for the U.S. to send its goods to more than 80 countries worldwide. We should never underestimate the power of doing business and I, for one, remain excited by what our future partnership may yield.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Ministers, politicians, decision makers, from both the U.S. and Turkey, all the business leaders, members of the press and everyone, whose support has made this event possible.

Thank you.

Nail OLPAK
President of DEİK