

Second Session of the Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETCO) between Turkey and Belgium

20 January 2021, 16.00

Dear Participants,

Thank you, Özlem Hanım.

We heard that our Ministers had a fruitful meeting before us.

I wish a healthy day for all of us because we're still testing 2020 a year to remember as if not finished with the effects of pandemic. We faced real changes in our life, including business part.

We noticed increased demand for digital solutions.

Supply chain, sustainability and availability became more important than ever.

And as DEİK, we're working more than ever despite the pandemic for business diplomacy with our 146 Business Council all around the world.

Friendly relations between Turkey and Belgium has been running for years. But, having an economic focus, I believe our bilateral economic relations are not responding to our potential. The bilateral volume, as we all know, last year was about 7 billion \$ due to pandemic. Here it seems main part of the responsibility belongs to business community so I believe we

should work together more with support of our governments where they open our way for the points we need.

I'll touch on 4 points which I believe will help to improve our bilateral economic relations.

- Our economies mainly are non-competing each other. Therefore, I invite the Belgium companies to work together also in third countries, in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, where we can achieve positive results.
- Secondly, although our ministers also mentioned, from business side I want to repeat two points that we need effective support of the Belgian authorities and our Belgian business partners to modernize the EU-Turkey Customs Union and also the visa procedures. With the point of view of business world, we're in a position that, the goods said to be free, but the trucks which will carry them are restricted as well as the business people. We're also badly affected being in position that, we're not being represented at the deciding mechanism, but we have been affected by the decisions, such as FTA's.
- In the era of the European Green Deal, yes we're aware the importance of it but we also do not want to face with a new barrier related with Green Deal.
- Finally, Belgium has a large diaspora of Turkish origin renowned for its entrepreneurial character, which plays a bridging role between our countries. Visions Europe, Cricket & Co. are two models of exemplary success from the Turkish community in Belgium. Within DEIK, we have a branch dedicated to the business community from the

diaspora worldwide, called DTİK. We should build more on this potential, not only between our countries but also in other parts of the world.

Thank you all for your attention.

Nail OLPAK

President of DEİK