**“The Eurasian Vector in the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Turkey”**

**Address by H.E. Ambassador Hasan Göğüş**

**Graz University**

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**Vice-Rector Professor Scherrer,**

**Dean Professor Marko,**

**Distinguished Professors,**

**Esteemed members of the Academia**

**Dear Students,**

* It gives me distinct pleasure to have the opportunity to be here today, with the members of the Graz University.
* It is always a challenge to talk at a University conference organized by the subject matter experts.
* It is particularly true here, facing the learnt members of the Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies Center.

**Dear friends,**

* The global strategic landscape, in terms of politics, economy and security, is still in a state of flux.
* Unpredictability has become the defining term for today’s international environment. Transformational dynamics interplaying across the map present us with as many challenges as opportunities.
* Turkey is located at the center of a wide geography where the pace of change is particularly rapid.
* In fact, one can safely say that the flow of history is accelerated around Turkey.
* At such times of systemic volatility, nations display a natural instinct to seek stability and predictability through regional integration.
* This is also an important pillar of our multidimensional and proactive foreign policy.
* Turkish foreign policy aims to promote regional ownership and integration for finding lasting and mutually acceptable solutions to problems through dialogue and cooperation.
* In this context, our priority is to create a belt of peace, stability and prosperity in our region and beyond with a global vision.
* We pursue a constructive, consistent and principled foreign policy.
* In doing so, we seek to preserve a balance between national interests and universal values, such as democracy, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law.
* In the face of security threats from the multiple crises in the Middle East and in Ukraine, as well as a number of frozen conflicts, our ability to implement this principled, consistent and constructive foreign policy is our greatest asset.
* We embrace our capacity to impart to this troubled neighborhood, whatever positive influence possible on the side of lasting stability, prosperity and socio-economic development.
* However, we are always cognizant of the wealth and inherent richness of the people that live in this wide geography.
* We will continue to strongly support the legitimate demands for democracy and dignity.
* We call on all regional actors to respect international law and to refrain from taking unilateral actions that would cause further instability.
* We will not cease to advocate political dialogue, since only through regional ownership the much needed stability can be achieved and sustained.

**Dear participants,**

* In the past 10 years, legislative and administrative reforms undertaken in Turkey expanded the scope of fundamental rights and liberties, strengthened democratic institutions and aligned civil-military relations with those of consolidated democracies.
* Turkey also enacted structural reforms that allowed its economy to become stronger than ever before.
* In that period, we saw a three and a half fold increase in our national income from around three thousand to 11 thousand Dollars.
* Our foreign trade volume nearly quadrupled from 116 billion Dollars in 2003 to over 400 billion Dollars last year and we have doubled our share of global exports.
* With a GDP of 820 billion Dollars, Turkey’s economy is now the 17th largest in the world and the 6th in Europe.
* Drawing on our economic and political achievements of the last decade, we see that we have every reason to set higher goals for our foreign policy and be in all corners of the globe.
* We see opportunities to foster stronger bilateral and multilateral ties and to contribute positively to the resolution of problems in different parts of the world.
* This is the basis of our policy of reaching out to distant geographies like Southeast Asia, Latin America as well as to Africa.
* Indeed, in so far as the number of established foreign missions is concerned, with 224 missions abroad Turkey ranks 7th, and soon, we hope to have the fifth largest diplomatic representation in the World.
* In the last decade we opened 60 new missions abroad and in the last two years alone we added 14 diplomatic representations to our network.
* What is equally important though, if not more, is the increase in the number of foreign missions in Turkey from 160 in the year 2000 to 252 this year.
* This is a solid evidence of the interest Turkey generates in the world.
* Countries and international organizations find it necessary to be present in Turkey in order to follow not only the domestic developments but also to be able to take the pulse of the surrounding regions.
* Today, İstanbul ranks second only to New York, in terms of foreign representations it hosts.
* In all these endeavors, Eurasia also occupies a pivotal position for Turkey as a region of priority.
* For us, Eurasian landmass incorporates the Caucasus and the Central Asian Republics.
* In this picture, the South Caucasus is of particular importance to Turkey.
* Located at the south-western edge of a vast geography known as the Strategic Heart of the globe, the South Caucasus has served historically as a land bridge for the north-south and east-west trade and transport, linking Europe to the Middle East and Asia.
* The region is also home to rich energy resources which further consolidates its strategic importance at a global scale, particularly for the supply security of hydrocarbons.
* Its unique location at the crossroads of landlines of communication for goods and resources makes the creation and preservation of a safe, secure and stable environment in the South Caucasus a pressing priority.
* This is particularly true for Turkey given our deep rooted historical, cultural and ethnic ties with the nations of this region.
* In this respect, Turkey is fully committed to continue developing good-neighborly relations based on mutual respect with all its neighbors in the South Caucasus.
* The region is crucial not only for Turkey’s interests, but also for the interests of the EU and NATO as well.
* Cognizant of this fact, the main pillars of our policy toward the region are to:
  + Maintain regional stability and security

* + Explore means to find a just, viable and lasting solutions to the protracted conflicts through peaceful means
  + Support independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the South Caucasus Republics
  + Help sustain their efforts towards democratization, developing free market economies and pursuit of political reform including human rights
  + Promote regional and intra-regional cooperation
  + Establish and promote the parameters for bilateral and regional economic integration
  + Assist their integration with European and Euro-Atlantic structures and international organizations
  + Create the sense of regional ownership
* To these ends and with a view to enhancing regional ownership, in 2012 we established a trilateral mechanism between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia which aims to foster comprehensive cooperation in the South Caucasus.
* The trilateral summit meeting of Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan held in Tbilisi on the 6th of May this year elevated the cooperation mechanism to the level of Heads of State and Government which used to convene at the level of Foreign Ministers.
* Turkey established a similar trilateral cooperation mechanism with Azerbaijan and Iran, as well as with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.
* Turkey’s economic relations with the South Caucasus have also been improving steadily in line with our vision to create mutually beneficial and balanced interdependencies.
* Turkey’s total trade with the countries of the region is now over 6 billion Dollars.
* Our direct investments have exceeded 9 billion Dollars, mostly in energy and construction sectors, in the region.
* Azerbaijan, with which we enjoy excellent relations in all aspects, holds a special position.
* The depth and scope of our relations are described as “one nation, two states”.
* In the economic field for example, Azerbaijan alone attracted 8 billion Dollars which corresponds nearly to a third of Turkish investments globally in cumulative terms.
* Likewise, last year Azerbaijan’s direct investment to Turkey was 776 million Dollars, making it the 4th largest investor.
* Our bilateral trade volume stands at a respectable 4.7 billion Dollars which we aim to increase to 15 billion by the centennial of the Turkish Republic in 2023.
* Georgia is among our main partners in the region. We have exemplary relations and close cooperation on a wide range of areas from energy to trade, and from economy to education and culture.
* We are pleased to observe that economic relations between Turkey and Georgia are evolving towards integration, beyond the scheme of cooperation.
* In 2013, our trade turnover increased to 1.45 billion USD.
* Turkey is one of the biggest foreign direct investors in Georgia with a total investment of about 1 billion USD, mostly in construction sector.
* The total value of the projects undertaken by Turkish contractors in Georgia has now reached to 3 billion USD.
* The introduction of using only ID cards instead of passports for traveling between our countries, the joint use of Batumi Airport and “single window” model to be implemented at the customs among many other projects constitute concrete proof of the high level, our relations have reached and set an example for the entire region.
* Each year, 1.8 million Georgians visit Turkey and 1.6 million Turkish citizens visit Georgia, which also shows the robustness of the relationship between the two peoples.
* The crown jewels in our regional cooperation with Azerbaijan and Georgia however, are the mega-projects for the transportation of goods, people, oil and gas.
* Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Project are of strategic importance.
* Our cooperation in the field of energy is now further enhanced with the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which is going to contribute to the security of energy supply on both regional and international scales.
* Economic integration however, cannot be achieved in the absence of security.
* The region has the unenviable distinction for hosting the three out of the four frozen conflicts in the OSCE area.
* Encumbered by this burden, the Caucasus fails to take off fully.
* We believe that peaceful resolution of these conflicts will create a favorable environment for sustainable peace, stability and development in the region.
* The unresolved Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, for example, still prevents this region from realizing its true economic potential.
* There is an urgent need to find a just and peaceful solution to this issue on the basis of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.
* Turkey, continues to consider the OSCE Minsk Group as an appropriate platform for seeking a peaceful, just and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and actively participates in its efforts.
* We also believe in the merit of creative initiatives to overcome the current deadlock in the peace process.
* On the other hand, it is important for Armenia to recognize the benefits of taking the necessary steps for normalizing its relations with Azerbaijan, as well as with Turkey.
* As part of our broader vision for the region, we are determined to carry forward the normalization process with Armenia.
* However, the failure to find a just and lasting solution to the protracted conflict of the Nagorno-Karabakh continues to have a negative effect on the chances of achieving deep and broad normalization and cooperation across the region.
* We hope that the Armenian side would realize that by continuing their recalcitrant and uncooperative stance towards a just settlement and by continuing their unlawful occupation of Azerbaijan’s territory, they miss out on cooperation and its economic benefits.
* We would like to see Armenia showing the necessary foresight and political will to normalize its relations both with Turkey and Azerbaijan.
* Central Asia also requires a strategic approach with a long term vision and commitment.
* Turkey shares common ethnic, cultural, historical and linguistic ties with the region’s countries.
* We were the first country to recognize the independence of the Central Asian countries and have assisted them to consolidate their statehood and sovereignty.
* However, the region is not yet free from external influences and the preservation of independence still governs the policies of region’s countries.
* There is additional pressure on Central Asia due to precarious security situation.
* Afghanistan continues to lie at the epicenter of the strategic security equation and will likely to do so until the gains of the international coalition proves irreversible.
* On its part, Turkey will continue to support Afghan nation both on a bilateral basis and also within the context of the Resolute Support Mission.
* Turkey believes that a secure, democratic and market economy oriented Central Asia will better serve the interests of the region and the world.
* With this understanding, among other things, in the past two decades, Turkish schools in the region graduated over a 100 thousands students eager to connect with the world.
* The total value of contracts won by the Turkish construction companies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan reached 50 billion Dollars.
* When we take the Caucasus and Central Asia as whole, our trade volume with the region registered a 10 fold increase in the last decade and today stands at 12,6 billion Dollars.
* With the Russian Federation alone, our annual bilateral trade volume consistently exceeds 30 billion Dollar mark.
* If we add the Black Sea basin to this equation, together with the South East Europe, we are looking at an annual figure in total trade well beyond 60 billion Dollars.
* These figures attest to a high degree of economic interdependency and integration between Turkey and its surrounding basins, including Eurasia, which also entails a profound and varied political, social and cultural interaction with this geography.
* This is the state of play of Eurasian integration from our perspective.
* What we would also like to see however, is a Eurasia integrated with the world at large, not only in terms of economy, but also on the basis of universal values and shared ideals for human development, peace, stability and prosperity.

**Distinguished participants,**

* As Turkey opens up to new geographies beyond its immediate neighborhood and develops new venues of cooperation with nations and organizations across the globe, EU membership remains a priority as a strategic objective.
* The EU is our biggest trade partner. Perhaps more importantly, Turkey is the EU’s 6th biggest trade partner.
* Last year, our total trade volume with the EU was 155 billion Dollars. The EU’s share in our exports was 41.5 percent and in our imports 36.7 percent. The EU countries accounted for 71 percent of all direct foreign investment in Turkey.
* Our economic integration with the EU however, is only one side of the coin. Deeper than that, Turkey’s integration with the EU is based on democratic values, principles and institutions, on centuries long socio-economic, cultural and political interaction.
* We see the EU also as a civilization project and believe that the enlargement policy, which has contributed to peace, security, prosperity, democracy and the rule of law in and beyond Europe, should continue.
* We will work closely with the new leadership of the EU, as well as with the new EP.
* We want to see an inclusive Europe that is capable of projecting its power abroad.
* In this regard, we believe that Turkey has a unique role to play and bring in substantial contributions to the EU on many accounts, once it becomes a member.
* The recent developments in Europe and the Middle East demonstrated that we need to join forces more than ever.
* The dangers we face today are many and require well-coordinated collective action.
* In this respect, foreign and defense policy is a specific field of close dialogue and cooperation between Turkey and the EU.
* The EU without Turkey will be a lesser EU, unable to fulfill its true potential on the global stage.

* On our part, we will continue our efforts with determination to bring the accession negotiations to a successful end.
* With this, I would like to end my words and thank you once again for this excellent organization.