



Business

Tüzmen endorses term 'diaspora' to describe Turks abroad

At a Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) forum held in İstanbul yesterday titled "Turkish Entrepreneurs around the World," Foreign Trade Minister Kürşad Tüzmen addressed the audience and repeatedly used the word "diaspora" to describe Turks living abroad, praising their contributions to both Turkish trade and Turkey's weight abroad.



Participants in the Turkish Entrepreneurs around the World organization pose together.

Later, Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) President Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, following the trend set by Tüzmen, said: "I say to you, our objective is to become one of the most effective diasporas in the world. For many years, the words 'lobby' and 'diaspora' carried scary meanings for us. No need to be afraid. We have the accumulation of strength, energy and intent that we need."

Using the word "diaspora" is significant because it was likely the first time that a Turkish minister used the word to describe Turks living abroad. Analysts are all but sure to interpret these statements as a signal of increasing confidence in both Turkey's place in the world and the country's economic weight. In the past, the word was employed by Turkish ministers primarily to denote those expatriates around the

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world whose interests countered those of Turks. As further evidence of Turkey's increasing confidence on the global stage, Friday's speeches were full of references to Turkey's greatness.

In a later speech, Tüzmen drove this message home when he said: "The idea that Turkey will become a superpower in the new world order is often brought to the agenda of the international public. As a result, the eyes of the world are upon us. We have to continue to be successful, make our friends happy and make our enemies displeased."

Tüzmen and others repeatedly drew attention to the increasing size of the Turkish economy and the republic's ever-growing trade volume, which climbed from \$32 billion in 2002 to \$132 billion in 2008. Turkey has a total national income of \$700 billion. Reiterating the country's goal of becoming one of the top 10 global economies by 2023, when the republic celebrates its 100th birthday, he noted that Turkey's trade volume was forecast to reach \$500 billion by that time.

Quoting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, Tüzmen said: "Economic development is the backbone of the ideal of an independent, forever strong and prosperous Turkey. The way to reach more economic prosperity goes through being a 'global power'."

Muhtar Kent, CEO of The Coca Cola Company, addressed the audience, emphasizing many of the same points, suggesting the growing confidence of both the Turkish state and the Turkish diaspora and saying, "There are more than 1 million Turkish entrepreneurs abroad." "This means the existence of intellectual and economic power that have to be in connection with each other," he added.

Earlier in the week, the Turkish-German Education and Scientific Studies Foundation (TAVAK) released a report claiming that there were more than 131,500 Turkish entrepreneurs working in Europe alone and that their investment stock presently totals about 14.4 billion euros, accounting for over 48 billion euros in annual sales and employing more than 500,000 people.

"Firms and entrepreneurs are now having difficulties in growing business and managing their prestige. It was never as difficult as it is today to manage global brands. Turkey has itself now become a brand," Kent added.

He emphasized that even though Turkey was in a better position than many countries in the ongoing economic crisis, the country was not exempt from the crisis. During the past 12 months, Kent said, \$52 trillion



A roof for Turkish businessmen working abroad

A meeting of the World Turkish Entrepreneurs Assembly, organized by the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) and the Foreign Trade Undersecretariat (DTM), opened on Friday at the Lütfi Kırdar Convention and Exhibition Center in İstanbul with the participation of President Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and all economy-related government ministers.

The meeting will continue through today. The event is aimed at bringing together Turkish businessmen and entrepreneurs living abroad under the scope of a common, effective and institutionalized structure.

Nearly 2,000 Turkish entrepreneurs, executives from international companies and high-level bureaucrats will have a platform to create and utilize business opportunities.

The meeting began with opening remarks from Muhtar Kent, CEO and president of the Coca-Cola Company. TOBB Chairman Rifat Hisarcıkhoğlu and Foreign Trade Minister Kürşad Tüzmen delivered speeches prior to Prime Minister Erdoğan taking the podium.

In the afternoon session yesterday there was an interactive panel discussion with the participation of Deputy Prime Minister Hayati Yazıcı, Minister for Economic Affairs Nazım Ekren, Foreign Trade Minister Tüzmen, Economy Minister Mehmet Şimşek, State Minister Said Yazıcıoğlu, Chief EU Negotiator Egemen Bağış, Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, Finance Minister Kemal Unakıtan, Minister of Labor and Social Security Faruk Çelik, Minister of Industry and Commerce Zafer Çağlayan and Minister of Culture and Tourism Ertuğrul Günay.

The second day will start with bilateral business talks between participating businessmen. Later in the day, the general assembly elections for the organization will be held.

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in assets (\$38 trillion of which was equity capital) disappeared. He explained that this was equal to the gross world product for a year, and this money just vanished from the wallets of the middle class. Noting that now is not the time to panic, he said it was time to decide what to do with the new opportunities that emerge from the crisis.

DEİK strategy and communications advisor Samet Inanir said this was the first time that members of the Turkish international corporate world had spoken at such a prominent DEİK event, underlining growing collaboration between the many economic groups within Turkey.

"Turkey is not a country that people can easily ignore. What makes this place indispensable is its human quality, economic weight and, of course, the entrepreneurial power of our businesspeople."

11 April 2009, Saturday
DAVID NEYLAN İSTANBUL

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