

Monday, June 15, 2009

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June 12th Press Review

Published: 6/12/2009

GUL ASSIGNS TURKISH MEMBER TO NATO`S WISE MEN GROUP

President Abdullah Gul yesterday appointed Turkey`s former Permanent Representative to the NATO Ümit Pamir to the NATO`s wise men group. During his farewell visits in Ankara in early this week, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, set to hand over his post to former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Aug. 1, called on Turkey to take on active role in the 12-member wise man group as part of the new strategy plan of the alliance. Turkey responded positively to the outgoing head of the security alliance, of which it has been a member since 1950 and assumed important duties in the nearly sixty-year course of its membership. The first meeting of the group is expected to be held on July 7 in Brussels. The group members will not represent their countries. /Hurriyet/

ERDOGAN: "AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST, TURKEY SHOULD HAVE STRONG TIES WITH BOTH THE EU AND ARAB WORLD"

In a message to the Fourth Turkish-Arab Economy Forum, which started yesterday in Istanbul in a bid to boost financial cooperation and trade ties between Turkey and member states of the Arab League, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stressed that Turkey`s economic and political integration with the European Union won`t mean weakened relations with Arab states. "On the contrary, our commercial relations with Arab nations, with whom we share a common historical heritage, will gain more strength as a consequence of our bridging role between Europe and the Middle East," he said. Speaking at the opening of the forum, Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said Turkey`s exports to Arab countries rose six-fold over the last six years, from \$11 billion in 2002 to \$62 billion in 2008. The rate of Arab investments in Turkey saw a similar growth trend in recent years, Simsek said, giving a current figure of \$30 billion. Events bringing Arab and Turkish businesspeople together like the forum will do much to boost these figures, he added. Also speaking at the meeting, Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges (TOBB) head Rifat Hisarciklioglu called the Arab League one of Turkey`s key economic partners. Stressing the great economic potential of Arab countries, he said Turkey should work to get more Arab investments. Pointing to how trade between Turkey and Arab countries rose from \$6.5 billion in 2000 to \$37 billion last year, Hisarciklioglu also called for cooperation in areas such as a high-speed train network between Turkey and the Arab world, and the construction sector. /Turkiye /

FOURTH TURKISH-ARAB ECONOMY FORUM BEGINS

Speaking at the opening of the Fourth Turkish-Arab Economy Forum, organized in Istanbul by Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group (AIWA) in cooperation with Turkey`s Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) and the Arab League with an eye towards boosting cooperation between Turkey and Arab countries and stability in the region, Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for the Economy Ali Babacan yesterday called for improved bilateral relations and dialogue mechanisms between Turkey and the Arab League. Stating that Turkey and league members share overlapping agendas on such important issues as Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, Lebanon and the fight against terrorism, Babacan said improving dialogue mechanisms between Turkey and the Arab world is more important than ever in view of growing bilateral ties and the situation in the region. Praising the momentum of Turkish-Arab relations in recent years, Babacan also talked about the effects of the global economic crisis on developing countries. The crisis again showed developing countries how important it is to diversify their export markets and to improve bilateral trade and financial ties between each other, Babacan said, adding that Turkey supports not only global economic cooperation but also regional collaboration. He also voiced hope that negotiations between Turkey and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) will soon end in a free trade agreement. On Turkey`s efforts to cushion the impact of the crisis, he said the Turkish economy, and especially the banking industry, has managed to protect its

strong, healthy structure in the face of the crisis, thanks to timely measures and structural reforms, adding that the economy is performing well despite the crisis. Pointing to how Turkey`s rate of total debt stock over gross domestic product (GDP) is still one of the lowest among the world economies, Babacan asserted that this advantage will make Turkey one of the first countries to emerge from the global crisis with the least national debt. Along with 800 high-level business figures from Arab countries, also attending the opening were Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Minister Mehdi Eker, State Minister and chief negotiator for EU talks Egemen Bagis, Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, and Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges (TOBB) head Rifat Hisarcikloglu and many Turkish businesspeople. /Turkiye/

TRNC PREMIER EROGLU VISITS TURKEY

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday received Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Prime Minister Dervis Eroglu. After the meeting, Erdogan told a joint press conference that the criteria for a just and lasting solution on Cyprus are clear, saying, "No one should seek a solution anywhere but within the UN." He added, "Surely the agreements on guarantees and alliance will continue after a solution is reached. Turkey`s active and actual guarantee will continue." /Star/

TRAVEL AGE WEST MAGAZINE AWARD GOES TO TURKEY

US magazine Travel Age West magazine has given Turkey its annual Travel Age West Wave (Western Agents` Vote of Excellence) award. Turkey also got the Best Vacation Value Europe award. Visiting Turkey`s Culture and Promotion Attache Hasan Zongur in New York, the magazine`s editor in chief Kenneth Shapiro told him of the honors. Shapiro said Turkey`s cultural richness and the diversity and quality of its service sector make it an exceptional European destination. /Star/

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