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Istanbul braces for global business meet

ISTANBUL - Turkey's undersecretary for foreign trade and the Foreign Economic Relations Board, or DEİK, will organize the first World Turkish Entrepreneurs Assembly in Istanbul on April 10 and 11. The aim of the convention is to enable entrepreneurs of Turkish origin to network and exchange ideas on various issues.

The assembly will consist of discussions on regional issues as well as the global crisis and will be held at Istanbul's Lütfi Kırdar Congress and Exhibition Center. Prime Minister Recep [Tayyip Erdoğan](#) and State Minister Kürşad Tüzmen are expected to attend the summit.



The organizers have received applications from Turkish origin-businessmen from 63 countries, but they expect the number to reach 80 countries and some 2,000 participants.

Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, president of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, or TOBB, underlined the importance of the assembly during a news conference yesterday. "Millions of Turks who have moved abroad and have gathered economic strength there play an important role in turning Turkey into a global power," he said.

"In the past decade, the growing economic powers of India, China and Israel have all taken coordinated efforts to gather their diasporas. We too need to form and develop a sense of 'us-ness.'"

Abdullah Köten, the undersecretary of foreign trade, said entrepreneurs of Turkish origin have an important role in boosting Turkey's economy. Some 5 million Turkish citizens currently live abroad. It is also estimated that some 130,000 Turks currently study abroad. "These figures are the mirror of today and the pointers for the future," Köten said.

Hisarcıklıoğlu said the meeting of Turkish entrepreneurs residing abroad is long overdue. "We have earlier lost many chances to organize such an assembly. But if a country wants to become wealthier, the only way for it to reach this is to support its own entrepreneurs. This is the only way ahead," he said.

Muhtar Kent, the chief executive of Coca-Cola, said one may come across entrepreneurs of Turkish origin in most parts of the world. Kent is also the president of advisory board of World Turkish Business Council.

"This assembly will give Turkey two important things: It will enable managers, entrepreneurs and academics to cooperate more effectively. Crisis times are the times for cooperation. The assembly will also give a coordinated voice and create synergy between the millions of Turkish businesspeople who live and work abroad," Kent said.



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