

**Opening remarks by Ms. Cansen Başaran-Symes, TÜSİAD President,
TÜSİAD-Brookings Institution Conference
“Turkey, its neighborhood and the international order”
Washington DC, 14 April 2016**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to our conference with the Brookings Institution. The Brookings-TUSIAD program was launched in 2007 and we have already seen the positive impact it has had on perceptions and the US-Turkey relationship. Since 2013, we have enlarged the scope of the program to constitute the US-Turkey Forum. The Brookings Turkey Project under the coordination of Prof. Kemal Kirişci is very productive with conferences, seminars, analysis and publications that have stimulated debates on topics of relevance to US-Turkish and transatlantic relations.

The independent and bipartisan thinking and debate at Brookings are very crucial for the success of the program. I extend my thanks to all of our colleagues in Brookings for their intellectual and organizational contributions.

The content of the Turkey program reflects the context within which the political, economic and social agenda of Turkey and the transatlantic community is set. Our next event will be held in Istanbul just before the US presidential elections to discuss the impact of the elections on US politics in general and on Turkish-American relations in particular.

Today, we will discuss Turkey and the future of the international order.

Following the global economic crisis, the Western world had to confront challenges that might destabilize the foundations of its liberal democratic order. Economic inequalities undermined the social cohesion of Western societies, gave rise to populism, radicalism and political polarization.

Turkey, too, is exposed to these challenges in an aggravated manner due to its unresolved historical political conflicts. We are concerned with the weakening of our common values. Thus, the strengthening of Turkey’s relations with its partners and allies is more crucial than ever.

Our message has consistently been the same and can be summarized in one sentence: “Turkey’s future is inseparable from transatlantic values”.

Turkey’s strategic orientation has two main pillars: One is its European Union accession process. The other one is its membership in NATO and its strategic relationship with the US.

The main pillar for Turkey’s continued transformation is the EU perspective. Thus, Turkey needs to accelerate the political and technical reform processes in EU negotiations and recalibrate Turkish foreign policy towards the transatlantic community and its values. This perspective should continue on the basis of accession, not under an indefinite framework of cooperation or economic partnership.

Second, Turkey's transatlantic position should not be reduced to just a strategic-military partnership within NATO. We believe that the merits of the U.S. -Turkey relationship must rest on shared values, not only on common interests.

These common values are based on the principles of liberal, pluralistic democracy based on the principles of rule of law and secularism. The separation of powers, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, a strong civil society, and all fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, a free press, the right to assemble and free enterprise are the different components of these political values.

These European and transatlantic dimensions are the natural results of Turkey's strategic choice of modernization since the Ottoman era. Despite some occasional problems, Turkey managed to stay in the transatlantic system not only as a strategic ally but also with its democratic aspirations. We hope that this line of long-term partnership is powerful enough to resist any deviation or derailment. And by all means, business in Turkey and TÜSiAD will continue to be staunch supporters of this stance...

Each democratic country has its responsibility for the success of the international order based on the liberal democratic principles.

We believe that the course of American policy will be in accordance with these principles following the election.

I am sure that today's discussions will contribute much to our understanding of a common future based on the liberal-democratic principles of the transatlantic community.

Thank you for being here and for your participation in our conference.