

## **Dear participants of Black Sea Economic Cooperation,**

I am pleased to see you all again in Turkey where continents and civilizations meet at a time of 17th founding anniversary.

I greet all participants with honor.

Black Sea Economic Cooperation gathers especially those leading countries of energy production and consumption. Economic development levels of BSEC member countries are varied. Pre-1989 countries with centrally planned economies are nowadays swiftly making all the efforts to adapt to the conditions of market economics.

The total GDP of the countries in the region reach to some \$3,555 billion. It can be seen that while Russian Federation ranks the first, it is followed by Turkey as the second and Greece as third. In the case of trade volumes, likewise Russian Federation, Turkey and Greece are ranked in a row.

Despite the BSEC region looks to have the basis for a sole economic integration, it is a reality that GDP and trade volumes of these countries are relatively low. The major objectives of this cooperation it to lift these relatively low figures up.

Over the past 17 years since the founding of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania and Ukraine have played an active and efficient roles.

Turkey, being an efficient member within this group, has also important potentials to offer in the field of Freight Forwarding and Logistics.

\* With its youngest fleet in Europe, fastest growing airline transport fleet and infrastructure in the world

\* With its most developed and dynamic featured road transportation backed by a fleet of around 45.000 TIR trucks

\* With coastlines all around three sides and located in between Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Seas, a maritime fleet and shipbuilding industry to be considered as the valuable assets of its maritime aspects.

\* Its rigorous efforts to to upgrade its infrastructure to posses all it can in intermodal-combined transportation and with projects like Marmaray to link up Europe and Asia by rail transportation, Turkey by exploiting all is rich potentials

amongst all transport modes is moving swiftly ahead to revive the historical Silk Route from North to South and East to West.

In the aftermath of the economic crisis which started in the United States toward last months of 2008 and swept all the world, Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East regions gained importance. Turkey with its location in between Europe and the regions mentioned above plays a key link role.

The so called " Iron Silk Route" ,the rail project between Kars – Tbilisi and Baku, when completed is expected to handle the transportation of 1.5 million passengers and 3 million tonnes of freight each year.

This railway link is well ahead of its project phase moving swiftly closer toward the planned targets which will constitute the backbone of Turkey's freight transportation vis a vis Trans Causcasus and former Soviet Republics in general. This will enable to link up Central Asia to the Mediterranean by " Rail-Road Multimodal Transportation" in transit transportation to Central Asia.

In bringing solutions to various problems faced by BSEC countries, I suppose it is worthwhile to focus on eliminating obstacles on free trade and easing of border crossings in general.

I think, opening up the border with Armenia will create the basis for enhanced trade ties, good neighbourly relations and will equally benefit Armenia itself. If these considerations are shared by all, I beleive we will get away with all issues of conflict between the two countries.

I beleive that we will be able to find a solution to the problems associated with TIR transit licence quotas that we have been experiencing over the past couple of months with our close neighbour Greece and Bulgaria which is also one of the important founding members of these group of countries. I hope they will able to bring a solution to the problems that Turkish TIR truckers face during unloading in Greece and Bulgaria.

When we look at Turkey and Ukraine which both have coasts on Black Sea, we see some bottlenecks associated with trade and freight transportation. If the major principles of our objectives are to develop trade and services, we have to look to find ways of working out mutual solutions. For instance, problems experienced at Ukranian customs like diversities in customs tariff codes, imposing of arbitrary panalties have to be dealt with. The SMGS sytem which Ukrania

practices in rail transport have to also be put into effect in Turkey by a bilateral agreement between the two countries.

Finally, we, the countries making up Black Sea Economic Cooperation, have to closely watch the recent economic and social developments taking place in the world and to make best of the opportunities offered in global scale. Close cooperation between BSEC countries is of utmost importance.

UTIKAD an NGO of the Freight Forwarding and Logistics industry in Turkey which I represent, attaches prime importance on international gathering events where you also participate. These organizations are not confined to addressing presentations and participations alone but these are also organized in Turkey itself. Over the past couple of years Turkey hosted FIATA World Congress and Balkans Congress. South East Europe Freight Forwarder Operators Conference to be held in May 2011 will be hosted in Istanbul.

Amongst the recent missions of UTIKAD is; being the founding member of "ECOLPAF" a federation of associate members in freight forwarding and logistics of Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Tadjikistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizistan and Turkmenistan. The 2nd preparatory meeting of this federation will be held on 24-25 December 2009 in Istanbul.

I thank you for listening with patience and express my gratitudes to you all