

08.12.2016

The Honourable Ambassadors, Dear Faculty Members and Students,

As the Rector, it is my great pleasure to welcome all of you on behalf of Cukurova University.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Head of EU delegation for the organization of this high level visit to our University.

Dear Ambassadors and participants,

Turkey-EU relations officially started with the signing of the Agreement on 12 September 1963. Since then, European Union has always been an important aspect of Turkish foreign policy.

In the past, safety, financial, political, and economic factors had played a crucial role in Turkey's interest in having a closer relationship with the EU. Currently, Turkey attaches particular importance to close relations with the EU with the objective of joining the EU as an equal full member.

The EU Council decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005. Since then however, only 16 chapters, such as Free Movement of Capital, Food Safety, Taxation, and Science and Research have been opened to negotiations. Therefore, I need to say that the EU-Turkey relations have not yet reached the desired level for both Turkey and the EU.

As you know we are living in a globalized world.

Turkey's accession to the EU will increase the EU's role in the international and regional stages through Turkey's geostrategic location, its economic potential, and its educated and dynamic population. In 2015 for example, Turkey was ranked as the fifth largest trade partner of the European Union. A closer cooperation between Turkey and the EU is also seen in Science and Research area.

Turkey has actively participated in the Bologna Process, which defines the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, since 2004, Erasmus and EU Research Project Programmes have made significant contributions to Turkish and European students and academics, providing opportunities for both sides to establish dialogue and to promote cultural exchanges.

Dear Ambassadors and participants,

As you know on 15 July 2016, a coup was attempted against democratically elected state institutions, such as Turkish Grand Assembly and Presidential Office. During the failed coup attempt, over 250 innocent civilians were killed and 2100 were injured. I need to say that unfortunately the EU response to the coup attempt has not been sufficient enough to support the elected and legitimate government of Turkish Republic. In other words, we expected a more solid and much stronger EU reaction against coup attempt in Turkey.

Let me conclude my welcoming speech by saying that Turkey and the European Union share common values, norms and principle of democracy.

Therefore, the European Union needs Turkey and Turkey needs Europe for a number of political, security, economic and social reasons.

Thank You.

Prof.Dr. Mustafa KİBAR
Rector of Cukurova University