

## **Opening Address of TİKA Vice President Dr. Mustafa Şahin**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address such a distinguished audience on this occasion. On behalf of Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities and the OECD Development Centre, for hosting this important event.

As you will also agree with me, the Black Sea is an important region, strategically located at the meeting point of two major continents. It is situated on important transportation and trade routes and energy corridors. Due to its enormous economic potential and natural resources, the interest of the international community towards this region is growing. Needless to say, political, economic, historical, social and cultural ties have always been at the forefront of Turkey's close relations with the countries of the region.

TIKA, (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency), was established in 1992 for the purpose of helping newly independent countries in Central Asia, Caucasus, Black Sea and the Balkans. Therefore, Turkey became the first country that went in to action to give technical assistance to Eurasian countries.

With our staff of 275 people, our network of 22 field offices in 20 countries across Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East, our main aim is to provide economic, commercial, technical, social, cultural and educational cooperation to partner countries via projects aimed at assisting in their drive to attain Millennium development goals.

While we mostly use our own means to implement technical assistance, we often work in close cooperation with other organizations including bilateral donors, multilateral and non-governmental organizations.

Although Turkey's experience in development assistance is not very old, its efforts and success in this field is generally well-recognized. Turkey's official development assistance in 2006 amounted to 714 million US Dollars and together with other flows; Turkey disbursed 1, 7 billion USD.

As we closely observe recently, besides the Black Sea region, Caucasus and Central Asia also come to occupy a much higher place on the political and economic agenda in our region and indeed amongst our major partners in the world. In that sense, we are also pleased that OECD has taken a keen interest in focusing to these regions that merit more attention from the international community. Since the OECD acts as important workshop for the global economy where ideas turn into policies, it was timely for the Organization to focus on the Black Sea, Caucasus and Central Asian countries.

In this regard, Turkey is one of the financial sponsors of the BSECAO Project through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency. Indeed, in July 2006 a conference entitled "*Investment and Development in the Central Asia and Black Sea Regions*" was hosted by Turkey at the OECD Istanbul Headquarters in association with the

OECD and the OSCE, where it was decided to initiate the two projects entitled “BSECAO” and the “Investment Reform Process” which was to include 5 Central Asian countries, plus Afghanistan and Mongolia, along with all BSEC member states.

Following that conference in Istanbul the BSECAO project was launched in 2007 with the funding from Turkey, Greece and Romania. As Turkey, we are pleased to be a part of this project. It is a comprehensive effort to examine the regions that I have mentioned. It aims at systematically monitoring and assessing economic performance in the Black Sea and Central Asian regions. As a result, it will provide data and analysis of macroeconomic and structural policies and assess the economic performance of the countries in the two regions.

The BSECAO project is the first example of significant cooperation between the BSEC and the OECD. We would highly appreciate further cooperation between the OECD and the BSEC and its related bodies in the future.

After experiencing great transformation with transition to market economy in the past 16 years, I believe that it is time to help Black Sea and Central Asian countries to build up their economic strength. Therefore, Black Sea and Central Asia Economic Outlook is a timely project in the sense that it helps the region to map out its economic potentials, thus attract quick FDI flows.

Here, I would like to congratulate the OECD Development Centre for turning out this report, with significant inputs from the government institutions of three donor countries, namely, Romania, Turkey and Greece

Generally speaking, this is an economic report of high quality by taking two OECD member countries Turkey and Greece as benchmarks. The lay-out of the report is also worth mentioning. In its first part, it starts with analyzing recent economic development in the regions concerned, and then proceeds to review its integration with the world economy; in the second part of the report however, policy challenges in the global environment are the main theme.

*Black Sea and Central Asia: Work and Well Being* is a product of joint efforts which involved many actors, ranging from government institutions to scholars as well as private sectors, therefore, it is a book worth a good reading, thus to have a better understanding of the economic development of the Black Sea and Central Asian countries.

In closing, I would like to thank to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities and the OECD for hosting this event and wish them every success and I hope we will have fruitful discussions in the following panels.

Thank you.