



CSIS -TOBB U.S. -TURKISH CONTACT GROUP

Remarks By CSIS President and CEO Dr. John J. Hamre

It is an honor to greet our Turkish friends here today. CSIS is honored to partner with TOBB to promote a more sophisticated understanding of this critical alliance. We last met nearly two years ago, and you came just at a time when Washington was recovering from a hurricane that swept through Washington. Everything was knocked out at that time, and I know it also caused the cancellation of many of your meetings. But it was a blessing in disguise because it gave us at CSIS more time to meet with to understand your priorities at this critical time in the life of Turkey.

Let me say that we are approaching a critical date when EU-Turkey accession talks are scheduled to begin. We Americans—and especially those of us at CSIS—are not ambivalent about these talks. We are deeply interested in Turkey's success in these discussions. I have long argued that Turkey is America's most under-appreciated ally. We have asked you to undertake very difficult political assignments through the years and Turkey has always been on the front lines when America needed help. This alone merits our support of your request.

But there is much more at stake with these negotiations. We Americans, and all of Europe, have a critical stake in Turkey's success. Turkey can and must demonstrate to the world that a largely Muslim society can also be a successful modern society. This is Turkey's challenge, but it is in our national interest to play a constructive role.

In this regard, I congratulate TOBB and Chairman Hisarciklioglu for outlining the constructive role it can play in bringing together the business forces in Gaza with both Israeli and Palestinian businessmen. This is very constructive and exciting work. The Israeli decision to depart Gaza leaves a region that desperately needs economic development. You see the enormous opportunity these developments present, and have moved into an intellectual void with serious and constructive ideas. This is precisely what the world needs right now, and I congratulate you for your initiative.

Again, let me thank you for taking the time to be with us. The Turkey-American Contact Group is an excellent vehicle for promoting the constructive agenda that can and should unite our two countries. I am proud that you have given CSIS a chance to be your partner.

September 12, 2005