

**Joint Declaration of the Fourth Meeting of the Ankara Forum
Tel Aviv, 15 January 2007**

1. Ankara Forum for Economic Cooperation between Palestine, Israel and Turkey has held its fourth meeting in Tel Aviv in January 15, 2007.
2. Forum participants were private sector representatives from the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, the Manufactures Association of Israel and the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.
3. The participants expressed their regret for those private sector representatives from Gaza, who unfortunately could not attend the meeting.
4. The Forum members expressed their happiness to convene again after September 2005. Forum's meeting after a long period of intermission due to adverse political and military developments has to be considered as a manifestation of the strong will of the business communities towards a peaceful settlement.
5. The Forum members stressed the importance of private sector dialogue in the context of limited and ineffective communication channels between Israel and Palestine.
6. In order to revitalize the peace process, the members recognized the importance of creating positive expectations for the future and containing the sense of despair that is growing in both societies.
7. Members expressed the importance of the Project on the Revitalization of the Palestinian Industrial Free Zone (formerly known as the Erez Industrial Estate) that can serve as an effective third party involvement device to facilitate the contribution of the Turkish private sector to the peace process.
8. Members identified the need for institutionalizing the Ankara Forum as well as the need to focus on a number of concrete projects, initiatives and programs.
9. The three delegations agreed on the following principles and issues:
 - a. Open dialogue is the key to a solution for removing the obstacles to private sector development.
 - b. Ankara Forum contributed to confidence building as a dialogue and delivery mechanism. It had also created the political support from all three parties as culminated in the signing of bilateral MOU's between Turkey-Israel and Turkey-Palestine in January 2006.

- c. The project for the revitalization of the Palestinian Industrial Free Zone, which has so far been the flagship project of the Forum activity, is considered as complementary to multilateral border crossing discussions of today.
 - d. The project is still considered as part of the efforts to deliver a solution to the issues of security and predictable flow of goods and people. The project is now coming to the stage of implementation in early 2007. In this regard, it will be useful to open a coordination office for TOBB-BIS as soon as possible.
 - e. The project will be realized with the signing of two documents; namely a concession agreement between TOBB-BIS and the Palestinian Authority and a "Security and Trade Protocol" between Turkey and Israel. Ankara Forum will provide support in due course.
 - f. In the future, Ankara Forum should concentrate its activities and focus on a number of concrete projects that are private sector driven and carry the potential to contribute to the peace process in the region.
 - g. Ankara Forum should focus on projects that would be of complementary nature to the PIFZ Project, including those on SME development, skills training, trade facilitation etc. On these key issues, background and pre-feasibility studies should be conducted. For those that are deemed as potentially feasible, comprehensive project documents should be prepared immediately and projects should be realized as soon as possible.
 - h. Establishment of a permanent secretariat for the Ankara Forum will significantly contribute to reaching the above mentioned objectives and enhance the effectiveness of the Forum.
10. The next meeting of the Ankara Forum will be held in the soonest possible time, preferably in the first quarter of 2007 in Ankara.