

**Joint Declaration of the Sixth Meeting of the Ankara Forum
East Jerusalem, 4 September 2007**

1. Ankara Forum for Economic Cooperation between Palestine, Turkey and Israel has held its sixth meeting in East Jerusalem in September 4, 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 Forum members have expressed their content with the progress and effectiveness of the Forum activities to date and agreed that Forum has entered into a new process which brings new opportunities to sustain private sector dialogue and successfully implement private sector development projects.
4. **Erez Project.** The Forum members have stressed the importance of the TOBB-BIS Industrial Parks Management Company's project on the revitalization of the Erez Industrial Estate in Gaza, and declared their commitment to continue this first project of Ankara Forum.
 - a. The Forum members have reviewed the feasibility assessment of the Erez Industrial Estate Project and expressed their content with the progress in this project, that included completion of the registration process of TOBB-BIS in Ramallah as August 2007, and the draft concession agreement which will be sent to PIEFZA for consideration, upon filing an application for establishing operations as an industrial estate/free zone developer/operator in Palestine.
5. **A new project in West Bank.** The Forum members have decided that TOBB-BIS shall consider developing and managing another industrial estate project in the West Bank, in parallel to the efforts for the Erez Project. Forum members have agreed that such a new project will be in line with the Forum's objective of diversifying its activities to the entirety of Palestinian Authority controlled areas, as well as the desire of the Forum to contribute to the tackling of the unemployment problem in the West Bank. In this regard, the Forum members have reiterated their view that job creation contributes to security, stability and the peace process.
 - a. Forum members have agreed that site selection for the new industrial estate project shall be undertaken by the Palestinian Authority, similar to the process that was followed in the Erez Project, in which the PA had offered TOBB-BIS an industrial land, free of any ownership disputes and financial obligations.

- b. During the discussions, the Forum members have suggested that there are two viable candidate sites for an industrial estate project in West Bank, which were included in former PIEFZA Plans: an area near the Tarqumia Crossing near Hebron city, and another one near the Jalameh Crossing near the city of Jenin.
 - c. With a view to speed up the process of site selection and contribute to coordination between the relevant Israeli and Palestinian authorities, the Forum has decided to establish a committee of three including Mr. Guven Sak, Mr. Jamal Jawabreh and Mr. Dan Catarivas. The committee will be in charge of preparing a report that compares the viability of possible sites for the new industrial estate project. This report will be an input for the pre-feasibility assessment of the new project and will be completed in six weeks. This committee will also have the mandate to prepare an action plan, and coordinate with other agencies. The action plan will be reviewed in the next Ankara Forum meeting. The Committee will liaise with the Quartet team in planning the activities and forming the action plan.
6. **Ankara Forum Office and Staff.** The Forum members have agreed that Ankara Forum needs to increase its visibility and presence in the region as the most functional permanent dialogue mechanism across private sectors. In this regard, the Forum members identified the need to institutionalize the Ankara Forum through establishing an office and appointing a permanent staff to coordinate the efforts, activities and projects.
- a. The forum members have discussed the possible locations for the Ankara Forum office and decided that East Jerusalem will be the most suitable location.
 - b. The Forum members expressed their content with the steps taken by TOBB-BIS in starting an office and appointing a coordinator in the region, and agreed that it would be fruitful for the Ankara Forum office and TOBB-BIS office to be in close coordination and cooperation.
 - c. Forum members agreed that it would be useful to regularly update and improve the Ankara Forum website in order to effectively facilitate communication between the Ankara Forum members, business communities and the general public in three countries.
7. **Certification of Political Support in the New Context:** The Forum members have agreed that the political will to support the continuation of the Ankara Forum activities, especially the new industrial project in the West Bank, needs to be certified on a written agreement. This agreement could take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and be signed by foreign ministries of the three countries and endorsed by the three heads of State. It was agreed that such a ceremony to take place in Turkey could also strengthen both political support and public opinion about the peace process.

8. **Diversification & Action Plan.** The Forum members have reiterated the immediate need to diversify the activities of the Ankara Forum toward areas that are directly linked to private sector development. In order to take immediate action, Forum members have agreed that there is the need to prepare a detailed action plan in coordination with the other related local and international organizations.
 - a. The potential areas that have been identified by the Forum members includes: border crossing modernization and management, SME development, vocational training, capacity building programs for the chambers on PSD programs design, tourism-related projects and youth-related programs.
 - b. Ankara Forum members have all agreed that the effective functioning of border crossings is a key to the development of the Palestinian economy. The severe situation regarding private sector activity in Gaza lately attests to that. Palestinian private sector can take a role in the privatization of border crossings and TOBB can contribute to capacity building at the Palestinian chambers to modernize and manage border crossings
9. At a time when the international donor community is aiming to consolidate its efforts, the Forum members stressed the need for a concerted effort to coordinate the private sector development related activities, and expressed their content for the involvement of the Quartet.
10. The Forum members thanked to the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for hosting the 6th Forum meeting at the Saint George Hotel in East Jerusalem and for their hospitality.