

**Address by Ömer Cihad Vardan - Chairman of DEİK
at the 36th Annual Conference on U.S.-Turkey Relations
May 22, 2017 – Washington DC**

Honorable Ambassadors;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey - DEİK, I am delighted to welcome you all to the 36th Annual Conference on U.S.-Turkey relations.

And, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to our Business Council - TAİK and ATC in bringing all of us here today.

Distinguished Guests;

As we all know, this year marks the 36th Annual Conference on U.S.-Turkey relations.

And the timing of the event could not have been better: just a few days after our leaders met in the White House declaring the kickoff a ‘**new era in U.S.-Turkey relations**’.

Enhanced cooperation on **defense, energy, security** and **bilateral trade** is the determinant of this new period.

And today, business communities from both sides are gathered to build the roadmap for the ‘new era’ in line with the vision set by our leaders.

Therefore this year’s Conference holds a special place for DEİK as well as for our nations.

I sincerely believe, the Conference will provide more opportunities than ever **to learn, network, and celebrate the important role of bilateral economic cooperation** in advancing U.S. - Turkey relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The theme of this year’s event is “**Together towards Tomorrow**” as our intent is to further develop business with our American friends **to maximize opportunities and exploit mutual benefits**.

Therefore, this year’s theme is very much based on how we would like to see **tomorrow... our shared future**.

Hopefully, this Conference will offer **two interesting days** for us to discuss and exchange ideas on how we can shape the future of Turkish-American relations.

We have a great opportunity ahead since this year's event has a large spectrum of topics comprising of many different subjects such as **defense, trade, finance, cybersecurity, environmental opportunities, energy, and super batteries.**

Therefore, I believe that the topics we will cover during this Conference will not only improve outstanding collaboration, but also will offer new fields of cooperation.

Dear Friends;

We all know that our nations have gone through major **challenges** last year.

Presidential elections in the U.S.; coup attempt and the Referendum in Turkey dominated our agendas.

But now; it's time to work!

It's time to hold business.

It's time to focus on our economic relations and stick to the vision anticipated by our leaders.

Why? Because the current commercial figures do not reflect the real potential between our economies – unfortunately.

Then the question is the following:

How business relations could be set and be 'unbeatable'?

As a businessman having extensive commercial relations with the American companies for decades; based on my knowledge and expertise; I can easily say that **business relations can be "unbeatable" by and only with the advanced collaboration of both Turkish and American business worlds;** just as President Trump emphasized days ago.

That is why, this year, our program is not limited to this event. Right after we complete the program in Washington, D.C., we will visit San Francisco and Los Angeles in California to give a start to our long planned "state based events" in various sectors. And we will later expand this type of activities to some other major States in the future.

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In closing, I just would like to say that we as **Turkish business community are ready to support this new era in U.S.-Turkey relations.**

And, I sincerely hope that this years' Conference and the activities which we will realize within this week pave the way for all of us to make **real progress** on this new period.

So I wish you all, a productive conference and fruitful discussions over the next two days.

And, the last; while thanking all of you for being with us today at the Conference, I also would like to convey my warmest regards to our sponsors and all stakeholders, especially TAIK and ATC for realizing this event.

Enjoy the program....