

DEİK's Asia-Pacific Business Councils Roundtable
Ömer Cihad Vardan – DEİK's President

Excellences;

Members of DEİK's Asia-Pacific Region Business Councils;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey - DEİK, I would like to welcome you all to the dinner organized by DEİK's Asia-Pacific Business Councils.

I would like to extend my special thanks to Mr. Murat Kolbaşı, a brilliant, relatively young friend of ours, who successfully acts as the Coordinator Chairman at DEİK's Asia-Pacific Business Councils.

Distinguished Guests;

Presidents and Board Members of DEİK's Asia-Pacific Business Councils are around the table. You have been developing close ties with our friends and you all know DEİK. But for the ones who are unaware and new to Turkey, let me briefly explain who we are and what we do.

DEİK, established in 1986, is a professional businessman's organization that shapes our country's foreign economic relations. DEİK is an accredited institution especially to organize all business events of the Turkish President and relevant government bodies of the Turkish Republic.

With its 134 Business Councils, of which 127 of them are country-based, DEİK works to improve Turkey's trade and investment relations in a strategic manner with direct contact in these 127 countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

With its 19 Business Councils on the Region, DEİK highly values the growth of our economic relations with Asia-Pacific countries and tries to implement a multi-faceted approach to the Region that includes substantial trade, economic, and strategic investments.

Cause we believe the Region is a key engine for the global economy.

Let me quote some numbers:

Demographically speaking, the Asia-Pacific region is home to about half of the world's population.

China and India, with a combined population of 2.7 billion, are evidently two population giants of the world.

But we all know very well that the Region includes other countries with large numbers of consumers and investors, such as Indonesia (with a population of over 263 million-2017) or the Philippines and Vietnam, whose populations (103 million and 95 million-2017) are larger than many European countries.

The ASEAN countries as a whole represent more than 600 million inhabitants (608 million-2017).

The largest cities in the world can also be found in the Asia-Pacific region. At present, 14 of the 20 largest metropolitan areas are located in this Region. And some of these cities have grown considerably in size in recent years as a result of profound economic transformations.

The numbers are even more impressive in **economic terms**.

According to the World Bank statistics, the Asia-Pacific Region accounts for almost **31% of world GDP at purchasing power parity**.

Moreover, it also comprises some of the most dynamic economies in the world. As a whole, the economies of developing East Asia and Pacific are projected to expand at **6.2 percent in 2017 and 6.1 percent in 2018**, according to IMF figures.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Being relatively “**a new comer**” to the Asia-Pacific Region, Turkey with its ambitious targets, have no luxury to neglect the Region.

Because with its trade and investment opportunities, **the Asia-Pacific Region has become an absolute necessity for Turkey’s economic future**.

Nonetheless our country has succeeded in rapidly expanding its regional footprint in a remarkably short period of time.

Today Turkey maintains strategic partnerships with **China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore**.

FTAs have been successfully concluded with **South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore**. While negotiations continue with **Japan**, and Turkey has initiated the FTA process with **India, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand**.

New embassies in the Region have been opened and new ones on the way.

Economically speaking, **trade with Asia-Pacific has risen considerably in the last ten years from \$15 billion USD (2004) to \$50 billion USD (2014)**, displaying still considerable upward potential.

China is Turkey’s largest trading partner in the region, also the second-largest trading partner in the world.

Of course Turkey's growing economic ties with Asian countries resulted in an increased trade volume and enabled bilateral and multilateral cooperation in several fields; including **diplomacy, mediation and humanitarian aid.**

Excellences;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Turkey's evolving '**Look East**' policy has been centered primarily on building strong commercial, institutional and defence ties with the region.

And we have already seen some remarkable early examples of this evolving cooperation with the region:

Turkey's interest to become a **Dialogue Partner to ASEAN** and the warm welcome we have received from some member countries is encouraging.

The Silk Road Economic Belt, connecting China with Europe across the Eurasian landmass is a second important component of Turkey's growing interest to the Region.

Turkey, given its geographic location, takes a vital position in the Project and our country is committed to serve the mission through its investment in infrastructure projects including high-speed railways, new Istanbul airport which will be one of the largest airports in the world upon completion.

We believe, **an improved transport infrastructure would open up markets for Turkish businesses in Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China** itself, benefitting both and all countries.

Turkish President's visit to China in few weeks responding to the invitation by Chinese President for the '**Belt and the Road Summit**' is a good example of how Turkey is ambitiously supports the Project and looks forward to improve the relations with the countries in the Region.

Distinguished Guests;

I would like to conclude by once again thanking all of you for making it convenient to attend tonight's dinner.

I deeply wish our cooperation will lay down the road map for our future plans for strengthening and making our country's relation with the Asia-Pacific Region more meaningful and substantive.