

DTİK Talks: Adapting in a Covid-19 Africa

09 June 2020, 13.30

Vice Chairman of Sanlam Pan Africa Mr. Junior Ngulube

Chairman at Massmart Holdings Mr. Kuseni Dlamini,

Chairman of Summa Construction Mr. Selim Bora,

**Chairman of DTİK Africa-Middle East&Gulf Regional Committee
and our moderator Mr. Abubekir Salim,**

Thank you for the introduction Mr. Salim.

First of all, I wish a healthy day to all of us.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, colleagues and panelists today, Mr. Ngulube, Mr. Dlamini, Mr. Bora and of course my dear friend Abubekir, welcome again to DTİK Talks sessions.

It's nice to be in the presence of a group of people who care as deeply as I do about the ties between Turkey and African Countries.

During the last two decades, political trust between Turkey and African countries has been strengthening and Turkey has been establishing a powerful partnership, which was upgraded to a strategic partnership of mutual benefit and common development. Within this regard, Turkey also sees African diaspora a key to the Continent's development and thus gives

importance to cooperation on trading and exchanging experience on economic trends, business opportunities and development priorities for Africa.

Last month our Minister of Trade had a video meeting together with 45 Chairpersons of Turkey-Africa Business Councils. We discussed strategies to promote trade and investment with the Continent such as regional logistic centers in Africa, free trade agreements with the countries and regional economic communities, developing correspondent banking relationship and contributing to infrastructure projects for AfCFTA. Turkey is very keen on sharing know-how and promoting integration.

New partnerships between Turkish and African diaspora may unlock more value in Africa and increase the share of participation of the countries by exploring and developing joint projects in trade, capacity building, health, infrastructure, energy and connectivity. I also believe synergized efforts may achieve food security and healthcare in Africa and promote skill development.

As the President of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) and the World Turkish Business Councils (DTİK), I'll make a brief introduction of DEİK and DTİK.

DEİK is a business platform that has been continuing its activities on a voluntary based private sector membership for 35 years. In order to enhance investment and trade between Turkey and the other countries, we continue our works with an understanding of "business diplomacy". We have 146 country to country based business councils all over the World. DTİK is the one of the special purpose Business Councils of them for Turkish Diaspora.

DTİK operates under the umbrella of DEİK. It's mission is to create a network and to coordinate between Turkish Diaspora and Friends of Turkey all over the world. DTİK members are businesspeople as well as academicians, sportsmen, artists, professionals and NGOs all around the world.

As DTİK, we have an inclusive approach that means open for everyone, all ideas, ethnic bases or religions for the friends of Turkey. That make us stronger.

I hope this meeting also gives an insight for what can be achieved together as two strong diasporas.

Thank you.

Question: As you have 146 active business councils within DEİK and holding regular meetings focusing on each countries, in your opinion, what are the most affected and set to outperform industries due to Covid-19?

As DEİK, during this pandemic, we had an understanding of saying "we are not suspending our work, we're not shutting down". Of course, our health is the most important thing in our life and this is our priority so we should take all necessary steps to prevent the pandemic, but we should also consider the health of our companies as well as care of the people we're working together with us and I believe, this was the best method to save their lives and jobs.

What have we done so far and why we did it and what is the result?

Daily, I spend 8 to 10 hours on average for video conferences and meetings... That goes on with our business council members, with ambassadors and trade missions and time to time with our Ministers. We have been actually working harder than ever.

Honestly, we were anxious in the beginning, we spoke about that a lot during the first video meetings. Then of course we went on discussing the issues and problems on production, supply chains, customs, finance, the personal protection equipments, and so on.

We also discussed possible solutions in these meetings; networking and information sharing enabled us to convey this information immediately with the authorities, with the ministries, and in many cases directly with the ministers. So, once the solution is found and immediate and effective action followed. This means not only weathering the storm, but also seizing the opportunities that grow from it.

We also continued our works with DTİK. We shared experiences with our diaspora from all over the world through video conferences and gathered fresh information. I think this is important for evaluation.

And we have many plans for normalization process such as, our “Rethinking Turkey-US Economic Relations in the Covid-19 Context” report, “DEİK Interconnected Business Series” and so on.

As for DTİK, we have some projects also, such as DTİK Investment European Friends of Turkey project. We aim to bring Turkish-friendly Europeans to the DTİK platform with this.

And, I will now share a brief summary of the economic situation by sector in the context of the coronavirus outbreak:

- **Manufacturing:** After 5 quarters of uninterrupted growth, production has been decreasing since by mid of March – following a fall in domestic and foreign demand but a recovery started in May.

Automotive, textile and mining industries have been affected.

But, pharmaceutical, agricultural and food industries have successfully maintained their activities.

- **Distribution:** In order to curb the spread of the virus 70% of shops were closed for two months, many consumers, especially in big cities, have turned to online purchases. Big chains have tripled their home deliveries since the start of Covid-19. Now, they also started.
- **Tourism:** The sector, which represents 13% of Turkey's GDP, is another inevitable victim of the pandemic. However, we are expecting a rebound since the government has eased restrictions after May and is working on a "healthy tourism" scheme.
- **Infrastructure:** Projects have continued, like the Çanakkale Bridge and Northern Marmara Motorway. Some projects have been speed up to support the fight against Covid-19, including Istanbul's new Başakşehir City Hospital, as well as 3 new Hospitals built for Epidemic use at Istanbul.
- **Logistics and transports:** This is very important that logistics never stopped as it was afraid. Some unbelievable methods have been developed to maintain the logistics chain, since majority of companies continued their activities.

As we can see, while some sectors, such as shops and tourism have been hit hard by the pandemic, most industries have resisted well and strived to maintain production. This puts our businesses in a strong position to recover quickly as the virus comes under control.

It is hard to define which sectors will be the lead after Covid-19, but what I believe is, the one who guaranteed the supply chain and got the confidence of its counterpart during this pandemic, will certainly be the winner.

Nail OLPAK

President of DEİK & DTİK