

■ ■ ■ ■ **AB Dışışleri Bakanları**
■ ■ ■ ■ **Gayri Resmi Toplantısı'nda**
■ ■ ■ ■ **Yapılan Konuşma**

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Dear colleagues,

My eminent friends from across Europe,

I thank the Presidency, in the person of Mrs. Plassnik, for inviting me here to speak to you, in this beautiful city of Salzburg.

The Gymnich format is a call for being forthcoming and sincere... I will try to be both...

Recently, tensions were up in different parts of the world. At times, violence caused death and senseless destruction. During these developments, Turkey turned towards its historic links in order to scale down confrontation.

I cannot help but regret that we had to cancel at the last minute the joint EU – OIC forum that was to be held in Istanbul about two years ago. This would have given us ample opportunity to discuss very important questions.

Now, the initiative of the United Nations Secretary General to form the "Alliance of Civilizations," co-chaired by Spain and Turkey, has indeed been timely. Our conception of this initiative is an embracing approach which includes every civilization and tradition on earth based on peaceful co-existence. I am confident that we will be able to come up with a set of feasible ideas soon.

Dear colleagues,

There is one important lesson among others that we must learn from the way the recent tensions developed: It is time for us to see to it, that a strong

consensus emerges in Europe, determined to be pro-active, so that we can grow allies for our values and ideals... I am talking of values such as accountability, transparency, respect, tolerance and pluralism... Pillars on which democracy stands... What is frequently overlooked is the fact that these ideals have also grown in the Muslim geography from earlier times on...

We must remember that they resonate strongly in other parts of the world as well. However, the current insistence on seeing profound differences between two of the world's widely confessed religions is deeply worrying.

We have to admit that in this globalized world, threats are closer and multi-dimensional. There are many factors which lie outside our control. In such a world, no one can say that his actions are not bound to create unforeseen results. Precisely for the same reasons, winning hearts and minds and not losing them is now more important than it has ever been.

I do not wish to sound too pessimistic. On the contrary, I have in fact been speaking of Europe's immense soft power...

As long as people around the world prefer what is thought and produced here Europe will remain strong and in a leading position. This is why Europe needs to set the right examples.

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We must continue to aspire to be a positive force for solving global problems and not become part of the problem. We can be indifferent to the opinions of others for some time... But we cannot act indifferently for too long to the feelings of others...

It is time for Europe to focus on major problems of the world, and not let itself be lost in the web of problems less relevant in the global context. Rather, it is problems like poverty, radicalism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia urgently require Europe's undivided attention.

Dear colleagues,

With the end of the bi-polar world, Turkey's links to all directions started to produce important advantages for us and our friends alike...

Looking from that perspective, I have always allowed myself to be open and sincere whenever I had the opportunity to speak my mind. For instance, it was in Tehran in 2003, at the OIC Summit, that I voiced my worries about lack of vision, good governance, transparency and gender equality in the Islamic world. I stressed the need to put our houses in order...

I called for eradication of illiteracy, corruption and waste of human resources... These are the ills which strengthen the hands of the radicals and lead to violence. This is a serious threat to world peace. We strongly condemn such destructive actions.

Yet, in proposing solutions, we must be aware of the realities that people struggle with every day. Most importantly, our actions and policies must disprove the rhetoric of the extremists... Otherwise, we will lose our chances to engage the moderate groups.

Dear colleagues,

Let us understand that insistence on discrimination at categorical levels like “nationality,” “creed,” and “color,” eventually creates dangers for the whole of society. As witnessed during the last century, common sense can easily be replaced by radicalism whenever we fail in our resolve to fight such divisive and rejectionist behavior. We do not have the luxury to be tolerant towards such tendencies.

I would like to stress that what I express here is over and above the recent experience of the so-called “cartoon crisis...” I am trying to address a much larger issue at the root of which lies the growing gap of mutual appreciation between different cultures and civilizations.

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To be more precise, fanatical behavior and loss of common sense can happen anywhere. There is no country in the world that is immune from the dangers posed by discrimination and intolerance.

The important task is to be able to isolate such instances, and prevent them from spreading to other parts of the world. We have to admit that there are many factors beyond our control. When we fail to stop openly fanatical manifestations at their sources, we give enough material to the radical groups on the other side of the fence.

We cannot afford to see that people around the world start believing that respect for faith and religion do not make part of European values, whereas the opposite is true. This is the biggest asset of Europe, and it should not be damaged.

As a matter of fact, there are legal restraints against such defamation. However, these restraints sometimes only apply to the established religions of the concerned countries. I would like to call on you here to start a process of re-examination of your legislations to ensure that these restraints apply to all religions equally, including to Islam.

Let me be clear on one point:

What is at stake here is the greatest asset of the European Union, namely its prestige... If this prestige is allowed to be undermined in any way, Europe itself will be the first to lose. But the real loser will still be the world at large, which has much to gain from our determined engagement in global issues.

Let us start reflecting the diversity of the world, beginning at the grass-roots level; at home, in schools, and in our neighbourhoods... Let us teach and apply tolerance and respect for every creed and confession... And let us do that in every corner of the world! Only by such awareness to be applied in our daily lives, can we expect to live in peace and achieve co-habitation.

As far as my country is concerned, we are prepared to engage in a dialogue with any country particularly those where significant Turkish communities exist, with a view to help reaching those objectives.

Thank you.