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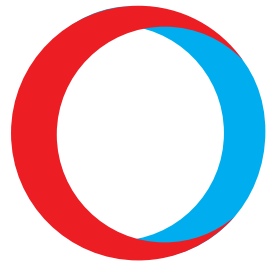
TUNISIA AND TURKEY-TUNISIA RELATIONS IN THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION

DEVİRİMİN İLK YILINDA TUNUS VE
TÜRKİYE-TUNUS İLİŞKİLERİ

تونس في العام الأول للثورة
والعلاقات التركية - التونسية

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية





ORSAM

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THE MEETING

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

History

In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle Eastern affairs.

Outlook on the Middle Eastern World

It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.

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ORSAM provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the relevant parties. With its website, books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academicians, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.

* ORSAM is a member of the The Middle East Studies Association (MESA).



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Tunus Cumhuriyeti Ankara Büyükelçiliği
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TUNISIA AND TURKEY-TUNISIA RELATIONS IN THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION

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Tunus Cumhuriyeti Ankara Büyükelçisi

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ÖZLEM TÜR:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We have the pleasure of having with us today his Excellency Ben Rhouma and we will be talking about Tunisia and Turkish-Tunisian relations. Of course it has been more than a year that the events have taken hold in Tunisia. We have been since then talking about what is going on in Tunisia and what is happening to Turkish-Tunisian relations. We can also see that since last year there has been a revival in Turkish-Tunisian relations. We have been asking the aspects of this and what we will try to do today is to talk about political, economic and cultural aspects of this relationship and try to understand both how the politics of Tunisia is evolving as well as how Turkish-Tunisian relations are evolving in this context. So his Excellency Ambassador, please start.

H.E. MEHREZ BEN RHOUMA:

Thank you very much, thanks for your concern for invitation and thank you for attending this conference. It is

great pleasure for me to be with you. The present day was 56 anniversary of the Independence Day, but Tunisia is living the second Independence Day on fourteenth January 2011. Tunisian people were liberated from dictatorship, oppression, injustice and corruption. Tunisia has said the initial process political transformation and politicization in the all region. We start as a local event in Tunisia but because of the regional ties, it became regional event. With the collapse of the regimes like Bin Ali, the regional atmosphere of the region is becoming ready for the political transformation. And the message sent from Tunisia to other Arab states is that the political change is possible. The main slogan that we heard and used it until nowadays in different Arab countries is to prevail the people want. And this by the way the poet said if you want to people want to live, their destiny in their hands. Tunisian revolution is exception in the sense that it was very process in compared to other revolution in the region. Thanks to God, after 23 of October when the elections was held, it was the free elections, it is



the first time in the Tunisia, the bullet box is there and people choose their members in the parliament since we have coalition government. What the Tunisian experience illustrates is that Islam and democracy could survive together. I think Turkey firms that before Tunisia. Our revolutions illustrate also that the geopolitical condition of the region is deeply interconnected for the simple reason the expectation and the demands of the people are roughly the same. Of course there are many challenges and many difficulties but we are optimistic since we have worked on difficult times after the revolution. Thanks God, we have no political vacuum. The functioning of the state was continuing and we preserve the political stability. This is thanks to the quality of the education background of the Tunisian people and the bureaucratic tradition which means the administration. The main challenge that Tunisia is facing now, firstly, is the great expectation of the people and needs that they want to be satisfied in the very short time. It means welfare, employment and so on. Because 23 years of injustice and oppression, you are aware that people are very waiting for good response from the government. Secondly, it is the equal regional development. Most of interior region has suffered from marginalization. Third is to avoid ideological polarization while drafting new constitution. Fourthly, the reconciliation of Tunisia with its environment is important. Tunisia as you know has multidimensional aspect belonging to Maghreb, Mediterranean area, Arabic, African and Islamic world. After the revolution, I would speak about the relation-

ship between Tunisia and Turkey. After revolution, we live an era in the Tunisian- Turkish relationship. Several reasons and factors could explain that. The two countries have common cultural and historical heritages. As you know Ottoman presence in Tunisia was well-perceived. Turkey is the most popular country in Tunisia. The recently opinion poll shows that for the Tunisian people Turkey is the most popular country in the Middle East. And they think the country is the same thing reciprocally, I hope so. Two countries share the same values such as liberty, democracy, liberal system of economy and so on. Maybe also the same policy directions two countries have the closer relationship with Europe. Both countries signed free trade with Europe and with very close relationship with the occidental world. We should also remind that the affinity that exist between AK Party and Al Nahda. She is majority party in Tunisian government. They both defend same occasion for reciprocal reconciliation between Islam and democracy. As you know Al Nahda has promoted a coalition government in Tunisia with alliances. Another factor is also very important. It is that Turkey could be a model for the others. It is also factor for the severity of the region. XXX The success of Tunisia would be the success of Turkey. For that there is a strong will in Turkey to support Tunisia. As you know in the recently, we have had very high visits in Tunisia, Prime Minister visited Tunisia. His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Gül was in Tunisia. We have very high visits in Tunisia, very intensified these kind of visits. The aim of this is to set up rela-

tionship in the strategic level. In last September we signed very important document which is the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. The two countries focus on this same sectors priority for us. First of all is cooperation on the macroeconomic sectors. We need to exchange our experience between in the field of economic strategy and the two government charge the two ministries of the regional development to coordinate this kind of coordination. The strategic cooperation is that to exchange the experience between two countries how to put on good strategy for the especially for the regional development and to struggle against poverty and so on. We are aware that Turkey has a very good experience then could be very useful for us. Secondly it is very important for us to investment and tourism. Unfortunately Turkish investment in Tunisia is so tight. We have only twenty three Turkish companies in Tunisia which employ one thousand and five workers only. The most investments are in the textile sector, maybe the half of this investment. But you should also say that TAV, she is very important company

is present in Tunisia with the one billion dollar of investments and employees five hundred workers. It is very important investment. However we are convincing that the potential Turkish investment in Tunisia is higher than that. We can develop in the next time. For that we focus on develop some industrial zones Turkish Tunisian industrial zones which could be prepared as the base development of this investment .We have some project in this sector. We are studying this week we have very important delegation going to Tunisia to visit some industrial zones and to study how can create this kind of investment. It is free industrial zone. In the trade sector, despite the free trade agreement between two countries, the global volume exchange is very low, one billion dollar only. It is very unequal between two countries, we suffered from 75 percent deficit and 80 percent of our export is the phosphate only. For that our aim is to increase the trade between two countries and to exploit this free trade agreement. In the tourism sector, it is also the result is not very high. We receive in 2010 only 18.000 brothers. It does not



translate very high and close relationship. As you know, 8 million Turkish people spent holiday out of Turkey. We hope that if we receive only one percent. It is enough for us. Then we appreciate there is a more interesting tourism and operative are more and more interesting in investing in Tunisia. Next month, we will have very important delegation with minister of Tourism and Culture visit Tunisia. There we hope that we can organize something between two countries. And in financial field, Turkish government offered Tunisia very important loans, commercial loans from Eximbank 500 million dollars is to stimulate to courage the trade between two countries. It is very important. I should also mention other thing is very TİKA will open office in Tunisia the next time. TİKA is very efficient organism in the microcredit and regional development and so on and it is very useful for Tunisia. But we revise also our legal framework. The framework exist between two countries is not very adapted to the new situation. Our aim is to set up this legal framework. We start to revise all the agreement to protect the investment exist between two countries. We are revising visa agreement. The others also revise their agreements to response our objectives. Other sector where we are working on is the higher education. It is very important. We hope that enhance remember the exchange between academics universities between researchers and to offer more scholarship for the students in the both countries. This is very important and to encourage the learning of the Arabic and Turkish language. There are more factors we stimulate.

It is exchange in these sectors. We have also Turkish governments announce that we open Cultural center of Turkey, it is very good thing. We have another sector is very important for Tunisia is professional training. You know that Turkey has very good experience in these sectors. We hope that we can profit from this experience. Two Ministries of Foreign Affairs are coordinating all these cooperation and we follow one road map for 2012. We are following all this cooperation. I will answer, if you have some questions about relationship with pleasure.

ÖZLEM TÜR:

Thank you very much for your talk. This actually laid the ground for a lot discussion and also for our other speakers who can talk about both Tunisian revolution, its consequences and challenges as well waiting there and also about Turkish-Tunisia n relationship in many aspects, especially in the economic section which we will talk. So without much due, here is Nebahat Tanrıverdi from ORSAM. She will be talking about the political dimensions of the relationship and what is happening in Tunisia.

NEBAHAT TANRIVERDİ:

Thank you very much. Today I will try to focus on political dimensions of what happen in Tunisia. The whole things started in Tunisia. The protests in small town, Sidi Buzid, began with a man's setting himself fire; then with the support of Unions, especially the local branches of General Unions of Tunisia; the protests spread to other

cities and ended Ben Ali rule with passive support of Army. But the uprisings did not end until the total exclusion of the former political figures from interim governments. The persistence of Tunisian public was the most determinant aspect behind the transition process; and I think that this is the important factor for a successful democratic transition in Tunisia. Such a conclusion is based on many reasons, but the most significant one lies in the country's political history which includes mobilization, long-term struggle for a multi-voice political atmosphere and social mobilization.

The economic reasons behind the uprisings have been highlighted by many in order to analyze the uprisings in Tunisia deserve special interest. In the economic section of this meeting, I think that we will discuss these very deeply. But the political discontent fed by authoritarian regimes is very important determinant. I think that it is also important to focus on former Tunisian regime to understand what is happening now.

When we look at the political history of Tunisia, we see that the three infitah waves transformed country in many ways, in 1970s and 1980s. During this period, with the economic growth, the popular segments of society like workers and students began to demand democratic reforms by demonstrations and strikes. With the impact of the challenges from below, Bourgiba's period ended and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali took the rule with a bloodless coup. The infitah and also transformation of Tunisia continued in Ben Ali period. At the end, a new authoritarian regime was built up. What are the main features of this new authoritarian regime?

First of all, this new authoritarian regime was built on a multi-party election system. One can call this "illusion of change", and I think this is absolutely right. The multi-party election system had been dominated by ruling party, with the former election law; in so new authoritarian regime controlled opposition in legal framework; softened mobilized masses and eased the opposition. The limitation on po-



litical and social life and pressure on media and civil society pushed the opposition while the elections with only one option, the ruling party's championship; sustained legitimacy for this authoritarian regime.

Secondly, the political openings such as multi-party system and restrictive associational life on one hand and the transformation of economy from socialist policies to market oriented capitalist system on the other hand created a significant shift in regime's social bases. In so, regime started to search more limited but dependent social bases for its legitimacy. By doing this, the popular sectors excluded from economic life more and more.

At the end, we can consider Tunisian transition at that time as a political and economic response of an authoritarian regime to the global changes and a way to survive. Ben Ali was successful in managing the discontent against him as a control mechanism in the domestic affairs until the end of his rule despite the fact that he brutally suppressed the opposition. But as we can see, the mechanism of authoritarian regime could not achieve to survive in the wave of protests and at the end a transition period had begun.

First of all the elections for a Constituent Assembly was held. The parties, Islamist Al Nahda, central Republican Congress and leftist Ettakatol formed a coalition government. In this respect the new assembly is expected to rewrite the constitution and some other basic laws such as election and media laws and supervise the election

of the new government. It is also important to note that this assembly is interim one and they will transform power to new assembly after fulfilling their one-year period.

It is also crucial to analyze the character of coalition government who guide this transition period now. Coalition government does not include any former regime remnants. It also constitutes a broad spectrum of society because of being a coalition between different political stands.

In addition to assembly and government, we should analyze what happened to the authoritarian regime. I think that in the early part of transition, I mean during the decay of the regime, the upper part of the former regime excluded from system. And also with the emergence of new political actors and involvement of civil society in transition period end the dominance of authoritarian regime. Today the repoliticization and resurrection of the society can be seen in the high number political parties and civil society organizations.

As my last words what happens in Tunisia is transition of the former regime into a more democratic one with more effective parliamentary system and adaptation of civil society to the system. For this reason the expectations from Tunisia are higher than others because the process has many similarities with the process in Eastern Europe in 1990s.

Tunisia located in a very strategic place in current Middle Eastern and North African debates. The demon-

strative effect cannot be limited by the uprisings or revolutions but successful democratization also fosters the similar process in the region. Thank you.

ÖZLEM TÜR:

The history of movement in Tunisia such a leaderless transformation which was carried out especially by the youth, by using such technology and without any role of top-down approach into change. There used to be rather a joke in 1980s, the Arab societies are addicted to crises and allergic to the change. They used to believe actually our societies would not change but Tunisia example has been a very good example because it is one of the few successful stories in this transformation. There are a lot of problems, look at the in Egyptian case, Libya, Syria. There are a lot to learn from the Tunisian example, looking at the region as well. So now let's have a look at the economy please.

HARUN ÖZTÜRKLER:

You all know economics is the science one professional study. So Mr. Ambassador and my dear friends not almost have left nothing for me to talk about but I will just try to specifically for Turkish friend to a role of a micro-economic situation in Tunisia. I will start to provide some macroeconomic numbers from mostly World Bank database and CIA's World Factbook. I start with GDP (gross domestic product) for the value that the goods and services produced in a given year in a country. We can calculate GDP in two ways. One is called purchasing power

parity which includes all kinds of goods and services produced but some of them may not be actually marketed. That number might be very misleading but still I mention it about. 101 billion estimate for the last year and about 104 billion dollars for 2012. In terms of official exchange rate, GDP is almost half of it. It is about 50 billion dollars for 2011 and GDP 52 billion for the 2012. GDP per capita are very bad measure of welfare of the people. Again in terms of purchasing power parity,, it is about 9500 but in terms of t... it is about 5000 dollars per person. In economics, we picture the structure economy by contributions of 3 major sectors to GDP: agriculture industry and services. The contribution of the agriculture to GDP is 10 percent. The low level of agriculture could be considered as a sign of development but it is different for Tunisia. For the industry, it is about 35 percent and services as 50 percent. I will mention couple of things this structure about in a couple of minutes. Another important measure of the structure of the economy is the labor force, how the labor force is employed. About 20 percent of the labor force is employed in the agriculture. Remember agriculture's contribution is 10 percent to GDP but the 20 percent of population are employed in agriculture that actually signs how inefficient and unproductive sector it is. Industry is about 32 percent of the people employed in industry and about 50 percent in services. Unemployment rate where I remember trusted any unemployed statistics in the world but 16 according to the World Bank data. Income distribution, the lowest 10 percent re-

ceives just 2.3 percent of the national income. Highest 10 percent receives 31.5 percent. So income inequalities are very big issue challenging the new regimes and new governments. Investment in terms of the number its 25 percent GDP it is a excellent number but then thinking of this inefficient economy, you must ask: what kind of sectors those investment go and how you can actually improve the productivity of those investment sectors. Budget, the revenues 10 billion expenditures 14 billion, so there is budget deficit for the last year. There is also huge burden of the taxes because of this deficit about 22 percent of the GDP is collected as taxes and the share of the budget deficit in GDP is about 9 percent. Public debt compared to troubling European countries is excellent. The share of public debt in Greece is about 150 percent; it is just 50 percent in Tunisia. That a good thing for the new government. The high public debt burden could force the new government. It is luck. Inflation is also low; it is about 4 percent and has remained low for a long period of time. What kind of goods Tunisia produces in agriculture mostly all is olive oil, grape, tomatoes, fruits, sugar, meats, diets, almonds, beefs and daily products. In industry, there are petroleum, mining particularly phosphor and iron as well as Tunisian textile and beverages. Oil production is about 85 billion barrel per day; oil consumption is about 85 billion barrel per day. Oil export is about 90 billion; oil import is about 80 billion. The proved oil reserve are 425 billion, it is a lot. I am going very fast. Natural gas production is 3.6 billion cubic meters. There is no natural gas

export but there is potential. Tunisia actually imports natural gas. Another number which is a very headache between Turkey and Tunisia is current income balance. It is in fact low about 5 billion dollars. Low income of the share the current income deficit is really less than 5 percent. For the economic relationship between Turkey and Tunisia, I want to mention little bit more about export, import and export and import partners of Tunisia. Tunisian export is about 18 billion dollars per year for 2012. Its exports clothing, semi finished goods, textile, agricultural product, mechanical goods, phosphors, chemicals, hydrocarbons and electrical equipment. And export partners, France, Turkey biggest export partner. 26.5 percent of Tunisia export goes to France. The second biggest partner is Italy, 17.4 percent goes to Italy. Germany 9.6 percent, Libya 6.2, Spain 4.2. In the highest 5, turkey does not exist. Import is about 23.4 billion dollars for 2011. Tunisia imports textile, machinery equipment, hydrocarbons, chemicals and food stuff. For import partners, again biggest import partner is unfortunately France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and China. There is not Turkey in here either. For foreign reserves, I will mention it especially among many numbers, because it is an important tool for the new government to implement development programs. It is about 9 billion dollars which is an about 12 percent of the GDP. It is a very good number. I talked about the external debt. I will go a little bit more if I have some time. What kind of challenges new governments are facing, and what kind of solutions we can come up with? The economic set-

backs and risks overtake social gains by it. Let's mention what was the cost of the revolution to Tunisia. According to international economic experts, the monetary cost of the revolution to Tunisia has been 5-8 billion dollars, nearly the ten percent of the GDP. So there is a financial cost for every revolution no matter it is good or bad. For the business scientists, there is no bad advertisement. For that revolution is good advertisement for tourism in Tunisia at least for the future. Foreign direct investment decreased to 12 percent. Today FDI is 30 percent less than what it was before revolution. It could be renewed again. Tourism as Mr. Ambassador mentions before hits hard. The number of visitors has been cut in half and business in tourism sector has been slashed as all the resorts are more provocative European tourists. Along the northern Mediterranean shore, it is almost empty. That is why Mr. Ambassador is very right to invite Turkish tourists to Tunisia. According to World Bank report, unemployment grew by more than 200,000 people of the revolution for 2011. It reached twenty percent specifically in urban areas. And it was 14 percent in 2010. In the periphery, unemployment reaches 50 percent. Specially, unemployment problem is the problem of the youth. Particularly, they are younger people with higher education. It is almost impossible for them to find jobs. The international rating agency also lowered Tunisian credit which of course results in finding international credit hard. Even if you find international credit, as your rating is low, you have to pay higher interest rate. I also like to mention about couple of things, what Turkey

has done since the revolution. The third biggest Tunisian economic relations are based on the association agreements established free trade zone between Tunisia and Turkey which came to force in 2005. Lately, Turkish Eximbank specifically has provided 500 million dollars credit. Turkey has also increased import quotas some products. Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency opened an office in Tunisia to support the development projects, provide technical and project assistantship in agriculture, irrigation, education and energy sectors. These are sectors in which we can improve our relations. What are the challenges to Tunisia? I singled out four of them. One of them is higher rates of unemployment, specifically youth unemployment. The second one is the large number of marginal jobs. This is very important. By marginal jobs, the economists mean they are low value. That is they are unproductive. It results in low wages and low profits. Low wages are important because of income inequality and poverty. If the profit is low, then there is no saving to reinvest for the development. The job quality must be increased in addition to job creation; Tunisia's problem is the quality of the job. Income inequality and substantial disparities, therefore new government must follow business friendly policies; put an end to corruption which had caused the country, according to international economic experts, 1 billion dollar annually for Tunisia. Specifically, the Global Financial Integrity Foundation calculates the cost of corruption as 1 billion per year during the previous president.

Tunisia must implement programs to support modern and competitive economy. Therefore new government's priorities must include 6 things: creating job opportunities, promoting economic activities specifically in the rural areas through fiscal incentives, policies through vitalized tourism sectors, making social aid more efficient because poverty in Tunisia requires social policy to tackle with it immediately, creating transparency as public sector which promoting private enterprise, lastly promoting a macroeconomic stability. Thank you.

SEDA KOCABAŞ:

His Excellency Mr. Ambassador, Distinguished Guests, as a representative of the Ministry of Economy, I would like to offer some information about the commercial and economic relations between Tunisia and Turkey. H.E. Ambassador and Ass. Prof. Öztürkler has already mentioned some information but I will give more detailed information.

First of all, I would like to touch upon the legal framework; there are several agreements that form the legal basis of the bilateral economic and commercial relations; I am glad to say that all those agreements are already signed; the Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation was signed in 1986, the bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement was signed in 1991 and the Agreement on Commercial, Economic and Technical Cooperation was signed in 1992.

Alongside these, Agreements on bilateral cooperation on various areas such as tourism, agriculture, civil aviation, marine and road transportation, health, science, industry, mining, geology and customs have also been signed between the years 1981 and 2011. However, the touchstone of the economic and commercial relations between Turkey and Tunisia has been the signature of The Association Agreement between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Tunisia on November 2004. This Agreement entered into force on 1 July 2005 and eliminated tariffs and non-tariff barriers in trade between Parties.

The Agreement also regulates numerous subjects such as sanitary measures, trade in services, foreign direct investments, internal taxation, balance of payments, public procurement, state aids, intellectual property rights, anti-dumping, safeguard measures and rules of origin as well as some other specific areas for cooperation.

Concerning industrial products, customs duties applied by Turkey for the goods originating in Tunisia have been eliminated by the entry into force of the Agreement. Regarding the customs duties applied by Tunisia for the goods originating in Turkey, those will be eliminated gradually until 1 July 2014. Regarding agricultural products, Turkey and Tunisia granted each other tariff reduction and/or elimination in the form of tariff quotas for certain agricultural products originating in the other Party.

With the Association Agreement, an Association Council headed by Ministers in charge of foreign trade

is established. The heads of the Association Council are H.E. Mr. Zafer ÇAĞLAYAN the Minister of Economy of Turkey and H.E. Mr. Mohamed Lamine CHAKHARI, Minister of Industry and Trade of Tunisia. The Council meets at least once a year and reviews the progress made in the implementation of the mentioned Agreement. It also examines any major issues arising within the framework of the Association Agreement including its economic and social impact and any other bilateral or international issues of mutual interest.

An Association Committee is also established which is responsible for the implementation of the Agreement. The last meeting of the Turkish-Tunisian Association Council took place in Ankara, on December 2010, and the last meeting of the Association Commission also took place in Ankara, on January 2011.

Let me give an example of the decisions that are made during these meetings; for instance, during the last Commission meeting, the Turkish and Tunisian delegations decided to amend one of the protocol of this agreement which actually determines the exchange of concessions on agricultural products. One of the several amendments of the said protocol was about the quota of dates imported from Tunisia to Turkey. This amendment increased the quota of dates imported from Tunisia to Turkey, from 2000 tons to 4000 tons per year. This was the decision of the Commission, however, to be valid; it has to be the decision of the Council, in other words, it needs to be signed by the representatives of the two Governments, a.k.a. the Ministers.

So the Ministers don't have to wait until the Council meeting to sign the decisions of the Commission, as a matter of fact, these amendments were signed in January 2012, during an official visit of H.E Mr. ÇAĞLAYAN to Tunisia. During this fruitful visit, H.E Mr. ÇAĞLAYAN was accompanied by about 70 Turkish businessmen and Turkey-Tunisia Business Forum was realized, with participation of about 200 Tunisian businessmen. Now about 1000 business meetings took place in this business forum. These kinds of business get together are quite frequent between Turkey and Tunisia. We think that this is a sign of the significant participation and high interest of both Tunisian and Turkish businessman for the business environment of two countries. Statistics are also another sign of the growing commercial and economic ties between Turkey and Tunisia. As I said before Association agreement entered force into 2005 and in 2005 the trade volume between the two countries was 420 million dollars, in 2011 the trade volume exceeded a billion dollars. Now if we take into consideration the negative effect of global economic crisis of 2009, this hundred percent increase is actually not bad but of course below potential. In 2011, Turkey's imports from Tunisia were 250 million dollars whereas exports to Tunisia were 800 million dollars. Turkey's primary export to Tunisia in 2012 was textile farm fabrics and related products, iron and steel and machinery specialized for particular industries. These industries are mainly being construction of food processing. And Turkey's primary imports from Tunisia in 2011

were fertilized fuel oil and inorganic chemicals, mainly phosphate. I would also like to say a few words about investments. There are 48 Tunisian companies in Turkey. Most of them are small and medium size enterprises. Two of them have actually higher capital more than 2100 dollars. The total investments of Turkish companies in Tunisia according to our numbers is 7,5 million dollars. So both in trade, economy and investment, we see an increasing trend, but as H.E. Mr. Ambassador mentioned, this is below potential considering that two countries have stable growing rates in last 10 years. But this is how we see it. In the future there are positive signs for both Turkish and Tunisian economies. First of all, as all you may know, there has been a slow recovery in the world trade from the economic crisis. Also the outcome of the Tunisian revolution will be a stable and peaceful environment where there is the rule of law. We also have Association Agreement. So in the future probably these economic and commercial ties between Turkey and Tunisia will grow a lot faster and hopefully set an example for the other countries in the region.

ÖZLEM TÜR:

Now I think that we have enough time for contributions, comments and questions. We can start the comment section. Please.

ABDULLAH BOZKURT:

We heard pretty good interventions from different contributors. Nebahat mentioned about political aspects

with some historical references. Assoc. Prof. Harun Öztürkler mentioned about macroeconomic numbers. You can always play around the numbers. We can see glass as half of it full or half of it empty depending on our perspective. Seda mentioned the bilateral levels of relations. But Ambassador Rhouma pretty much summed up the whole picture on Tunisia. And thank you for that. I am going to pick up on two things that you mentioned in your speech. One is expectations of the people; and the other is the timing. We are running on time, people start to feel frustrations toward new coalition government led by Al Nahda. And we don't have much time to deliver concrete results that make a difference on daily life of the people on the street. Thus there are significant challenges facing Tunisia. That is why I wrote in my columns that Tunisia need all the help all it can get, because we need to have a success model for all the other countries that experiencing revolutions. Tunisia itself is the best chance for us to put out and say that "look we accomplish this in Tunisia and you can do the same in Libya, in Egypt, in the future maybe in Syria and Yemen and in other places as well. Because of very well educated young population, although there are some challenges regarding the youth unemployment as Harun mentioned, but nevertheless there is a good potential that you can top on that like bringing the investors from outside, from Europe, Turkey or Gulf countries to employ these people. The important thing for us I think here, it to manage these expectations. How do you manage that? I am from media profession. Maybe that is why I

think that we need to focus on media cooperation as well, because if you publish stories on one way or another, you may have an impact on the perceptions of the people. I was a very useful tool during the revolution but after the revolution, you can use the social media to destroy the people's expectations as well. So we have to have cooperation on the media level that teaches the professions on the ground, on the reliability and professional ethics of the reporting as well. That is how to manage the expectations of the people. Another thing that you mentioned is that Turkish investments in Tunisia which is very low. You are very right. 23 companies are investing in Tunisia currently; the largest one is TAL and managing 3 airports in Tunisia. Maybe we are employing 500 people.

It is important that the expectation and how to response to this expectation. As you know, after years of oppression, injustice and corruption, it is normal that people are angry and frustrated. For that after revolution, we lived some difficult period of times but we managed this social integration. I think that to succeed in economic level is to manage social peace in Tunisia that is very important. We are quite sure that we have some problems. Tunisia has a chance to have very good frames. If we look at the statistics, Tunisia is the export country. It means that we have integrated system. For that the base is educational quality. We have also personally very good incentives to investments. Furthermore, we have good factors to promote partnership. Many countries like France and much

foreign investment all over the world, Gulf countries etc come to Tunisia after revolution. Revolution attracts. The little problem is to how to be quite in Tunisia and how to convince to workers to be more passionate. It is a political how to manage. Media has a very important role in Tunisia. Media in Tunisia, as you know, was for the regime, we had not very free media. The meaning of change is different in times. Now it means more freedom. They speak very freely but the impact is international. They manage like hedonistic problems but for the country revolution which is very older outside. 80 percent of the economy is dependent on the outside: industry, tourism, trade. Media is a very big picture. It is very important. About Turkish investment in Tunisia, we have free trade zones in Tunisia. The difficulty is the time. Time is very important. Since 3 must we seem Turkish businessman in Tunisia? We have very discussion we hope that we have very high potential in Tunisia. But as you know every project is to take some times sure. But we are very optimistic in a sense that we are working in the right way and the option is to some good industrial problem which response answer to the Turkish needs like Turkish model of the industrial zones. Regarding the generation of industrial zones, we are discussing about this. Turkish Ministry of Industry and Economy expressed very strongly to help us and to create this new kind of industrial zones. Because industrial zones, we have very flexible system of export, not much of control over it. We are working on this assumption. We are organizing seminars, for instance with Libyan

businessman and we are taking to create one industrial zone in the South Tunisia. We have 150 kilometers of border with Libya. It is a very good opportunity for Turkish businessman. Interestingly Libya could be very logistic trade and industrial zones for that we try to convince our Turkish partners to be there in industrial zones and to export to Libya. I think, it is under strategic that we are working full time, it is very important. I am very optimistic in a sense that we feel that there are places to see politically from Turkey to help Tunisia. Sure Tunisia has traditional trade, it is not definitive. We are very offer to another country. We want that Turkey should be our greater trade partner and revelation partner.

ÖZLEM TÜR:

Thanks you very much. Shall we go from you?

ALİ HUSSEIN BAKEER:

Actually I would take the time of the media or the economy. It seems that we are all talking about these issues which mean we are touching very important aspects of Tunisia. I want shortly talk about the role of the models. I think that we should less talk about models. Because it is for sure that our country has very common characteristics with them. But they are different characteristics as well. For example, we cannot be the same with Gulf countries or with Egypt. All say that Arab countries they have confrontations, but they have. Model is so practical. If you want to talk about the positive sense,

you should talk about the experiences. Success is a model for all. In this sense, we should talk about successful experiences, not about models. In our square or Tahrir, we have many people demanding the same things that they were frustrated. However nothing strong was achieved in Tunisia or Egypt. We should limit our expectations if you want to consider achievements. For instance, achieving democracy is not an easy task. It comes after a long time of dictatorship. What do we expect from people is being three decades. We should not. So we expect much. We should realize things should take time and we should move on the right track. We reach long outcomes or we will fail. It is important to make people realize how the tasks are difficult and make them also aware of the achievements the governments doing or just preparing to. But for my humble knowledge about Tunisia, it is also obvious that, they also polarize. Maybe some of the old figures influence them. We can see different Tunisia, if you move through channels, it is something else. To achieve democracy in Tunisia, we have big challenge. The challenge is to economic one which is very serious. Why? You can undermine the political transformation. The government does this. The economy is one reason why Tunisian people revolt. Of course, it's not only workers made, but is one of the reasons refusing the repression and promoting freedom. That is why economic situation is very important and people wait outcomes from the government. Tunisia like very Arab countries is very rich in terms of human, resources and capitals; natural resources. So we have

to balance this by helping Tunisia also financially. It is very important to help project, and finance projects. His Excellency also talks about bilateral relation with Turkey. We have the same things. We use the percentages. Percentages are not really things on ground. We are expecting more. Turkey is the 16th biggest economy in the world. Your companies are not so big or 500 million in annual or 1 billion foreign trades is very individual. We are expecting more especially foreign investment also loans maybe. Because I am not sure about this but his Excellency can give us information about his. But Gulf countries get loan to Tunisia with higher rates, if it is occur or not, but we expect that as Davutoğlu said “the success of Tunisia is our success; and its faith is our faith”. However we cannot see real actions on the ground. We do not want t things just to be statements, we hope actions. His Excellency mentioned the constitutional change. I think if you can elaborate us, for how the constitution will be formed for us, it. By the way, you still talk Tunisia could be a constitutional model to Turkey. As far as I know, Tunisia was one of the first countries in the Middle having constitution, even before Turkey. It was about 230 years ago. Turkey made it in the last of the 19th century. He said that one of the challenges for avoiding the polarization. Unfortunately, you can still see very dangerous polarization especially very radical separatism and very radical Islamists.

GAMZE COŞKUN:

Maybe, you can talk about Salafis and how will Salafis deal with the issue?

ALİ OĞUZ DIRİÖZ:

Well, I have two questions. We all talk about why we expect success in Tunisia; Tunisia has a strong state tradition and homogenous population. But I want to comment on and ask the role of the social media. There was a 22 or 23 years old guy who had a rap song called the Head of the State in Tunisia. It was very much popularized in the social media. My question is that if social media is not just source of an organization, but also of inspiration among the youth, and many companies invest in social media. Youth came together via social media. Can the social media be a channel for promoting greater impact in Tunisia? Secondly, my question is about France. Your former regime had very close relationship with Sarkozy. France later apologized for it. It is biggest investor with biggest trade partner in Tunisia. How does such a thing play out in the relations? Thanks for taking your time.

SEDA KIRDAR:

About constitution making process in Tunisia, we all know that in compared to Egypt, Tunisia functions well on that. I believe that Tunisian leaders and experts could be the leaders in the region and Egyptian case would be avoided. It is very mess process. There are still setbacks in preparing constitution. Are you taking any comparative constitutional analysis into account and what is the most challenging part?

HARUN ÖZTÜRKLER:

We cannot overemphasize the importance expectation and management. We must remind us if there are such concepts in international theory, there must be independence of country and freedom of people. As we all know, Tunisia was under Ottoman for 250 years and under France 75 years. Since 1956 when Tunisia got its independence, then there were just 2 presidents. So I do not think that people were free. The last thing is about the industrial zone. Clarifying this concept is very important. It is a zone in which both horizontal and vertical integration of firms, reduce investment cost sharply and increase productivity. I hope that your Economy Minister and Finance Minister know about industrial zones.

H.E. MEHREZ BEN RHOUMA:

Sure, every country has specific model and specific reality, but we can exchange and use each other for aspirations. So there are some kinds of interactions. Why not? Turkey is a good example. We recognize that Turkey is a successful example in terms of political, economical and social fields. About constitutional challenge to clarify my deal about polarization and so on, as you know, there is debate on the Sharia, how to implementation of Sharia to constitution. Just start to Tunisia to be a new constitution, there are some voices, sure hope that we can that constriction would be base on the Sharia. But they are in minority position in Tunisia. The most opinion is to maintain our particular first article one of the constitution

which said that Tunisia is a republic, its regime is Islam. I think, most people in Tunisia is in this direction. Yesterday, prime minister made a speech and he confirmed that as you know, prime minister belongs to Al Nahda party, but he agree with the fact we should have a constitution upon all the parties and opinions because constitution is for all. We should have consensus on constitution without polarization between any parties. For that there is a debate but I think, Tunisia has very long history, as you said Madame. The first constitution in the Arabic world was written in Tunisia, constitution of ... 1856. Tunisia also created the first human rights league. Then Tunisia also in the 1956, banned the polygamy, all this kind of some platform and acquire that go on because Tunisia is a moderate country, Tunisian people are very open to others. For all this reasons, it would be very wise today this way in preparing our constitution. We are very optimistic for this. For the Salafis, should the Salafis term the seats? It is now reality but it is very bit minority in Tunisia and there is no risk to pursue our life in Tunisia. Al the parties are against such behavior in Tunisia. But the government would like to use strong commitments to tide the increase, because they are aware of the fact that maybe as it is very minority, it is better to isolate them by the others, by the dialogue than to struggle against them. Maybe the direction would be more negative. Tunisia is a country which is a very open; we have neighbors like Libya with problems. This is maybe also one factor that we should consider. Our stability is more important than others. Another can

express his opinions freely and there will be no problem. But we are against violence. For the social media, which kind of contribution can it make? Sure it is very dynamic sector in Tunisia. As you know, uprising success is thanks to Facebook and Twitter and many other thinks. Its contribution is very important in this. Maybe for the civil society in general, this kind of social media is very important. It has very good contribution.

Sarkozy and very close relationship with Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali to the point that France has offered some special applies. France is a trade partners and many visit Tunisia. How will it change after France's help to former Tunisia?

Exterior Foreign policy should be fixed not only by the personnel of that to you. France is our traditional partner and our first partner because of historical factors; we have a very big important community in France. We have also educational system very close to France. For these reasons, we have very close relationship with France. But we are not definitely con-

demned to this kind of relation. We can diversify our relations, it belongs to our interests. There is no problem. Until respect our independence, sovereignty and interests, no problem. Our problem is based on interest of our country, respect for sovereignty. We maintain good relations with France. Salafis is very minority section.

ÖZLEM TÜR:

Thank you very much Mr. Ambassador. According to recent survey, which is carried out by TESEV, Tunisia is scored the highest among the Arab countries over 90 percent in two important questions. First was about Turkish role positive in the Middle East in the general, Tunisia scored the highest. Secondly is about the impact that Turkey has in Middle Eastern affairs since the Arab Spring. Again Tunisia is the first country with the highest score. This was the first in a serious of events that we will be carrying out ORSAM and METU. Thank you very much for coming this meeting. Please join me to thank our participants.



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