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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Discussing about Greek-Turkish relations, I will try to focus more on the common symbols and cooperation perspectives rather than emerging problems.

And I will try to do that as consciously as possible.

I am not a historian to talk about problems because differences have historic deposits.

Also, I am not a politician and I won't play a 'political game'.

I am an economist and the main point of this discussion is the economic relations. I would like to discuss the framework and the requirements that contribute to a more substantial (intrinsic) improvement of these relations. Of course, don't regard my discussion as something new, something special when I am talking about the intensiveness of economic relations.

We can't say that things were the same as there are now, we can't consider that in the past, relationships from both sides put as a main issue the stepped up of economic relations.

But, it is common knowledge that the participation of both sides to European Union has modulated a level which is feasible and can be done.

And, of course, many important and meaningful approachable steps have already taken place.

So it is of great importance to start and end up the discussion on this basis: on the relationship of consolidation of economic relations looking into future without any reference on the problems because

- It modulates an environment of mutual understanding and trust as far as it doesn't stress the emotions from the past
- It discourages others from their attempts to take advantage of these emotions for as long as these are going to exist.
- It will release funds which otherwise were being used in different ways. For example funds for armament underpinning of borders, reinforcement of mechanisms thus creating tension between the two countries
- It will bring out multiplicative influences in economic/social/cultural education

Under which preconditions can this rationale continue?

First of all step by step.

Secondly, without referees (the participation of the two countries in EU will help)

Thirdly, common action in common issues (e.g. cultural promotion, tourism, exploitation of the Aegean sea, overborder problems etc)

Whatever it is agreed it will be done (e.g. Chamber is a basis/structure)

So, what are the elements that unify us? Some of them are the following:

1. The mood for the amplification of economic relationships over the last years has increased significantly e.g. Helsinki (1999). Business between parties join each other and open ways
2. The mood for institution modulation which support entrepreneurship from both sides (Greek-Turkish Chamber) and the Chamber of Kavala in Istanbul
3. Important investments occur. For Greece we already know that many enterprises are working close together with the Turkish one. Recently a merger took place National Bank of Greece bought the Turkish FinasBank (2.3016€)
4. Sea unifies us and all its activities (tourism, maritime transports, oil)
5. The main point of this unification is the geographical position of the two countries which is of strategic importance for the transfer of funds, goods and services and energy throughout Europe and Asia. We cooperate in the transfer of natural gas coming from Russia towards Europe (channel). More should be done in the interface between countries in means of transport in order to serve all the aforementioned targets. This interface should cover sea, land and air. The Express 'Φιλια-Dostluk' is not enough.
6. The past can be regarded as a link. Greeks lived in Turkey, Turks lived in Greece for many years
7. Last but not least is the mentality that joins us. People (both Greek and Turks) are relaxed, open-hearted. What counts for them mostly is mutual trust. They enjoy life even if sometimes this cost them.

For all that if you asked me about the real problems that deplore Greece and Turkey, I would answer that are the following:

1. Common goods (oil/sea) that both sides don't take advantage of them adequately. As a consequence, many supports are absent. I would point out that the 'train of development' goes on a slow pace.

2. Armament deprives from many important funds which otherwise could have been offered for social policy. Especially, when less money is given to other sectors such as education, research, social security and at the same time expenditures in armament covers almost 4.5% of GDP in Greece then I could definitely stress that there seems to be a big problem and something must be done to change this situation. Also, bear in mind that the above case is being exploited by USA in a contrived way (reference to Professor Brasche)
3. We regard the existence of sovereigns as a real problem in the sense that they put one side against the other.
4. Another true problem is the management of common problems from both sides of the borders, such as migration, River Evros, Aegean Sea etc.

Summing up, the dilemma that arises as far as Greek-Turkish relationships is concerned, is to stick to the rationale of the past that separates people and drives to confrontation and prejudice or to insist on a cooperation perspective facing all difficulties and consequences?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Basic barriers of the past (political, economical entrenchment- protection of the relations) don't exist anymore and stopped of being inhibitory factors of this relationship.
- Turkey's accession in the EU, the modulation of common institution (common Chamber) intensiveness of the economic relationships and finally a positive political mood from both sides are samples in order the two countries to go ahead.

On behalf of the Greek team, I would like to say that we belong to the group of people that wish for this cooperation and it is a pleasure for us to send a promising message which will form a reference point and basis as far as the Greek-Turkish relations are concerned.