

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY H.E. RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, AT THE OPENNING OF ANTALYA DIPLOMACY
FORUM**

(18 JUNE 2021)

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished representatives of international institutions,

Distinguished members of the academia and the intellectual world,

The warrants of our future, dear youth,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings, affection and respect.

I am very pleased to come together with you at this first meeting of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

I welcome you to Antalya, the capital of Turkish tourism, and the pearl of the Mediterranean.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for accepting our invitation and attending the Forum.

I am happy to host you with traditional Turkish hospitality in Antalya, a city with world-wide recognition for its historical, cultural, and natural beauties.

We are gathered here to talk, discuss and find solutions to the issues of our region and the world.

Of course, it is not a coincidence that Antalya is hosting the forum.

Antalya is a city that has been the cradle of civilizations throughout history. It has shaped the history of humanity, is one of the most beautiful cities of the Mediterranean and is at the junction of many continents.

Just like the Mediterranean, Antalya is home to many cultures.

Our Antalya, in which people of all origins and faiths live together in peace for centuries, has also been at the center of diplomacy.

With the Forum, the first of which is held today with the intense efforts of my Minister of Foreign Affairs, we are adding a new dimension to the riches of this beautiful city.

I have confidence that in time the Antalya Diplomacy Forum will hopefully turn into a platform where the heart of global diplomacy beats.

The messages of friendship, dialogue and cooperation we will give here will spread in waves all over our region, and the world.

On the occasion of the Forum, you will also have the opportunity to see the beauties of Antalya and to witness the practices of our Safe Tourism Certificate program.

Thanks to this program that we initiated last year, we hosted 16 million tourists in our country in 2020 without any problems.

By further expanding the scope of the system in 2021, we have made it possible for our guests to enjoy their holidays with peace of mind in every corner of our country.

I want you all to enjoy Antalya, which will always be honored to host you with your family and loved ones.

Distinguished guests,

Diplomacy is an institution that has existed, been used, and pondered on ever since humankind started living collectively.

According to a more recent definition, diplomacy, which constitutes the balance between the forces of peace and war, has constantly increased its importance with its preventive character.

With communication technologies, internet, social media and increasing globalization, the playfield of diplomacy has undoubtedly expanded.

When we talk about diplomacy today, we are not just talking about the meetings between state and government officials behind closed doors.

With this concept, we also mean the work carried out in a wide area, ranging from public diplomacy to cultural diplomacy, from tourism diplomacy to trade diplomacy.

In addition to the actors of diplomacy, the platforms upon which diplomacy is exercised are changing and diversifying as well.

Today, the contacts between non-governmental organizations, business world, media, and universities shape foreign policy as much as those between politicians and diplomats.

“Digital diplomacy” is becoming more and more prominent, and it is one of the most prominent gains of this new era.

The expansion of the field of diplomacy, of course, offers great opportunities to humanity in reducing tensions.

In today's world where conflicts continue for years, our need for new avenues opened up by the art of diplomacy is also increasing.

It is time now to increasingly make use of diplomacy and its subtleties in the peaceful resolution of problems, rather than excluding it.

As we always say, there is no shaking hands with clenched fists.

The most effective way to loosen these clenched fists remains to be diplomacy.

We need to render dominant a visionary diplomacy practice that correctly reads the changes in the world, produces solutions for future generations, and re-kneads the knowledge that has been filtered from the past to carry it on to the future.

The magnitude of the threats we face makes international solidarity and cooperation essential.

We have all felt this need once again during the coronavirus pandemic.

Unfortunately, the international community, despite all the tools at its disposal, did not succeed in managing the devastating effects of the pandemic.

It took the United Nations Security Council a hundred days to put the biggest health crisis in history on its agenda.

In the face of the pandemic, which affected even the most remote places in the world from tropical islands to Siberia, unfortunately cooperation gave way to protectionist and competitive policies.

While the burden of billions of people could only be eased through solidarity, our African brothers, Asian and Latin American brothers have been left to their fate.

We see that the pandemic has sharpened injustices worldwide, and further deepened the gap between the richest and the poorest.

The relapse of social unrest in many countries, the re-activation of irregular migration routes, and the increase in deaths in the Mediterranean are the most striking examples of this.

In this process, as Turkey, we tried to come to the aid of our friends all over the world with the belief that “a friend in need is a friend indeed. ”

We sent medical supplies to 158 countries and 12 international organizations that requested help from our country.

We ensured that the refugees we host in Turkey had access to the same health services we provide our citizens with.

In order not to repeat the mistakes made during the first stages of the pandemic, it is important not to give leeway to vaccine nationalism.

It is wrong to use the vaccines as a tool of blackmail, coercion, or policy dictation.

We carry out our domestic vaccine development efforts, which we plan to complete before the end of the year, with a human-oriented and universal approach.

When it is ready for use, we will hopefully share our domestic vaccine with all humanity.

Distinguished friends,

Look at what the spiritual architect of Anatolia, the great sufi, and a person of a warm heart, Mevlana says, as if it were a mirror to our day.

"How beautiful it is to be on the flight everyday

how nice it is to perch somewhere new everyday

how good it is to flow, without drabbling, without freezing!

my dear, they have gone away with yesterday,

whatever has been said that day

it is now time to say something new”

We are living through times when we need to say new things, not just as politicians, and not just as diplomats. But altogether, as academics, students, businessmen, non-governmental organizations as well.

It is clear that we cannot find solutions to today's problems with the habits and the narrow vision of the past.

In their current form, the main structures on which the global governance system is built, especially the United Nations Security Council, are part of the problem, not the solution.

We cannot continue our journey in the 21st century with these institutional structures imposed on us by the bipolar world view.

As Turkey, the aim of our struggle under the banner of “the world is larger than 5” is to rid ourselves of the burdens of the old and embrace the new.

The fate of approximately 8 billion people cannot be left to the mercy of the 5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

A system that gives 190 countries the right to sit at the table for a while but not a say in their own destiny, cannot produce justice.

Where there is no justice, there will be conflict, tension, and oppression.

One of the areas where we need to intensify our diplomatic efforts in the upcoming period is to make the Security Council more inclusive.

Those who benefit from the status quo will of course not want to share this privilege that gives them asymmetrical power.

There may even be implicit or overt pressures to exclude and silence the countries that voice their demands for reform.

The "axis shift" debates about Turkey, which have been frequently put into circulation recently, are the sign of this problematic mentality.

We do not allow these ill-intended, malicious, and artificial discussions to discourage us.

We continue to defend the righteous and the justice for the future of our citizens, our children and entire humanity.

We are undoubtedly aware that this is a long, tiring and difficult process.

We know very well that patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.

We believe that you, our friends share the same feelings and we trust in your support.

Dear guests,

Inspired by Mevlana, we decided on the theme of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum as "Innovative Diplomacy: New Era, New Approaches".

While the world rapidly changes, we have to adapt our diplomacy as well as our approach to interstate relations.

Behind our understanding of Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy, lies this need for innovation and transformation.

Reflecting centuries of experience, Turkish diplomacy draws its strength from its ability to keep up with the changing conditions.

Effective diplomacy in today's world is about looking at the events from a broad perspective and following the developments on the ground closely.

Diplomatic success is only achieved if you can intervene quickly and proactively.

Turkey has the 5th largest diplomatic network in the world with its 252 missions abroad.

We are present all over the world not only with our expanding diplomatic network, but also with our institutions such as Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Maarif Foundation, The Turkish Red Crescent and Turkish Airlines.

With our qualified diplomats who are experts in their fields defending the interests of our country, we also strive to contribute to the peace, stability, development, and prosperity all over the world.

In many regions, we have reaped the fruits of the steps we have taken with this understanding.

We have worked hard to find a political solution to the conflict in our neighbour Syria that will reflect the will of the people.

We have been hosting nearly 4 million Syrian brothers and sisters in our country for about 10 years.

We extend a helping hand to more than 5 million oppressed people who are trying to hold on to life under difficult conditions just beyond our border.

We became the first country to be active on the ground in Syria against terrorist organizations such as PKK-PYD, YPG and DAESH.

We did not allow Syria to become a training and sheltering camp for foreign terrorist fighters. By ending DAESH's presence in Syria to a large extent, we have contributed to the security of our country, Europe, and the world. To date, 4.500 DAESH terrorists have been neutralized by Turkey.

We have enabled the safe and voluntary return of 430,000 Syrians to their lands.

We also support the displaced people in Idlib with our projects such as the construction of briquette houses.

Many of our friends here are well aware of the difficulties we face in all of our sincere efforts based on self-sacrifice.

We did not get the support we expected from the international community, in our fight against terrorist organizations or in our efforts to stabilize Syria.

The murderers who killed civilians in our country are protected through granting of political asylum seeker status.

Under the guise of fighting against DEASH, an attempt was made to establish a terrorist state along our southern border.

Except for a few ostensible operations, no decisive action has been taken to prevent the PKK from collecting tens of millions of Euros in tribute every year.

However, it is the duty of everyone, especially those who give lessons on democracy and law to the world, to fight against all forms of terrorism.

The responsibility to ensure peace and stability in Syria falls not only on Turkey, but on all of us.

The brotherly people of Libya, have similarly gone through years of pain.

Our solidarity with the legitimate Libyan Government recognized by the United Nations has paved the way for a ceasefire, unity, and a new beginning in the country.

It is important to increase support for healing, reconstruction, and development in Libya, especially during this critical period.

Our friends from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine, who are among us today, have been experiencing the problems caused by the inability to resolve conflicts.

We have been carrying this burden for years in the context of the Cyprus issue.

We support the proposal presented by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Geneva for a two-state solution based on sovereign equality .

We want the Mediterranean to be a basin of peace, prosperity, and cooperation.

Our proposal for the Eastern Mediterranean Conference, in which all stakeholders will participate, is still on the table.

It is in our hands to enable the energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean to lead to cooperation and not confrontation.

We are pleased with the momentum we have recently achieved with our neighbour Greece.

We would like to strengthen our cooperation with our ally, the United States and the European Union based on positive agendas.

Distinguished guests,

With a history of more than 2,200 years, Turkey is one of the countries with the most well established state traditions in the world.

This also means having a deep-rooted diplomacy culture.

The diplomacy of Turkey, which is geographically an Afro-Eurasian country, is carried out with a broad vision embracing these three continents.

We never neglect Latin America while developing our relations with Europe, or the Balkans while strengthening our cooperation with the Turkic World.

We are striving to ensure that Al Quds, which hosts the holy places of Jews and Christians as well as Muslims, preserves its original identity and becomes a "land of harmony" today as it was in the past.

We are at the forefront of the fight against Islamophobia, xenophobia, and cultural racism, which has become graver with the pandemic.

While expanding the horizons of Turkish diplomacy with our "Asia Anew" initiative, we are furthering our cooperation in all fields with Africa, with which we have long-standing ties.

In this context, we organized the Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit twice, first in Istanbul in 2008 and then in Malabo in 2014.

During my tenure as Prime Minister and then President, I visited 28 African countries, some of them several times.

Exactly 10 years ago in 2011, I visited Somalia with my spouse, which was experiencing the biggest crisis in its history and became the first world leader to do so.

As a country without the shame of colonialism in its past, we want to benefit from Africa's rich culture and experience.

We hope to host the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit in Turkey in September, which we had to postpone due to the pandemic.

In the upcoming period, we hope to further increase our cooperation in all fields, by fixing one foot of the compass in Turkey and with the other reaching out to all geographies from Africa to Latin America, from the Pacific to Asia.

The Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which is being held with extensive participation, is one of the most important initiatives that reveals this horizon, purpose and sincerity of our country.

It is also meaningful that our young people, who will be the leaders of the future, take part in the forum as well as politicians, academics and non-governmental organizations.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to organizing the Forum, especially my Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I would like to express my gratitude to each of you in advance for your participation and contribution to the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, and once again I greet you with respect.

May you all remain safe and healthy.