

**Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to start by extending my heartfelt welcome to all our colleagues who have travelled a long way to take part in this prestigious program.

I hope you all had a pleasant trip on your way to Ankara.

This year we are celebrating the 20th consecutive year of “The Training Program for International Junior Diplomats”.

Since its inception in 1992, this program has brought together and trained more than 800 young diplomats – just like yourselves - from 5 continents and more than 100 countries.

I believe your next few weeks in Turkey will be a unique and positive experience for you all.

The training program will provide insights into multinational dynamics while offering opportunities to discover the culture, history and art of Turkey.

You will find that Turkish diplomacy is deeply rooted in tradition.

This tradition, which goes back well into centuries, is duly reflected in the program.

Your curriculum will cover foreign policy, politics, culture, economics, and history, with special focus on Turkey.

Your instructors will include academics from top universities, experts from think-tanks, and high-level officials from the Turkish government.

In addition, Turkish diplomats will give you candid briefings about how we conduct Turkish foreign policy.

But also, in this multicultural setting, you will learn from one another through free and dynamic discussions.

I believe this will establish common ground for further international cooperation and intercultural dialogue, as well as long-lasting friendship among you.

Dear colleagues,

The need to develop a deep mutual understanding is a must in today's fast changing world.

In fact when I was around your age, at the beginning of my career, making sense of diplomacy was much easier.

It was a bi-polar world with rigid confines for international politics. Serving in West Germany as a young diplomat was a unique experience for me to understand these two separate worlds.

Today rapid and vast geopolitical changes are characterizing the globe. This is an interconnected and interdependent world.

Current trends are indicating that in the near future, resource demands for energy, food and water, demographic patterns and global developments, such as climate change will require more international cooperation.

Therefore, the need to reform and democratize international governance mechanisms will only increase.

In this new era, economic power and political influence have been shifting, particularly towards Asia, Latin America and Africa.

No country in the world can remain indifferent to this transformation. This is especially true for the emerging economies, which are gaining stronger footholds in the international economy and politics.

As an emerging economy itself, Turkey has been extending its network of connections beyond its immediate region by building a web of mutually beneficial relationships in these vibrant geographies.

As a result, Turkey's presence is continually increasing across regions ranging from Africa to the Pacific, Latin America to Oceania.

In addition to the political, economic and investment aspects of our engagements with these regions, we also join in the regional cooperation schemes, either as an observer or a dialogue partner.

In fact today, there is hardly any regional organization around the world that Turkey has not developed a substantive relationship, from ASEAN to African Union.

Turkey's Africa opening is a demonstrative case in point. In line with the priorities set out by our Africa Strategy, we have undertaken a comprehensive policy in this continent, fostering close political relations and boosting bilateral trade.

Foreign Ministry is leading the effort by establishing diplomatic presence across the continent. The number of Turkish embassies in Africa has increased from 12 to 35 in the last five years.

In less than a decade we almost tripled our trade volume with Africa, reaching 20 billion today. We set an ambitious target of increasing the trade volume to 100 billion dollars in the next ten years.

Turkey's interest in Africa goes well beyond its diplomatic and commercial dimensions. Turkish Airlines, for example, is flying to 38 different destinations in Africa, while Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency is carrying out projects in 37 African countries.

Similarly, Turkey strives to strengthen its relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

In that respect, today Turkey is able to call its bilateral relationships with China, Japan and Korea as "strategic". We enjoy a privileged position of maintaining excellent relationships both with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

We have also enhanced our diplomatic presence in the region by opening up four new missions, in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Brunei in the last two years.

Having completed a friendship and cooperation agreement with ASEAN in 2010, Turkey has become a "dialogue partner" with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, another vital regional body.

Similarly with Latin America and the Caribbean we have developed intensive relationships through trade and enhanced relations with regional institutions and organizations.

Turkey pursues these relations in tandem with its strategic relations with the European and Transatlantic political, economic and security structures.

In this regard, EU membership remains a strategic goal for Turkey. We believe that Turkey's EU membership will be mutually beneficial for both sides.

Once Turkey's EU accession process is re-energized, this will create a positive synergy in a wide geography. Given the current volatility around us, from Ukraine to Syria, the importance of such a momentum needs no further explanation.

Turkey's indispensable and central role in NATO has been further strengthened in view of changing nature modern threats.

Along the same lines, Turkey's multifaceted relationship with the United States is deepening by gaining new dimensions. Not only on regional matters but also on global issues, the two countries continue their close cooperation.

As a staunch supporter of multilateralism, Turkey's profile has also been increasing in international organizations.

Having successfully served at the UN Security Council in 2009-2010, Turkey announced once again its candidacy for a non-permanent membership in the Security Council for the period of 2015-2016.

Turkey will assume G-20 Presidency in 2015.

We will be hosting the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016.

Dear colleagues,

It is a privilege to be a diplomat representing one's own country.

Do remember that this career is a marathon.

It requires careful planning and sustainability.

With this in mind, we have devised a three and a half week short version of this marathon for you here at our Academy.

You will also have a chance to visit some of the most unique corners of our country and witness for yourselves the treasures of ancient civilizations that transcend centuries.

In the upcoming years you may meet each other again in multilateral organizations or in other destinations.

I do hope that you enjoy and benefit from this program and keep the friendships you will make here.

I would like to express once again my happiness to host you here today. Enjoy your stay in Turkey! Thank you.