

08.06.2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is my pleasure to take part in the opening event of the "German Turkish Week 2009" and come together with you for this occasion.

The centuries-old tie of friendship between Germany and Turkey has, as you all know, been intensified especially through employment-related Turkish immigration to Germany. These days Germany and Turkey share close connections in every field. On the list of visitors to Turkey, German tourists have been number one for many years.

Taking these circumstances into consideration, I think it's no exaggeration to say that, amongst the countries that enjoy good relations, Germany and Turkey are two truly connected nations. So I would like to congratulate the host organizations - "The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy ", "The Robert Bosch Stiftung" and "Istanbul Policy Center of the Sabanci University" for celebrating the rich diversity and cultural connections between these two closely connected nations within the framework of the "German-Turkish Week 2009".

Also I am happy to see the "German-Turkish Week 2009" as part of the Young Leaders Forum "Germany Meets Turkey". As many of you know, this Forum aims to bring together young leaders who will further strengthen the ties between Germany and Turkey. The fact that this week-long event series is part of a program which aims to fulfill this, and is organized mainly by young people for young people, gives me a feeling of hope regarding the future of German-Turkish relations, not to mention a feeling of pride. Despite us knowing each other so well, I am sad to observe that not only the relations between Germany and Turkey, but also in discussions about the Turkish population in Germany, we are not free from prejudice and stereotypes.

Cultural differences will remain, with no doubt, and it is a matter of course that people consider these differences as part of their identity. However the issue which is most important is that we treat each other with respect and tolerance and learn to perceive cultural differences as a contribution to our lives. I firmly believe that the young people of today act upon the basis of such principles.

At this point I would like to take the opportunity and address the Young Leaders directly. We must not forget that the future belongs to you, the young, much more than to today's leaders, politicians and bureaucrats. Events like this that focus on you give us all the opportunity to be heard, portray our problems and become a part of the solution. To meet responsible, young people like you gives us hope for the future.

I wish the "German-Turkish Week 2009" to be an event which reflects the rich cultures of both nations in an effective manner that will allow the two nations to grow closer and build an even more solid foundation for their relationship.

I thank everyone who has contributed to the organization of this event and the realization of the idea behind it, as well as today's guests. I wish you all an entertaining evening and an enjoyable week.

Thank you for your attention.

H. E. Ali Ahmet Acet

Ambassador of Turkey to Germany