

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT OPENING CEREMONY

(23 May 2016, Monday, İstanbul)

Excellencies,

Valuable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I salute you all with my most heartfelt feelings and regards.

Welcome to our country.

It is a great pleasure to host the first World Humanitarian Summit of history and to host you in İstanbul, the city of civilization and history, on this occasion.

I hope that this Summit leads to auspicious outcomes for all humanity, primarily those hundreds of millions of people striving to sustain their lives under great distress.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his team for their efforts in convening such an important summit.

I congratulate all those who contributed with their efforts in organizing the Summit.

Valuable guests,

Crises caused by wars, natural disasters, epidemics and climate change are threatening the peace, welfare and common future of all humanity.

We present in this Summit recognize very well that pain knows no colour, race, language or religion.

It is with this understanding that Turkey implements humanitarian and development aid activities and carries out thousands of projects in more than 140 countries around the world

We also host more than 3 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

I would like to proudly express that Turkey is the country that hosts the highest number of refugees and has the highest increase in its ratio of aid to national income around the world.

The total amount of our humanitarian aid and humanitarian development aid for 2014 has been finalized as 6.4 billion dollars.

This figure increases every year.

Within this process, we had the opportunity to observe all aspects of the global humanitarian aid system and experience at first hand the problems and shortcomings of the system.

The current system falls short in the face of urgent problems of humanity.

The burden of the system, which fails to generate solutions to the problems, is shouldered only by certain countries.

Everyone should assume responsibility from now on.

First of all, we need to review the global aid system with a perspective that places the human beings in the centre.

If a system cannot deliver even a couple of dollars' worth of anti-malaria nets to those in need and cannot supply simple vaccines and remains a bystander to the loss of tens of thousands of children's lives, it means that there is a problem in this system.

We, as leaders and responsible individuals of the international community, can only succeed if we work under common principles and goals.

The Humanitarian Agenda presented by the Secretary-General and the core responsibilities listed therein are highly important in this sense.

First of all, to prevent the suffering around the world, we should ensure that current conflicts are ended before all and that new conflicts are prevented.

We are continuing and will continue our mediation efforts as Turkey.

Secondly, we need to step up our efforts to bring an end to violations of international law, as we have witnessed in Syria.

With this understanding, we will not stop pursuing blood-shedding dictators and we will do our best to ensure that the crimes committed against humanity do not remain unpunished.

Thirdly, we need to provide more assistance to displaced women, children, disabled people and others in need.

Fourthly, in order to reduce dependency on aid, there is a need for overhauling the way we work to ensure that every nation can stand on their own feet.

With its AFAD, TİKA, Turkish Red Crescent and other institutions, Turkey endeavours to present a different model with its “development oriented humanitarian aid” policy by ensuring collaboration in its humanitarian and development aid activities.

Finally, while needs increase every day, resources do not increase at the same pace.

Moreover, in terms of aid financing, we observe some issues and tendencies to avoid responsibility among the international community.

The country that best knows and bitterly experienced this weakness is Turkey.

While the amount spent for the refugees in our country exceed 10 billion dollars, the contribution of the international community remained at 455 million dollars.

I hope that the World Humanitarian Summit serves as a turning point in all these areas.

We shall never forget our responsibilities vis-à-vis the people who locked their eyes and hearts to the messages and commitments that will arise from Istanbul.

With these thoughts in mind, I welcome our guests honouring this historical summit from all corners of the world and I wish this Summit great success.