

**D-8 OPENING SPEECH of H.E. MEHMET MEHDİ EKER,
MINISTER OF FOOD AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK OF
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

Honorable Secretary General,
Excellencies-Ministers,
Esteemed Participants,

Before I start my speech, let me express how pleased I am in hosting you in Turkey, on the occasion of the 5th D-8 Agricultural Ministerial Meeting on Food Security.

I hope that this conference shall bear fruitful outcomes both for our countries and the world and wish you a nice and enjoyable stay in Istanbul, the city bridging Asia and Europe.

Esteemed Participants,

One of the sine-quo-non needs of man-kind is food supply and nutrition.

Day by day, it gets more and more challenging to meet such a need due to difficult access to food and distribution gaining further importance.

Rapid population growth in the world, migration from rural to urban areas, limited natural resources such as soil and water, global warming, migration between the countries are the common challenges, today.

According to the reports published by international organizations, the world population which is 7.2 billion today is expected to reach 9,3 billion in 2050.

Within the same period, it is estimated that agricultural production is going to increase by 70% in developing and under-developed countries.

When the prices declared by international organizations are analyzed, we see that there seems to be no crisis.

Nonetheless, I believe that we need to monitor **Agriculture and Food security** in order to be proactive against the crises that we all have had experienced before.

In addition, agricultural products cannot be produced overnight unlike industrial ones. It takes time, soil, water and labor force, which constitute the main inputs.

Today, Good National and Global planning is required to ensure food security. Production of sufficient food is not adequate for food security *per se*.

Easy access to food is as vital as its production.

As you do know, during the food crisis in 2008, some major exporting countries brought limitations to food-stuffs and social outbursts occurred as a consequence.

Having the money does not mean that you have access to food, at all times.

Food security is the most important element in overall security and welfare in Turkey.

If there is a food security problem in a country, then, that becomes the problem of all and we, as D-8 countries, need to act all together to develop solutions in this matter.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

D-8 countries' population is constituting 1/7 (14%) of the world population.

D-8 has a significant place, in view of population size.

From the standpoint of employment and economic growth, agricultural sector has an important place.

More than 30% of the labor force in D-8 countries is employed in this sector.

Despite its huge share in employment, contribution of the agricultural sector to the national economies is limited.

This fact indicates that one of the major problems in the agricultural sector is low productivity.

Another important matter is that **the amount of investments made in the agricultural sector has to be increased.**

According to the figures by international organizations, an additional investment of 83 billion USD must be realized in the global agricultural sector.

Such investments must be made, according to a system, under the supervision of the governments.

Apart from public organizations, private sector should be also included into the process and we should put in place the arrangements that will facilitate the private sector investments.

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

D-8 has registered progress by contributing to co-operation between the Member States for 17 years.

Within this scope, various working groups have been established and they created a platform to seek common solutions by bringing national experts together.

I ascribe importance to these Working Groups in view of areas of cooperation, identification of common challenges, filling the gap and approximation of policies to achieve a common understanding.

I believe that the Member States must participate in the Working Groups further to make the most out of them.

No matter how often the working groups come together, we see that there is a problem in achieving concrete and long-lasting solutions. **As the D-8 countries, I do not think that we do benefit from the existing potential in agriculture.**

Within this framework, we feel that **private sector must take place in our works.** That is why we have invited the representatives of the private sector.

Definitely, public-private partnership under the umbrella of D-8 platform will positively contribute to the improvement of agriculture and food security.

We should keep in mind that we are much more advantageous than many developed countries that are suitable for agricultural production. Then, we can take advantage of this situation through cooperation, in a multi-faceted way for the welfare of our countries.

Another topic that I would like to elaborate on is the **frequency of the Agricultural Ministerial Meeting.**

As Turkey, we suggest that the working groups convene regularly but the Ministerial Meeting be held every 2 years, instead of once a year.

Therefore, the decision-makers will have enough time to monitor the adopted decisions.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Now, I would like to touch upon the efforts that Turkey could assume under the umbrella of D-8. As you do know, as of **1 December 2014, Turkey is the president of G20**. Giant 20 economies of the world discuss the matters that will shape the future of the world, under the roof of G20.

Turkey, as a member of G20, is an active actor of this system. Within this scope, we will host the heads of G20 States, agriculture as well as NGOs and organize many events in Turkey.

Food security will remain to be a top priority, in the agenda of Turkey during G 20 Presidency.

Here the target audience is not G20 countries *per se*. In particular, special works will focus on low income countries.

Regarding this matter, we believe that the accumulation of know-how and experiences that we have and the capacity of co-operation will have positive reflections upon the **D-8 platform**, during our term.

Within the frame-work of strengthening our cooperation, we, as the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture, are always ready to provide a support to the regional and global endeavors of the D8 countries, in particular about food security, just like the way we share with G20.

Specifically, **sustainable food systems must be planned and put into practice in order to ensure food security as a priority.**

Within this context;

- **Special importance should be given to small holder farmers as well as the employment of women and youth in the agricultural sector.**
- **R & D and agricultural infrastructure should be developed.**
- **Market surveillance and transparency are important.**
- **Food waste and losses should be decreased.**

As we all know 1 billion 300 million tons of food is wasted per year in the world. With this amount, It is possible to meet the food needs of 1 billion people, suffering from hunger. In other words struggling with food waste is an important issue and giving more practical results than food production.

Honorable Ministers,
Esteemed Participants,

The main issue in food security is derived from access to food and distribution associated problems.

Food security, deemed as an essential element in overall security and welfare, is a common issue in all Member States and as D-8 countries, we should act jointly to develop solutions. We should also **intensify cooperation** in order to get more shares both from domestic and international markets for our products.

Today, many tragedies occurring in the Muslim world are making our hearts bleed literally.

Assuring food supply and security, in other words, implementation of effective agricultural policies, will definitely contribute to the reduction of

the concerns in the Muslim geography where socio-political problems still persist.

Humanitarian drama in Syria, Palestine and Iraq renders approximation and cooperation vital. So, D-8 Meeting gains much more importance in this sense.

At this juncture, I would like to emphasize that; Agriculture and Food Security affect not only the Muslim world but also the political and social issues in the world, this or that way.

At the moment, there is huge struggle for new areas of cooperation globally.

Especially, efforts to create a single economic block out of the USA and the EU and the initiatives of the Asia-Pacific countries for economic partnerships shall absolutely pave the way to new formations.

It is inevitable to perform positive restructuring in the agricultural systems of this region.

Without being a mere member of the audience vis-à-vis the developments, we ***as D-8 countries, must elevate the level of cooperation.***

Excellencies,

Esteemed Participants,

The previous day, the experts of the working groups held their sessions and yesterday, we held a high-level officials meeting. Today, distinguished friends will share the results of this meeting with you soon.

Again, as a result of this meeting, we will be talking about the Istanbul Initiative.

While concluding my remarks, I wish that the 5th Agricultural Ministerial Meeting will bring blessings to all Member States. Once again, I would like to greet and welcome you all full-heartedly. Now, let's start the meeting.