

Committed to competitiveness

By **ÜMIT BOYNER**

PRESIDENT OF TÜSIAD, TURKISH INDUSTRY & BUSINESS ASSOCIATION



ÜMIT BOYNER

completed her BA degree in Economics at the University of Rochester, New York and completed the Financial Management Program of the Graduate School of Business at Columbia University. Following a career in a number of companies including Chemical Mitsui Bank, she became in 1996 the Vice-President in charge of finance in Boyner Holding. She served as Vice-President of TÜSIAD between 2005 and 2010 and was elected President by the General Assembly of the association on 21 January 2010.

The year 2005 was a crucial moment in the EU-Turkey relationship. The EU Council of Ministers, under the British Presidency, was about to decide on whether the EU membership negotiations with Turkey would be opened or not. On the eve of this meeting, the Confederation of British Industry-CBI and TÜSIAD, representing the Turkish business community, issued a joint public welcome for the European Union's decision to commence accession negotiations with Turkey:

"We believe this is an important milestone in a journey that should focus minds on the economic dynamics of the EU and Turkey. It reflects the progress Turkey has made to embrace and deliver reform. Both our organisations see significant benefits of securing Turkey's place within the European single market. Europe must face up to the challenges of becoming more competitive, of embracing the Lisbon agenda and of effecting economic reform. Political questions that may arise in the negotiations are ultimately for member states and the Commission, working with the Turkish government, to address at the appropriate moment. In the meantime our business communities look forward to contributing towards broader and deeper economic reform, and to securing momentum towards Turkey's accession to the EU."

The EU Council of Ministers of 3rd October 2005 effectively took the decision to launch Turkey's EU accession process. Since then, Turkey has made considerable progress towards becoming a more active European country both in international politics and the global economic scene. British and Turkish economic ties have deepened despite the global financial crisis, and both countries continued to boost Europe's global competitiveness: the UK as a large European economy with the most global vision and Turkey as Europe's largest and fastest emerging economy. After all, London and Istanbul are Europe's global gateways.

The President of the Republic, Abdullah Gül, was one of the chief architects who transformed this crucial moment of 2005 in the EU-Turkey relations into a window of opportunity for Turkey's future in Europe. His later contributions to Turkey's EU process and the international peace transformed these opportunities into tangible political and economic achievements. This is why Chatham House's decision to deliver its prestigious prize to President Gül is welcomed by the Turkish business community as a recognition of

his personal role as well as the high significance of the British-Turkish partnership for Europe's future.

Turkey, while being in the middle of the most volatile regions of the world, has policies and constructive engagement which are major factors of stability in the Eurasian area. As an energy corridor, an economic hub and a transit route connecting Europe with the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, Caspian region, Middle East, Central Asia and beyond, Turkey is strategically located to further the integration of Eurasia. This vast region from the British Isles to Japan is the world's largest trading area. This is also the area where trade and economic integration would continue apace, to generate the world's wealth for the foreseeable future.

Therefore, it is no surprise that Britain emerged as one of Turkey's most consistent and vocal supporters in the European Union. This is partly a result of long standing ties of friendship and a rational alliance between our two countries. But it was also because the British government has a built-in reflex to think more strategically about the EU's future. Many member countries alongside Britain had an eye for the long-term, beneficial consequences of Turkey's accession.

I believe, this unique and matchless position of Turkey is causing intense discussions on whether Turkey's axis is shifting or not. In some sense, Turkey's choices of identity, strategic preference and political orientation will be one of the important factors shaping the 21st century. If this axiom is correct, then a European Union that aspires to more than complacently preserving its wealth, comfort and privileges would benefit from Turkey's admission. This will in fact be the enlargement of Europe in every sense. This will be the enlargement of Europe's spheres of values, law, policies and interests to a large, vibrant and innovative land and society.

In this context, TÜSIAD will continue to be ever more committed to enhance Turkey's global competitiveness relying on its representative role of the Turkish business: around 60 per cent of the added-value, 80 per cent of the exports and 85 per cent of the corporate tax revenues. We will also continue to lead the Turkonfed, Turkey's largest network of SMEs, regional business associations and industrial sector organisations.

For us, Turkey's global role and European future imply working for a better democracy, sustainable economic growth and social development. **F**