

Turkey's success story

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HASAN BASRI GÖKTAN has a degree in engineering and a PhD in Economics. He began his career in 1973 at Seker Fabrikaları A.Ş., subsequently serving as Chairman of Pankobirlik between 1983-93 as well as General Manager of the Sugar Beet Cooperatives and Chairman of Sekerbank T.A.Ş. and Konya Seker Fabrikası A.Ş. In 1993, Dr Göktaş became the General Manager of Sekerbank T.A.Ş. and a board member of Türkiye Seker Fabrikaları A.Ş. In 2008 he became Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sekerbank T.A.Ş. He is also an Executive Member of the Sekerbank T.A.Ş. Board.

The political, economic, and cultural changes that have swept the world over the last decade have increased Turkey's importance on the global stage. This country's economic size, its rich agricultural resources, its location along energy transit routes, its dynamic workforce and young population, along with financially sound sectors based on high level know-how, such as banking, have all enabled Turkey to play a vitally important role in the future of the region. The Chatham House Prize bestowed on President Abdullah Gül is one the best indications of that role.

Turkey's position today is the result of the bold steps first taken in the early years of the Republic, even earlier. Along the way, EU relations, and particularly the negotiation process that began in 2005, and to which President Gül contributed considerably, are important. As noted by President Gül on several occasions, this process has had a positive effect on the welfare, stability, and peace of Europe and Turkey, as well as to the wider region. Looking back over Turkish-EU relations, it is clear that our links to Britain have been particularly important. We thank Britain for her efforts in helping to develop Turkish-EU relations, as well as for supporting full EU membership for Turkey; Britain is one of our most important partners in Europe.

This wide-ranging partnership, a continuation of the long-standing historical ties between the two countries, has taken on a new dimension thanks to a series of recent high-profile visits. This has been reflected in bilateral economic relations as well: trade between the two countries reached approximately US\$10 billion in 2009. Continued trade at these levels will have a positive impact on the economic development of both countries and the wider region. In this framework, the current period that began with the global economic crisis, and gradually indicating that the entire world has entered into a tremendous transformation process has highlighted Turkey's financially sound sectors based on high level know-how, like banking.

Thanks to the personal efforts and support of the Turkish President, the banking sector has found new international markets, strengthening its potential to be one of the main locomotives of economic growth in Turkey. With its robust balance sheet structure, balanced risk distribution, strong equities, and risk management, the Turkish banking system stands out

as the most self-confident sector in the coming decade. The fact that there was no need for public intervention in the Turkish banking sector, unlike in many other countries, has illustrated at home and abroad yet again that the banking sector is "Turkey's success story".

Over the last 58 years Sekerbank has consistently contributed towards Turkey's growth through its support of industry, while servicing SMEs, agriculture and individuals with the mission of Community Banking. Turkey's credits to GDP ratio is a quarter of the EU average, but in the period to come, as long as Turkey's GDP increases, so will the sector's credit volume, and this will have a correspondingly positive impact. The banking sector grew eightfold between 2002 to 2009, while the increase in the credits to GDP ratio between 2002 and 2008 is 16 per cent higher than the EU average.

As Turkey's economy has grown, we at Sekerbank have adopted a strategy of controlled and sound growth in specialist fields. Sekerbank continues to perform at the top level in the manufacturing, small enterprises, SMEs, and agriculture sectors. Agriculture in particular is gradually increasing its share in the Turkish banking sector. Sekerbank knows the farmer very well, knows his needs and working conditions, and we are constantly developing new products and applications in line with these needs. Agricultural banking is not a new opening for Sekerbank: it is the reason we were set up in the first place. Accordingly, our agricultural credit portfolio is three times greater than other private banks.

Along with agriculture, energy efficiency is another leading area that we give strategic priority to, and which is also attracting more attention from the banks. Our EKO kredi product has been developed specifically with energy saving/ efficiency investment in mind. Once again, we are leading the way with a product applicable to all market segments: we have introduced more than 12,000 people to energy saving so far. While we aim at preserving energy resources by means of EKO kredi, we are also looking to help family and businesses manage their budgets by raising consciousness about energy efficiency.

With a widespread network of branches in 70 cities and 194 districts across Turkey, Sekerbank shall continue to play a key role especially in Community Banking by financial support it gives to the driving industrial sector of Turkey as supported by its background and experience in these fields. **F**