

Scaling new heights

By HE ÜNAL ÇEVİKÖZ

AMBASSADOR OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



ÜNAL ÇEVİKÖZ

holds degrees in English Literature and Political Science from the Bosphorous University and holds a Masters in International Relations from the Free University of Brussels. He joined Turkey's Foreign Service in 1978 and served in Moscow, Sofia and in Austria as well as at the International Secretariat of NATO in Brussels. From 2001 to 2004 he was Turkey's Ambassador to Azerbaijan and subsequently Ambassador in Iraq from 2004-06. Mr Çeviköz has served in various political departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and most recently was Deputy Undersecretary for Bilateral Political Affairs.

This is the second time in a year that I have the pleasure of writing an open editorial for a Special Report on Turkey by FIRST, this time to mark the State Visit of President Abdullah Gül, which in itself sends a strong message on the excellent state of relations between our countries. Last year President Gül visited London to receive the Chatham House Prize.

Turkey and the United Kingdom share a long common history. It comes as no surprise that Britain sent its first resident Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 16th century. Yusuf Agah Efendi, who was appointed in 1793 as the first resident envoy to London was the first Ottoman Ambassador ever posted to a foreign capital. The establishment of the first permanent Ottoman Embassy laid the foundations for modern Ottoman diplomacy. Turkey-UK diplomatic relations have deepened ever since. We have worked together to achieve shared goals. Indeed, since that period Turkey has been very much part of the Western and European worlds, being a member of the Council of Europe, NATO, the OECD and the OSCE, and having an Association Agreement with the European Union going right back to 1963. We are happy to see the UK as one of our staunchest allies, whose cross party support for our European Union bid has long been appreciated.

Today, Turkey and the United Kingdom enjoy a "Strategic Partnership" based on strong bonds of alliance, friendship and mutual trust. Our relations are flourishing in almost every field. We have developed close and effective cooperation in a wide range of areas as well as on major regional and international issues. We are in constant contact at the highest level and work closely to help peace, security and stability as well as democracy, freedom and the rule of law prevail and flourish across a wider region, not to mention the imperative of dedication to the promotion of economic growth and prosperity as a prerequisite for and also long-term guarantor of democracy and peace. Increasingly we are finding that when we work together there is much that we can achieve together that we cannot achieve separately.

Turkey has a strong and active presence in Britain. Almost half a billion pounds have been invested by Turkish companies in the UK in recent years; there are more than 3,000 Turkish students attending UK

universities; the Turkish community in Britain, the traces of the arrival of which date back to the 16th century and numbered 400,000 today has already formed the strongest human and cultural bond between the two countries as well as over 35,000 UK citizens who have chosen Turkey as their second home. Despite the global financial crisis, the annual trade volume between our countries reached US\$ 12 billion in 2010. The trade volume in the first half of the current year reached US\$ 6.6 billion. UK is Turkey's 2nd largest partner in exports and 10th largest partner in imports. This is a good record but, we are committed to move forward towards the common goal of doubling the trade volume within the next five years.

The situation is equally remarkable from the UK perspective. Today, the UK is the second largest investor in Turkey. More than 2,300 British firms have made investments worth of US\$ 4.1 billion in Turkey. Major British companies have significant investments in Turkey. In the present very demanding economic circumstances, building stronger economic and trade links could help pave the way for economic stimulus and generate wealth both in Turkey and in the UK.

The State Visit of President Abdullah Gül is a hugely significant occasion. It will help bring the importance of our relationship based on mutual interests to a wider audience and open new avenues for cooperation. I am confident that the State Visit will highlight the very special nature of Turkey-UK relations. As the Turkish Ambassador to the United Kingdom I am deeply committed to further broaden and strengthen the relations between our countries. **F**

The Republic of Turkey

- Government: Parliamentary Republic
- Area: 302 thousand square miles
- Population: 72.5 million
- GDP: US\$1.016 trillion (PPP)
- GDP per capita: US\$14,077 (PPP)
- Turkey is the world's 16th and Europe's 6th largest economy. The OECD estimates that Turkey will be the third highest growing country after China and India by 2017. Turkish GDP grew by 8.9 per cent in 2010.