

Opening Remarks by Dr. John Hamre, *President and CEO, CSIS*

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to this seminar sponsored jointly by Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). This seminar is, I believe, the fifth conference that we have hosted, featuring President Rifat Hisarciklioglu. We are proud to have this association with TOBB and with Turkey.

My role today is strictly ornamental, to welcome all of you and to introduce one of my bosses on the CSIS Board of Trustees, Mr. Muhtar Kent, who in turn will introduce President Rifat Hisarciklioglu. But I can't resist the opportunity to offer just a few framing comments about Turkey.

I have said on numerous occasions that Turkey is America's most undervalued ally. I know the exceptional help that Turkey provided America and the West during the long standoff of the Cold War. Turkey was on the front lines of that geopolitical standoff, and never flinched. And today, I believe that every crucial strategic problem in the region is solved only with deep and constructive relations with Turkey. Turkey is situated in a complex and difficult neighborhood. It is a country that is struggling with all the tensions of the region, yet has to find its own way to balance values and prosperity. I don't minimize the tension that presents to Turkish citizens at all levels. I have seen enormous energy and commitment among the many Turks with whom I am privileged to work, and I see genuine progress.

It is my firm belief that America and Turkey are bound in a far deeper and more strategic partnership than we share with almost any other country. We have many complex interests and goals in this general region. And in every one of them, Turkey is a critical factor for our success. For every problem that consider, the solution is dramatically easier if we and Turkey work together constructively, and far more difficult if we let our relationship drift or let it become fractious.

We are here today to hear the head of TOBB. This is a unique institution. It reflects a blending of the private sector and the public sector in common purpose. We have had the privilege of working with TOBB for many years. It is my firm conviction that the problems that we are facing in this complex world are not going to be solved by the government in isolation or by the private sector through its own energies. These are problems that can only be solved through a deep and sustained partnership between the government and the governed.

TOBB was established in 1952, but its business model is more relevant today than at any time. Finding a way to bring forth a public sensibility in the private sector, and marry it with a government perspective that is tempered by a lively knowledge of the private sector is the path for success.

Thank you all for coming today. We are delighted you are here.

Let me take a minute to thank one of my bosses—Muhtar Kent—for coming today to be the official host for this conference. Muhtar is a son of both Turkey and America. We both boast to

have him and he has been a huge success that makes both of our countries equally proud. I am delighted he is a member of the CSIS Board of Trustees. He is a true internationalist with a pragmatic perspective and a leadership charisma. We are the better for having him on our board. I am delighted to turn to Muhtar to open our conference today.

Thank you.