

**Introduction by Mr. Muhtar Kent, President, CEO and Chairman of the Board, Coca Cola Company; Trustee, CSIS**

Let me join John Hamre in thanking each and every one of you for taking the time to be with us today for what I know will be an insightful and productive discussion with my good friend, Rifat Hisarciklioglu.

I also want to thank Center for Strategic and International Studies and Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey for staging this important dialogue and hosting us in this beautiful venue.

As we gather here in this building named in honor of the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, I am reminded of something President Reagan said about U.S.-Turkish relations on the eve of his presidency.

He told the visiting Turkish Prime Minister that *“The ties between Turkey and the United States are broader than our common security interests. We are brought together by the strong bonds that derive from shared values as well.”*

Bonds of freedom ,bonds of democracy, entrepreneurship, free markets and the rule of law.

In the course of my life, travels and conversations with business and government leaders from around the world, I have come to three basic conclusions about relations between Turkey and America.

1. Turkey needs a strong America.
2. America needs a strong Turkey.
3. The world needs strong American-Turkish relations.

Not just strong diplomatic relations but also strong commercial and economic relations.

I also believe that American and Turkish businesses, in particular, have an important leadership role to play in developing private sector solutions for the economic problems facing the world today.

We bring a unique perspective and approach to the table.

Neither of our nations are strangers to economic crises.

Think back thirty years ago to the economic crisis here in America, or just eight years ago to the economic meltdown in Turkey.

We not only survived but we grew stronger and that’s because our great nations did what we’ve always done best.

We innovated and reinvented ourselves.

America replaced 40 million antiquated jobs with 80 million new high-paying and high-skilled jobs between 1980 and 2000.

Turkey not only survived the economic crisis of 2001 but quadrupled exports and grew into the world's 16<sup>th</sup> largest economy, Europe's 7<sup>th</sup> largest economy, and the single-largest economy from the Adriatic to China.

The innovative and entrepreneurial spirits that define both our nations have never been in greater need around the world.

Our distinguished guest speaker today is singularly qualified to talk about this.

Mr. Hisarciklioglu has dedicated his career to the development of Turkey's private sector, and to the betterment of its economic relations with the rest of the world.

As the President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, Mr. Hisarciklioglu oversees Turkey's largest and most influential non-profit business organization – one with over 1.3 million member companies.

A successful entrepreneur in his own right, Mr. Hisarciklioglu is the Chairman of Eskihsar Group of Companies, which has commercial interests in construction, agriculture, investments, land development, export and import, automotive and food industries.

For the past eight years, he has also been president of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey and has helped that organization expand to 82 Business Councils around the world.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Hisarciklioglu has also served – and continues to serve -- in leadership roles in virtually every major trade, economic development and business advocacy organization in Turkey.

Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Hisarciklioglu is Chairman of both the Ankara and Istanbul Forums, which are tasked with building stronger Turkish economic relations with Israel and Palestine and other neighboring regions.

I had the privilege to meet and work closely with Rifat Hisarciklioglu about a decade ago when he and I cooperated in building a world-class race track in Turkey and bringing the acclaimed Formula One to Istanbul.

I think by now, you've gotten the sense that this is a gentleman who brings a wealth of experience and a unique perspective to our discussion today.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Mr. Rifat Hisarciklioglu.