



# TURKEY UPDATE

Center for Strategic and International Studies ■ Washington, D.C.

## Ankara Forum

for Economic Cooperation Between Palestine, Turkey and Israel

### **Washington Declaration of the Ankara Forum**

*The Ankara Forum is the institutional business dialogue mechanism established by Turkish, Palestinian and Israeli private sector representatives. Having convened previously in Ankara, East Jerusalem, Istanbul and Tel Aviv between April 2005 to January 2007, the Forum held its fifth meeting in Washington, DC on March 30, 2007. The Chairman of the Ankara Forum, M. Rifat Hisarciklioglu, the President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and the Co-Chairmen, Shraga Brosh, the President of the Israeli Manufacturers' Association and Ahmed Hashem Al-Zughair, the President of the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture adopted the following declaration:*

1. Forum members recognize that the growing unemployment problem in Gaza among the Palestinians is a major impediment to the peace and stability of the Middle East.
2. Although, political conflicts require political settlements, job creation in Gaza has the capacity to create a conducive environment for consensus building efforts.
3. Any peace effort in the region requires serious political decisions. If positive expectations prevail, then such challenging political decisions can be made much more effectively. On the other hand, the growing frustration in the region, if left to itself, will be a major obstacle for any effort towards peace.
4. We see our current major project of revitalizing an industrial zone in Gaza as complementary to the recent peace efforts of the US government. TOBB-BIS the industrial park management company is planning to open its office in Gaza and Jerusalem in 2007.

5. Revitalization of the former Erez Industrial Estate, which was evacuated after the Israeli withdrawal in 2005, has the potential to bring 50 companies and generate around 10,000 jobs in a rather short amount of time. Successful implementation of this revitalization project can substantially raise the expectations about economic well being in the region and would strengthen the peace efforts.

6. All parties in the Ankara Forum agree that the political backing of the US Congress is vital for the success of the initiatives taken by the Forum.

7. We believe that while the work of the TOBB-BIS initiative to revitalize Palestinian Industrial Free Zone, formerly known as the Erez Industrial Estate, is both timely and uniquely valuable, the Ankara Forum should also diversify by developing other initiatives. Possible areas of further trilateral cooperation, already discussed at previous meetings of the Ankara Forum, include development of Small and Medium Economic Enterprises [SME's] and a vocational training initiative. We believe that it is important to proceed with these initiatives as rapidly as possible.