



Türkmeneli İşbirliği ve Kültür Vakfı  
AVRASYA İNCELEMELERİ MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR EURASIAN STUDIES



# **MONGOLIA**

## **ON THE EVE OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM) & TURKISH- MONGOLIAN RELATIONS**

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# Contents

## OPENING REMARKS

*Ambassador (R) Alev KILIÇ*.....5

## MONGOLIA

On the Eve of the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) &  
Turkish-Mongolian Relations

*Ambassador Murat KARAGÖZ*.....8

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.....21





## OPENING REMARKS

**Alev KILIÇ**  
*Ambassador (R)*  
*Director of AVİM*

A hearty welcome to all of you.

As the name suggests, the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) is a think-tank that focuses on the newly emerging concept of Eurasia, a region which stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is significant to underline that our understanding of ‘Eurasia’ is not synonymous with the one espoused by the President of the Russian Federation. As you may well know, from Russia’s point of view, its “Eurasian Union” encompasses the Post-Soviet Republics; Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus as well as Ukraine. In this sense, our understanding of Eurasia diverges from that of Russia.

At present, we are witnessing a change and gradual shift in geopolitics. There is

a rising power in Asia, namely the People's Republic of China, which is the largest economy in terms of purchasing power of Gross National Product (GNP) and the second largest in nominal terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In this sense, there is an evolving shift in the balance of power from the West (from the Atlantic, America, and Europe) to the East, to the Pacific.

What does this shift imply for Turkey? Briefly, up until today, we have conceptualised Turkey as being the easternmost extension or outpost of the West. In the face of this new geographical formation, Turkey's place is becoming more Eurasia, a nexus of East and the West. As a result, Turkey is assuming regional role at the centre of an evolution of Eurasia from the Atlantic to the Pacific. When speaking of this shift and the emerging center, we are not only referring to Turkey but also to the Balkans, the Caucuses, Iran and Central Asia. In the meantime, Central Asian countries, also referred to as the 'Turkic Republics', is emerging as an area of interest for Turkey ever since gaining independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this regard, Turkey has a much interested outlook on Central Asia and this is precisely where Mongolia comes into play.

Mongolia is a country which Turkey takes interest in irrespective of the geopolitical factors. As you know, Mongolia is a country with which we share long-standing historical ties, where the very early Turkish rock-carved Orkhon inscriptions are found. Moreover, the developments we are facing today are placing great geopolitical significance on Mongolia, too.

All the Central Asian countries have characteristics unique to them, and there are numerous reasons for Turkey's interest in this region. However, when we speak of Mongolia it is noteworthy to remember the following; Mongolia, located on a landmass of 1.5 million square km, is twice as big as Turkey with a population of 3 million people. It shares a border with only two countries, China and Russia. In this sense, it is not only landlocked but it is also squeezed between these two states. It is important to bear in mind these facts in order to have a better understanding of Mongolia.

I would like to mention another aspect. At present, we are amidst another significant development. Central Asia, and Asia for that matter, is witness to Russia's and China's competition for more say in the region. Today, as I just mentioned above, Russia's concept of Eurasia, China's Silk Road and the 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) Project all point to important developments taking place in Asia. First, I would like to underline the significance of two important developments.

The first is the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The interest for membership to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is on the rise. As you may know, Turkey is taking part as a 'dialogue partner' and Mongolia is an 'observer'. As AVİM, we

also show interest to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. From our point of view, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is acting as a platform for China and Russia to pursue their goals in Central Asia with regards maintaining a strong grip over the region, economically or otherwise, and doing this not in conflict with each other but rather in a cooperative manner. In this connection, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can be perceived as a forum for reconciling China and Russia's clashing interests in Central Asia. This situation however, has led Mongolia, situated between China and Russia, to embark on a search for a third way. Here, we believe that Turkey, with its geopolitical, historical and traditional ties has an imperative part to play. This is to say, Turkey is a country which can lend a helping hand to Mongolia.

I previously mentioned two developments. The first was the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the second is a very recent development, which is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which was initially established as an effort to support China's Silk Road Project connecting Eurasia to Europe and the Atlantic, has broadened its scope. Turkey's full membership to the AIIB has been confirmed very recently and Turkey is now the 11<sup>th</sup> largest member state. In this regard, the AIIB presents itself as a concrete opportunity for us to provide financial means in our relations with Asia, within the broader context of Eurasia. I would like to touch upon another very recent development. As I have just mentioned above, Mongolia is weighing out its options between China and Russia for third parties and quite aware of this situation, the European Union is keeping a close eye. For instance, the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Meeting will be held in Mongolia in the near future. I would like to draw attention to a particular point. Despite the ongoing accession negotiations with the EU and our close interest towards Central Asia, Turkey is not taking part in this meeting, Turkey has not been invited to take part. We perceive these as serious shortcomings for Turkey as well as the EU. Perhaps we can talk about addressing these issues in our meeting today.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Murat Karagöz. Murat Karagöz is a graduate of the Department of International Relations, Istanbul University and therefore has a very strong background and is familiar with these topics. Following his undergraduate studies, he received his master's degree from The City University of New York. I have known Ambassador Karagöz for many years, particularly since 2009 when he was the Deputy Directorate General for the Balkans and Central Europe. In this sense, he not only has a strong grasp of the Balkans, but also the Central Asia-Balkan dimension. He has been the Turkish Ambassador to Ulaanbaatar since 2013, for three years now, which is a respectfully long time. Hence, it is a pleasure and honour for us to have Ambassador Karagöz with us here today as one of the most knowledgeable diplomats on this topic, country and region. I would like to thank Ambassador Karagöz for attending this meeting, and in fact, for coming up with the idea for organizing this event today.

**MONGOLIA**  
**ON THE EVE OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM) &  
TURKISH-MONGOLIAN RELATIONS**



**Murat KARAGÖZ**  
*Turkey's Ambassador to Ulaanbaatar*

Thank you very much,

Esteemed Director of AVİM Ambassador Alev Kılıç and likewise, Ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem, who was Deputy Undersecretary 26 years ago when I first started working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who was amongst the interview jury. Fellow colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and scholars, I extend my warmest greetings and express my appreciation for your invitation to this meeting.

Geographically distant, Mongolia is nevertheless a country close to our hearts. Regardless, I keep in touch with the analysts and everyone here through social media on a regular basis. I also make sure to read all of AVİM's publications, be it in my area of interest or not.



My perspective on the wider Eurasian region is shaped by my outlook on the Balkans and Bulgaria, with which I have not severed my ties with. As you know, I am here in Ankara on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ambassadors Conference which took place last week. The downing of the Russian jet on 24 November by the Turkish Air Force for breaching the Turkish airspace and the crisis which resulted from this, which in my opinion will persist for a while longer, was one of the topics we addressed at the Conference. I will not go into the details of this in my presentation, however I can elaborate on it further in the Q&A session. I would like to extend my gratitude for your kind invitation and for showing interesting in Mongolia and the region.

The theme of today's meeting has been defined as Mongolia's current situation prior to the ASEM Summit, Mongolia's potential in the region, and Turkish-Mongolian relations. Similarly, my presentation will be along these lines. Mongolia is unbeknownst to many and for this reason I would like to first briefly talk about what kind of country Mongolia is and why it is unknown to many. In speeches and presentations I have delivered at think-tanks, universities, and other occasions, I always mention that Mongolia is a country of contradictions. There are positive aspects as well as challenges, and for this precise reason Mongolia is considered to be a 'hardship post'.

Why is this the case? As Ambassador Alev Kılıç mentioned earlier, Mongolia has one of the largest territories in the world, it is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest landlocked country following Kazakhstan. Despite its vast territory, stretching over 1.5 million square km, Mongolia's population of 3 million makes up only one-third of Istanbul's, as Istanbul's population has exceeded well over 15 million. This is the first contradiction.

Secondly, Ulaanbaatar is one of the coldest cities in the world (it was -33 degrees Celsius just last week), and yet Mongolians are amongst the most warm-hearted people you can meet. We have here with us representatives from TİKA [Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency] who occasionally visit Mongolia, they would also know how friendly Mongolians are, the positive image they have of us, and their general attitude of "you are us and we are you".

Thirdly, the blue in the Mongolian national flag represents the endless blue skies of Mongolia which are known by, not only me, but by travel guide books such as *Lonely Planet*, *Polyglot*, and *Baedeker*. However, despite this, Ulaanbaatar is one of the most polluted cities in the world. The air pollution in Ulaanbaatar is 7 levels below the global standards set by the World Health Organization, maybe we can elaborate on this later today. Why is this? One reason is that they do not use natural gases. Mongolia has one of the richest coal mines. There are two large thermal power plants located near the airport. Largely because of that and partly because

Ulaanbaatar is located in a valley, air pollution levels in Ulaanbaatar are quite high.

Likewise, even though it is one of the least populated countries, as hard as it may be to believe, Ulaanbaatar has one of the most congested traffics in the world. The distance between the embassy and the residence is 1 km and yet it takes 25 minutes by car. You may wonder why I don't go on foot. I would prefer to walk, but one, there are no sidewalks and two, it is around -30 degrees Celsius which eventually numbs parts of your face.

For all of these reasons Mongolia has characteristics unique to itself.

In the same manner, as Ambassador Kılıç mentioned earlier, it is trapped or surrounded by two major powers from which it has tried to free itself of for centuries. It shares a 4,500 km border with China and a 3,500 km border with Russia. Having said this, in the Post-Cold War era, based on my observations, I can confidently say that Mongolia is the only country in Eurasia which has succeeded in transforming politically, economically, and socially, concurrently and in a peaceful manner. I am aware that this is a rather bold statement but there are numerous examples that verify this, which I would like to highlight. A smooth-running system in terms of a well-functioning democracy, I am not referring to shortcomings of individual leaders but rather the system in general, civil-military relations, the balance and separation of power, elections, local administration, freedom of press, the public's acceptance of politics, internet freedom, which is fast and easily accessible like nowhere else in Eurasia, people's freedom to criticize politicians in public, and gender equality; this is something we see in Eurasia more generally but particularly in Mongolia women are present in all aspects of everyday life, in politics, the economy, law, media, on the streets and in traffic and women are thus increasingly engaged in social life.

Mongolia has the richest mineral deposits in the world, including coal, copper, gold, silver, uranium, and other metals and consequently, Mongolia's wealth derives from its resources. In addition to this, there are 60 million cattle. The population of Mongolia is 3 million, needless to say this makes 20 cattle per person. Half of these are small cattle breeds, and yet the livestock sector is not developed in Mongolia. Despite the vast number of cattle, Mongolia imports 74% of its milk and milk products from China. It is like a tragicomedy. This can be given as an example of the 'challenges and opportunities' I mentioned earlier.

It has the second largest cashmere industry in the world. If we set aside China, it has the largest cashmere industry. In the same manner, it has a large surface area however, only one-tenth of it is suitable for farming or grazing animals, which is shrinking with time.

Unfortunately there aren't many forests in Mongolia. Whereas if we go up North to Siberia, we have the Taiga Forests. There are Taigas in Mongolia too, in the North-West of Mongolia around Lake Khuvsgul where the Dukha people live, the Turkic tribes, however, these regions are mostly barren due to Mongolia's steppe climate. Perhaps you have come across photographs that attest to this fact.

The manufacturing industry, just like livestock breeding, has potential to grow but it has not yet unlocked its full potential. When I speak of the manufacturing industry I am naturally referring to the leather industry.

In terms of tourism, Mongolia is attractive particularly with regards to adventure travel and nature-based tourism.

I do not see any reason why I shouldn't share this with all of you, as I have reported it to Ankara countless times; nomadism, Buddhism, and shamanism are rooted in the genetic codes of this country. 34% of the population still lead a nomadic lifestyle. They live in a number of different cities. Ulaanbaatar is a large city. As you know, there aren't many cities, particularly capital cities, in the Eurasian region with a population of more than 1 million people. Almost half of the population of Mongolia live in Ulaanbaatar, which makes it a relatively big city. Unfortunately, it is not a very pleasant-looking city. I saw pictures of Ulaanbaatar from the 1980s in an art exhibition and I can say that it was much more beautiful with its large Genghis Khan Square, huge Bogd Khan Mountain, where deer would roam around and which was not masked by tall buildings. Now, unfortunately, it has more or less turned into a construction site. You may take this as a sign of being developed, however, in terms of city planning and progress, regrettably, it is not very uniform or orderly.

Mongolia, a country which has emerged from the heart of the Soviet geography, has never been part of the Soviet Union. It became a full member of the United Nations in the years 1960-61. Here, I am referring to Outer Mongolia, there is also Inner Mongolia in China. It is stated that the Mongolian diaspora constitute around 10 million in total. A significant number of them live in China. There are also some who live in the Buryatia region in Russia, in New Jersey and Chicago in the U.S, and South Korea. In this sense, Mongolians are not bound by the national borders of Mongolia.

How do Mongolians identify themselves? Perhaps I can tell you how they do not identify themselves. First of all, they do not refer to themselves as a Central Asian country, a Central Asian republic, or a Central Asian Turkic republic. Mongolia is a 'unique' country and we should therefore come up with 'unique' policies. You could, more or less, place the Caucuses in one basket, and likewise, the Central Asian republics, although there are variations amongst them as well. But you

should, under no circumstance, place Mongolia amongst them. In this sense, I am not only speaking in terms of politics. Mongolia was a part of the Manchu Dynasty for around 300 years and China had a hold over Mongolia, but it is not China. It has lived side-by-side with Russia for 70 years, and has been influenced by its elites, arts, and education and yet it is not Russia. Despite displaying progress in technology and modernity it is not South Korea and definitely not Russia because they have gone through different phases of transformation. For all of these reasons, Mongolia is unique. Its typology, language, alphabet, and way of life is different. It would also be beneficial to bear in mind the genetic codes of this country, as I mentioned above.

As I described earlier, after 300 years of being under the Manchu rule, in 1921 Mongolia gained its independence with the support of Russia, led by Sükhbaatar, whose statue has been placed at the city centre in Ulaanbaatar (in a place similar to Taksim, Kızılay, or Tandoğan). They have left the square as it is, and I hope it stays that way for a while longer.

Ulaanbaatar means ‘red hero’. ‘Ulan’ means red and ‘baatar’ means hero, just like in Turkish. It is one of the many words we have in common.

Ultimately, in 1924, Mongolia wrote up a constitution but later established close relations with the Soviet Union. As a consequence, its foreign policy came to have great impact on its internal affairs until the 1990s. In 1990, with a peaceful revolution and without shedding any blood, Mongolia transitioned into a democracy.

Today, Mongolia is a parliamentary democracy. The President is elected through direct elections. The Parliament of Mongolia is called the ‘Great Khural’, it has 76 members. As I mentioned before, it is a well-functioning democracy and free-market economy. If we set aside the past two years, it has had an enviable growth rate; it grew by 17.4% in 2001, surpassing China, 13% in 2012 and 11% in 2013. Even though the figures remain relatively high, there was a substantial drop in the past year, as it fell to 7.8%, which is still relatively good. This year, however, growth rates are estimated to be around 2.4-2.5% or 3% as forecast by the IMF and the World Bank. Likewise, it is expected that 2016 will not be any different for the same reasons.

In 1994, or throughout the Cold War to be more precise, there was Chinese and Russian rivalry over Mongolia which Mongolia tried to find balance between them. For this precise reason, Mongolia has lagged behind in reaching the desired level of development. Despite having 21 large provinces, Mongolia has grave shortcomings in infrastructure. Each province is almost three times as large as Konya, but the population of each does not exceed 93-110 thousand. Mongolia has a very small population.

The majority of its population consists of Mongolians. However, when you speak of Mongolians it would be wrong to place them all under the same category. There are around 17-18 ethnic groups to which Mongolians belong to. There are Muslim Kazaks who live in the West of Mongolia and make up 5-6% of the population, there are the ‘relative communities’ (although we may consider Mongolians themselves as ‘relative communities’). Amongst the 17-18 ethnic groups I mentioned above, there are the Khotons, Dukha Turks of around 600-650 families living in the Taigas and also in the least populated region located in the North-West of Mongolia, who practice deer farming. There are also Tuhas, a branch of the Dukha people. These are all groups of people who we, as representatives of Turkey in Mongolia, try to establish close ties with.

In the same manner, as our esteemed Director mentioned previously, Mongolia eventually grew tired of the rivalry between China and Russia, which explains the revolution in 1994. Last year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the revolution and there were large-scale celebrations organized for this occasion. The European Union was particularly interested in this event. Mongolia is a success story, we should keep that in mind. It has not yet been able to unlock its full potential with regards to its economy, however, it will get there in the near future.

Trapped between Russia and China’s power struggle, balancing between these two powers in the year 1994 was an important part of Mongolia’s strategic concept. Mongolia revised its strategic concept in 2011, and this time put forward the notion of the “Third Neighbor”. In this new strategic concept, Mongolia identifies 6 ‘groups’ of countries. It will be clearer why I referred to them as ‘groups’. These include; The United States, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, India, and Turkey. This is a very significant privilege. If you have noticed, I did not mention Canada or Australia amongst these countries. They haven’t included these countries in this category. Even though they refer to every country as being part of their ‘Third Neighbor’, officially speaking and in written documents, Turkey is amongst these 6 countries. This is very important and with it brings responsibility. From my point of view, it is not only something we should take pride in, but also something we must act on.

Mongolia is very active in international politics. As I mentioned previously, they have been a member of the UN since 1960-61. Mongolia is a candidate for the non-permanent seat on the 2023-2024 UN Security Council. In 2015, it was elected as member of the United Nations Human Rights Council as part of the Asia-Pacific group receiving a high number of votes in its favor. Mongolia’s election received acclamation similar to ours in 2009-2010, when Turkey was elected to the UNSC.

Mongolia is a member of ASEM, which I will touch upon in a moment. It is a

member of the OSCE, with Turkey's support. This is important. It is a member of the OSCE as a country located in the North-East of Asia. It holds the observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, this is also very important. It is a 'global partner' of NATO. These are all very significant. As you can see, Mongolia is a country which utilizes different tools and instruments to maintain a balanced policy, and rather successfully in my opinion. When we speak of balance, one should perceive of it in the following way; to find balance between its two neighbors, namely Moscow and Pekin, and to maintain balance between its two neighbors (Russia and China) and its 'third neighbors'.

Mongolia is a democratic country. It is a member of Freedom Online, a coalition of countries committed to democratic values. The annual Freedom Online Conference was held in Ulaanbaatar under the Chairmanship of Mongolia in 2015.

As you may imagine, Mongolia has a special relationship with Russia and China, but it acts cautious in this relationship. It has managed to pursue a policy without choosing one side over the other. As I have mentioned earlier, Mongolia suffered greatly from this during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the Cold War period. When relations between China and Russia soured, Mongolia was forced to pick a side, and it was consequently subject to harsh policies inflicted by the other.

Russia, a huge supplier and China, with its population of 1.4 billion, is a huge market for Mongolia. In this sense, 90% of Mongolia's trade, exports to be more precise, take place with China, which places China at the top of Mongolia's trading partners.

In 2014, in a period of just 3-4 months, both Xi Jinping and Putin paid an official visit to Mongolia. This is an important sign. It does not only demonstrate the importance of Mongolia for these countries, but it is also an indication of the role Mongolia will play in China's mega 'One Belt One Road' project, as pointed out by the AVİM Director.

They have an experienced political leader, Elbegdorj. Even though I criticize his role in politics from time to time, he is a very experienced politician. Elbegdorj served as prime minister and also played an active role in the democratic transition of Mongolia. Despite being trapped between two countries, Mongolia is able to turn this to its advantage. It is able to paint an 'open' image of itself, and it is therefore rather active in the international arena. It is possible to see this in many forms.

Perhaps I should say a few words about the 'One Belt One Road' Project. Elbegdorj envisaged a triangular cooperation. This triangular cooperation was initiated first with a meeting between Putin and Xi Jinping in the framework of the 14<sup>th</sup> SCO Conference held in Dushanbe and was later made official by a declaration.

The Minister and Undersecretary of the Ministry Foreign Affairs, and representatives of ministries spearheaded this triangular cooperation. At first, it emerged *de facto* but later fell into place, *de jure*. The 15<sup>th</sup> SCO Conference was held in Ufa, to which they attended with a concrete project. What was this concrete project? The Russia-Mongolia-China economic corridor project, linking Russia's Trans-Eurasian Belt Development (TEBD), Mongolia's 'Steppe Road', and China's Silk Road project, and designed in a way that allows Mongolia to benefit from it. It is still quite premature, but there are various documents available to the public, which you may find on their foreign ministries websites. This economic corridor is extremely important for the future of Mongolia.

With regards to the 'Third Neighbors' of Mongolia, I mentioned the EU, the U.S, Turkey, India, South Korea and Japan. Amongst these, Japan is the country which has benefited from Mongolia's 'Third Neighbor policy' the most. This is because U.S representatives visited Mongolia, and the other Central Asian countries, just twice, the last one being in October.

Despite not having extremely well trade relations with Japan, Mongolia appears to be an important democratic partner and also significant in terms of investment. Mongolia realized its first free-trade agreement with Japan which recently came into force foreseeing customs-free trade. Japan also comes to the fore with its development projects. Turkey also plays an important role in development projects, however, Japan has a special place in Mongolia's heart. Certain political elites have told us "Turkey is special to us. Turkey is neither like Russia nor China or the U.S, your place is different. If we must make a comparison, you are similar to Japan. Geographically you are distant, however we share a common history, a friendship, your history dates all the way back here and we will never forget all that you have done for us since the early 1990s, particularly through TİKA." I will talk more about our bilateral relations with Mongolia, this was just an insight into how they perceive of Turkey.

Last year, a trilateral partnership was initiated between the US, Japan, and Mongolia. I am not quite sure whether it will take off, however, it is worth keeping an eye on. The foreign ministers and undersecretaries of the three countries met in New York under the framework of the UN General Assembly.

Mongolia has a partnership with the European Union, particularly in the areas of democracy and human rights.

It has an increasingly positive imagine with respect to the UN Human Rights Council. It has not resorted to capital punishment for some time and it was officially abolished this past year, this is an important development.

Mongolia's relations with India, which date back 2000 years, are founded on Buddhism.

Last year, the President of Mongolia announced that it was taking steps for Mongolia to become a 'permanent neutral state' to the United Nations. This was an initiative taken by the president. There was no demand 'from below' and no attempts taken 'from above' by the political elite or bureaucracy. The president was the brain behind this initiative. We found the documents on our table this summer and exchanged quite a lot of letters with Ankara about it.

Presently, our embassy has assumed another role. I am the permanent representative of Turkey to NATO for the 2015-2016 period, which brings with it a significant degree of responsibility. NATO has seven representatives there; from the U.S, the U.K, France, Bulgaria, Hungary, Canada and Turkey. The NATO Deputy Secretary General paid a visit, along with other high-profile officials, which was the first of its kind.

It is not quite clear what "permanent neutrality" would bring for Mongolia, however, Mongolia's bid for permanent neutrality has not found its way into public debate just yet. It was brought before the parliament so that it would be discussed on legal grounds, however, Elbegdorj had already spoken of his intentions at the UN General Assembly. It does, however, still necessitate the passing of a law. It must be proceeded on legal grounds. They are not quite at that point yet.

I can also touch upon economy. I mentioned mining previously. I briefly talked about Mongolia's growth rates and its downturn in the years 2013, 2014, and 2015. The reason for this is as follows; following the elections in 2012, The Democratic Party, a strong supporter of the current government, opted for tightening restrictions for investment in the mining sector. This was the result of the rising 'resource nationalism' in Mongolia, which had greater implications than they had anticipated. I was in Mongolia when discussions on this were taking place, I started my post on 15 November 2013. The essential idea was to keep China from penetrating into the economy and to loosen China's grip on the private and manufacturing sector in Mongolia. The effects were, however, much beyond this. Foreign investors, particularly from the West, took this as a sign and completely withdrew all their funds, which resulted in serious downturn in Mongolia's economy.

In addition to this, there were other adverse developments for Mongolia. First, there was a general decline in demand. China's slow economic growth also reflected on Mongolia, particularly in its demand for coal. This resulted in a serious downturn. Moreover, the significant drop in the prices of goods such as coal and gold had great impact on Mongolia's economy. Mongolia witnessed a series of ups and downs. Despite all of these, Mongolia has developed a number of projects.



One of them, which you may have heard of, is the Oyu Tolgoi underground mining project, worth 9 billion dollars. In the face of the above mentioned developments, however, the project was put on hold. A positive development on this front came in December; Mongolia secured a 4.4 billion dollar investment from a financial institution. Oyu Tolgoi is considered to be the second largest copper mine in the world.

Partly because it is of interest to Turkey and partly because we have been rather active recently, I was invited to one of these mines. It was my first experience underground and it was very impressive. It was -3 degrees outside and 24 degrees underground. I went 1.3 km under with an elevator that goes 6 meters per second. 75% of the briefing was on safety and security. All the necessary safety regulations were taken. These plants have been active for 3 years and there has not been one causality, not taking into account small injuries. Underground, there were tunnels which stretched from one corner of this room to the other, and double its length. There were trucks which they assemble and disassemble over period of two weeks.

They have extracted all the mineral resources through ‘open pit’ mining and are therefore continuing their search underground. The construction of tunnels of 200-300 km are currently underway, it is foreseen that it will become operational by 2018 and Mongolia will take-off from there. Oyu Tolgoi is very significant. Likewise, another is Tavan Tolgoi. Similar to Oyu Tolgoi, Tavan Tolgo, which is about 70-80 kilometers from China, is a thermal coal deposit - an investment worth 4 billion dollars, and naturally, of great importance for China.

Finally, I will touch upon our bilateral relations with Mongolia. Just like Ambassador Kılıç mentioned earlier, Mongolia has a very important historical background. Our written history dates back to Mongolia. I will not get into whether Genghis Khan was Turkish, or whether Turks and Mongolians have an ancestral relationship, however, when we look back on 1300 years of history, it is indeed possible to see the heritage of the Göktürk Khanate which reigned in the years 600-800, or 532-725 more precisely, and it is hard not to feel sentimental.

Otukan, also referred to as Karakorum, which was the capital city of the Mongol Empire, is located 340 km South-West of Mongolia. At that location, in an area which stresses across 40-50 kilometers, it is possible to find the original tablets. In 2008, with TİKA’s initiative, these tablets found their place at the Bilge Khan Museum alongside other works of art. These tablets, erected in honor of Bilge Kagan and Kül Tegin, are written in runic alphabet and similar to hieroglyphy; written from left-to-right and top-to-bottom. They were translated by a Danish scholar, Thompson, in 1893. We celebrated the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this occasion, and I feel pleased to have been part of the organization.

Karakorum is certainly a beautiful place which has an effect on its visitors. It is not always very easy to get there. The road is quite bumpy. Everything there is off-road. In fact, I sometimes say it is ‘off off-road’, especially when I have to use stairs to get down from cars. It is a challenging geography, but is equally enjoyable. Likewise, a part of these inscriptions belong to Tonyukuk, who served as vizier at that time. These are found 50-60 km east of Ulaanbaatar. If you visit Mongolia in winter I can at least guarantee a visit to this part. However, if you decide to come during spring or summer, it would definitely pay-off to visit the other side too.

Our bilateral relations are extremely well. We have signed more than 100 agreements and there are high-profile visits on occasion. Last year we reached the 45<sup>th</sup> year of our relations. Our relations experienced a substantial boost with the visit of Cemil Çiçek, Speaker of Parliament. Moreover, the Minister of National Defense, the Secretary General of the National Security Council, and for the first time in 46 years, maybe this requires some self-criticism and maybe I ought to write to Ankara about this, our Minister of Foreign Affairs made an official visit to Mongolia. His Excellency Mevlut Çavuşoğlu came in April and stayed for three days and left with extremely positive insights.

We have visa-free entry into Mongolia, which came into force during my post, which I am very pleased about. This policy had been in place for Mongolian citizens, as a unilateral gesture, since 2007, alongside other Central Asian countries. Turkish citizens can now freely enter Mongolia for visits up to 30 days without any visa requirements. Turkish Airlines has direct flights to Mongolia since 2012. When I say ‘direct’, maybe I need to open a parenthesis here. Because of a provision found in the memorandum of understanding (MOU), the flights to Mongolia make a stop in Bishkek. Taking this into account, the flight takes around 10 hours. Turkish Airlines has flights to Mongolia three times a week.

Our bilateral relations with Mongolia are particularly strong in the field of military/defense and education. From early 1990s onwards, almost 2,000 Mongolian students were educated in Turkey. It is possible to come across these students who have returned to Mongolia and started working in the public sector, private sector, in the media, and various institutions. As I mentioned to H.E Ambassador Kılıç earlier, one of the most widely used foreign languages in Mongolia is Turkish, which is certainly something to be proud of.

In fact, it was my third month in Ulaanbaatar, Tuncer, the third secretary and I were walking on the street, looking for a place to have lunch and talking in Turkish about all the things we plan to do in Ulaanbaatar. Behind us were high school students, carrying backpacks. At the lights, one of them tapped on my shoulder and said “are you Ambassador Murat Karagöz? We follow you on social media, I’m

sure you'll get the chance to do everything you mentioned". It is very interesting to come across such things, especially because an ordinary Mongolian doesn't have a lot of interaction with Turkey. Of course, there are Turkish schools in Mongolia. But regardless, there is a high level of interest and sympathy towards Turkey.

Mongolians are very talented people. They are especially good at learning new languages. A specialist from the Stratejik Etütler Merkezi, an extension of the National Security Council, came to Turkey and participated in an eight-month language program at the Turkish and Foreign Languages Research and Application Center (TÖMER). After eight months, the specialist was able to speak fluent Turkish and even tell jokes and sing songs. He returned to Mongolia and is passionate about conducting further research. This is very important. At present, there are around 900 Mongolian students in Turkey. Half of these students have received scholarships from the government and the other half fund their own studies.

I touched upon TİKA earlier. TİKA, which opened one of its first offices here in Mongolia in early 1990s, Ms. Nilüfer, please correct me if I am mistaken, has realized approximately 450 projects. We have offered 28 million dollars in aid.

When speaking of Turkey's influence over this geography, it is of course necessary to refer to 'soft power' instruments. I mentioned TİKA as just one example of this, but it is indeed necessary to think about the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Airlines as soft power instruments. We are grateful for all the work you do.

We have managed to achieve free-visa regimes in this geography, but if we become a part of Schengen as of October 2016, then we will have to abide by all the rules set by the EU. I am not quite sure whether there will be an exception. One could hope so. However, I have not received any signals pointing towards that. We must have strong influence over our neighboring regions, not just culturally or historically, but strategically too.

Scholarships are one of our strongest instruments. We have a relatively modest group at the Embassy in Mongolia. I ask our embassy personnel to provide information on our scholarships to students. These are extremely significant instruments. It is unclear whether we have kept close record of these since the 1990s, however, we should be able to do this more efficiently and effectively. We should be able to make better use of this opportunity. In the end we should have ruling elites. Some of these students take the easy way out. They prefer to study economics or business administration, I am by no means underestimating these professions, but perhaps we could provide more scholarships for law, EU law, human rights, or political science. I must also mention that not enough Turkish universities show interest in exhibitions that take place in Mongolia.

Our embassy is open 24/7. I informed everyone at the embassy that this geography can be difficult. We must do everything in our hands; welcome every Turkish citizen for a cup of coffee if we must. If I am not available then our friends at the embassy are always ready to help. Unfortunately, our ties with Mongolia are not that strong. I certainly agree that we share a cultural heritage, but cooperation in this sphere should be more planned and coordinated. It is not feasible to think, “I brought the shovels, I have the books, let’s do some digging in Orkhon”. And not just Orkhon, there are approximately 200 works of art belonging to the Göktürk period. Our Embassy is working with the Head of the Department of Turkology on a special project. 2016 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Turkish embassy in Mongolia.

Partly because it is a large country, and partly because the climate conditions not being very suitable, travelling is not very favorable in Mongolia. However, despite this, I have travelled to 14 out of 21 provinces. I am planning on visiting the remaining seven provinces this spring and summer.

We have strong cultural ties, and we are doing everything we can to improve them. For the past two years we have been organizing ‘Ulaanbaatar Turkish Days’, which was inspired by the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our relations with Mongolia. I would be happy to hear any recommendations you might bring for this event. For instance, we invited *Moğollar* [the Mongols], the music group, which drew a lot of attention. It was their first time in Mongolia, and funnily enough, they were celebrating their 45<sup>th</sup> year as a group. Cihat Berkay was very excited about this, they were very pleased to be there.

I will conclude my presentation by briefly touching on the current state of affairs. There are two challenges awaiting Mongolia in 2016. The first is the general elections. They never re-elect the same government. As a matter of fact, during my time in Mongolia, there has been three different governments and two different prime ministers. This is subject to change, however, it will possibly remain more or less the same. The slow decision making process can result in delays in the elections. Is it possible for the government to change? Yes, it is. Public opinion polls, though not as widespread and reliable as they are in the West, indicate to a change.

The second challenge awaiting Mongolia is the ASEM Summit which will be held in July this year. 53 Heads of state and government will be coming to Mongolia for this occasion. This is important not only for Mongolia’s economy, but for its prestige and visibility in the international arena. This is how they perceive it.

Thank you.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Alev KILIÇ**  
*Ambassador (R)*  
*Director of AVİM*

Thank you very much Ambassador Murat Karagöz. I am aware that Ambassador Karagöz summarized the notes before him to dedicate more time to answer your questions.

**Prof. Dr. Onur Ender ASLAN**  
*TODAİE, General Manager*

Thank you ambassador for this presentation.

As you may know, every country has an institute of public administration. We have one of the oldest ones; TODAİE [Public Administration Institute for Turkey and Middle East]. With the initiatives of the rector of the Academy of Management in Mongolia, we have started working on a project. You have showed a lot of support on this, thank you. I was quite surprised to learn that it was founded in 1924. We always used to think we were an old institute; we were founded in 1952. Acad-



emy of Management is one of the few academies, alongside TODAİE, in this region which provides Masters and PhD programs. So I was naturally very surprised when I read about it in the catalogue Ambassador Karagöz had sent us. Thank you once again. A group of scholars, vice rectors and faculty members will be visiting this academy in the following week, and hopefully in the coming months we will be visiting them as well. I believe what Ambassador Karagöz said about ruling elites is very important. These institutes were founded precisely for this reason, to provide education on public administration. Theoretically, it is impossible to provide training to 4 million public servants in Turkey. But based on the logic of Enderun, we should train ruling elites for the future.

TODAİE's strategy for the past two years has been to establish academies in this region including, the Balkans, the Caucuses, Central Asia and the Middle East, Mongolia being the farthest we have come.

We are currently working on an Academy in the Balkans; a public administration academy. We already have one in the Caucuses. In this regard, our relations with Mongolia are especially important because we believe that the future ruling elites of Mongolia should take part in the Master's and PhD programs we provide. We have made a lot of progress in Kyrgyzstan. A significant number of the personnel from the Presidency and Prime Ministry of Kyrgyzstan are currently undertaking a Master's program from our academy. I think that Mongolia is a strategic country in this sense. Hopefully with your support we will train the future ruling elites of Mongolia, too. We have programs in both Turkish and English, I'm not quite sure which one would be more suitable. Kyrgyzstan particularly wants us to establish an institute there, however, I think that Mongolia might be a better option for this, also because Russia has a much greater influence on Kyrgyzstan. Following your presentation, I now think that Mongolia might be a better choice to establish ties with. I don't know what your thoughts are on this but after the information you have provided us with in your presentation, Mongolia seems like a better choice as opposed to Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan.

Ruling elites is an important topic. We receive some scholarships from YTB [Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities], but we also have our own quote system, our independent scholarship program. We provide our own scholarships in parallel with YTB. But we don't provide scholarships to layman. We provide scholarships to personnel from Presidencies, Prime Ministries, from the Ministry of Economy and other strategic points of connection. If you could kindly support us on locating strategic institutions in Mongolia, whether it is the Ministry of Energy for instance, it would be very useful. I believe that Mongolia is a better option compared to Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan.

Thank you.

**Murat KARAGÖZ***Turkey's Ambassador to Ulaanbataar*

Thank you.

TODAİE is certainly on our agenda. I made a visit to the academy you mentioned and met with the rector and the dean of the academy. Despite being quite old, it took us a very long time to develop ties with this institute, and we have not yet been able to institutionalize our relations with them. TİKA has renovated their library and has made book donations. These are recent developments which draw a lot of attention. It was also mentioned at the Ambassadors Conference last week that relations are likely to be established with the academy. Bearing this in mind, it is important that we prioritize this. There are a lot of people ready to provide assistance, and they were pleased to hear about this possible partnership. If the Memorandum of Understanding is signed quickly, it will be a decisive step towards partnership. I am keeping a close eye on it.

I agree with your remarks. As the Turkish ambassador to Ulaanbaatar, I will naturally look at the matter from Mongolia's perspective. Nonetheless, I share your observations. It would make sense to give precedence to Mongolia, especially taking into account Mongolia's democratization, intellectual capacity, and development. Master's and PhD programs in both Turkish and English would be possible. I can provide the necessary guidance in pinpointing strategic institutions, but it pleases us to see Turkish institutions, organizations, and universities more engaged in Mongolia. It doesn't always have the same effect over the internet, phone, or fax. There is an incredible interest towards Turkey, and this sometimes fall short on our side. Maybe this will come up in the Q&A session, but everything about Turkey catches their attention, particularly after the downing of the Russian jet. You may come across news on Turkey in newspapers, or in the mainstream media. There are two-three newspapers in English, you may find news on Turkey in these media outlets.

They keep a close eye on Turkey. They refer to Turkey as 'Polaris', the brightest star. However, contradictory remarks made by us or certain developments taking place recently in the South-West, with regards to DEASH are reflecting negatively on us. For this reason, as I always say, it is necessary to highlight the positive developments taking place in our country, and for this reason, academic and cultural partnerships and the presence of businesses and firms in Mongolia are of great significance.



**Prof. Dr. Çınar ÖZEN**  
*Ankara University Faculty of Political Science*

I was the former vice dean of the Faculty of Political Science.

My comments will be about public universities. As you highlighted in your presentation, we are increasingly witnessing diplomacy pursued at the expense of public universities. A substantial number of scholarships are granted, but nothing is provided for public universities. Our burden is growing. Our faculty, Ambassador Kılıç our esteemed diplomat was once a student there, was composed of only 300 students once. At present, there are 5,000 students; 3,000 undergraduates and 2,000 Master's and PhD students. We lack the facilities to support these large number of students. The infrastructure of the faculty is on the verge of collapse. YÖK [Higher Education Institute] is ignoring our requests to decrease the number of scholarships. The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities is granting scholarships much too easily. They do not consult us on whether we have the



capacity to support that many students, whether we have the facilities or enough space in our classrooms. For instance, we have difficulties providing our students with computers. The university is humongous, it has numerous faculties, it is impossible for the rector to keep up with everything. For this reason, we have reached a dead end. This diplomacy will no longer succeed if resources are not allocated for public universities. I must also add that we make great contribution by providing education in Turkish, because students learn Turkish at TÖMER, a very good language center, and are later able to contribute more. For instance, I have observed that African students are able to make great contribution to trade commerce after learning Turkish. Those who graduate from English-medium schools are not able to contribute in the same degree. Maybe it would help to make use of private universities. It is necessary to allocate more resources for private universities so they can also be involved in this. Based on my experience in management, I kindly ask for a cut down on the number of scholarships granted to foreign students unless more resources are allocated to public universities.

### **Murat KARAGÖZ**

*Turkey's Ambassador to Ulaanbaatar*

I will keep it very short. I completely agree with your assessments, Mr. Özen. We should not only rely on public universities. I will not get into the discussions on quota, Ms. Sevilay clarified that point. Nevertheless, I agree that we should involve both public and private universities.

### **Prof. Dr. Sencer İMER**

*Hacettepe University*

Despite having retired, I continue to give lectures together with my colleague from Ufuk University. With regards to what you have mentioned, it may be possible to make a proposal to Ufuk University, if they have the means.

During Ahat Andican's time, your presidency had not been founded at the time, we worked on a project with Turkic states and communities. I was the coordinator of the project. In this framework, we brought together representatives from the private and public sector and developed an archive in a building close to the Prime Ministry. We formed various working groups on heavy industry, tourism, finance, the health sector and so forth. I was the head of the working group on heavy industry, energy, and defense. In fact, Çevik Bir also headed one of the working groups, I remember very clearly, we had the opportunity to work together. Projects were collected to be presented to high-profile politicians and later compiled into numerous books, which I think you should have at the presidency.



One of the most unfortunate things in Turkey is that there was no continuity until the presidency was founded. This is one of the weak sides of public institutions. I tried my best to save everything I could at the time, later Haluk Çay took over and we realized that attention was increasingly directed towards the Orkhon inscriptions and we were witnessing a slowdown in our other activities.

In order to refresh my memory, quite a lot of time has passed, I would like to know one thing. The coal reserves in Mongolia, as you have pointed out earlier, are significantly large. We can compare Mongolia's resources to those of Australia, Canada, or Russia. For this precise reason, Mongolia, with its huge coal reserves, is indispensable for China. China has a growing economy, on its way to becoming the largest economy. Petroleum is about to run out, so is gas. The most durable at this point is petroleum, and there is also uranium which is particularly significant. Turkey is working on nuclear power plants and at present we are importing 20 million tons of coal; metallurgy coal. We only produce 2.5 million tons. Based on our calculations, our demand for coal will increase to 40-50 million tons in the coming year. It is extremely important for us to invest in coal reserves. During Özel's presidency, when the conjuncture was favorable and the prices were low, Australia was going to allocate certain materials to us. This would not be possible given the prices of today. This was an incredible opportunity for us at the time.

This is very important for Turkey's energy strategy and we must also look at it from a foreign policy perspective. It is of utmost importance to have a share in these reserves.

In my visit to the Ministry of Energy, I regrettably found out that Australians and Canadians, despite extracting coal there, had closed down the coal reserves. The same cannot be said for us, but we had been planning for it. The situation was not looking very good, they took control over the region through long-term strategies and planning, and they did this despite being one of the largest coal producers. I think that energy strategy is one of the things we need to emphasize.

My first question: What is the current situation? Second, there is a large reserve in Erdenet, a copper plant. Gold, silver, and copper are found together so there are large reserves there. In this regard, copper is also of interest to us. There was also an iron and steel plant there, I remember clearly, it worked on scrap metal. Because they have a very small population, it is awfully difficult for them to succeed in this industry. Likewise, if they shift to glass manufacturing it would again pose difficulties to succeed on their own. They had been importing glass from China. They even imported milk bottles. China's hegemony over this region, as a neighbor, is unsettling because it is taking over the region in terms of economy. It is pursuing the exact same policies in Central Asia. You can see the Chinese everywhere you go. Now that Mongolia is free from this threat and it is trying to pursue an independent and balanced policy, it is necessary for countries like Turkey to take action in terms of industry and raw materials, particularly in this geography.

The Americans are pursuing policies against this. Japan almost gave them 250 million dollars at the time. This almost amounted to their annual budget or expenses. Now, the Japanese are on the right track. What are we doing about this? We should be the ones coordinating this. Turkey has experience both in the private sector and local business, Zonguldak included. These opportunities should be seized. These are likely to bring with it other developments. It is significant not to neglect these while we are dealing with small-scale industries. What is the current situation? Does it remain the same? This is precisely why Mongolians react to others who come and take control of their mines, but merely keep them as strategic reserves.

Thank you.

**Murat KARAGÖZ**  
*Turkey's Ambassador to Ulaanbaatar*

Thank you very much for your well-informed observations.

We are here today with an incredible group of people, and for this reason all the observations and comments are on spot. This is something I say quite frequently as an ambassador, I have reported this to Ankara but unfortunately it has not received any interest. When we speak of mining, as I have mentioned in my presentation, coal, gold, copper, uranium, silver, and other metallurgy reserves are very much developed in this country. But as you have mentioned, a lot of countries have shown interest except for Turkey. Since the 1990s, some of our ministries had made certain commitments but none of them were kept. This is not only unique to Mongolia, similar things can happen elsewhere too. This is, of course, the result of certain internal problems. These are all understandable. However, some of these commitments I am speaking of wouldn't be too costly. In a visit made by representatives from one of our ministries, they tell me that, they had agreed on a project to bring water to the Gobi River in Mongolia. It was a project worth \$1.5 million and we did not see to it. This is only an example.

Due to its large coal reserves, Mongolia is facing grave pollution and environmental problems. For this reason, there is a shift towards renewable energy. These include water resources, hydroelectric power plants, wind power, and other energy reserves. We can also be engaged in these areas. There are only a few Turkish firms and they come here through their own means. They always mention that they face difficulties in terms of financing. I have never worked in this sector and I cannot say that I am very knowledgeable in this field, but I believe that these can all be overcome.

Almost all the international organizations have offices in Mongolia; the Bretton Woods institutions, IMF, the World Bank, EBRD, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, all the agencies of the United Nations. You have China, Singapore, and Thailand where the headquarters of many financial institutions are found, which are inclined to financing credible projects. Maybe it is easier said than done. There are two possible scenarios; either our young entrepreneurs are taking the easy way out, or we are not able to realize our strategic visions as we should be. The same can be said for credit. It is true that our politicians went up to 300 billion dollars' worth of credit from 10, 20, 30 million. There are certain steps Mongolia must take as well. It must disclose all its documents and at least try to reach certain outcomes. Japan is starting to win over Mongolians by providing small-scale development assistance and credit at low interest rates.

Mongolia has a small airport, the Genghis Han airport. 45 km north of this airport,



Japan is working on a project worth 500 million dollars. Some had been skeptical of its location. It is a long-term project, at a very low interest rate, and it will certainly have high returns for Japan once it is finished. Taking into account the free-trade agreement I mentioned earlier, maybe they will turn it into a grant. Or maybe it will have a completely different outcome. Japan invests in one project, and alongside it builds a small bridge with a sign written, “Mongolian-Japanese Friendship”, a bridge that crosses the Tuul River. For the past two years everyone has been talking about this bridge. I can’t say we are able to completely respond to the interest Mongolia has shown in Turkey. This is only an observation, but it is important that we become more engaged in Mongolia.

As you’ve mentioned, energy is a strategic matter too. Let me put it this way; there are three flights from Istanbul to Ulaanbaatar per week. A few of the passengers are Turkish and Mongolian but the majority are from the U.K, the U.S, Canada, France, and Germany. The Germans are also quite active in Mongolia. GIZ, JICA, and KOICA all have offices in addition to TİKA. We have a very good reputation.

However, we must direct this towards more strategic areas. We must look at energy from this perspective.

I have to be honest here. In the past two Ambassadors Conference, except this one, I explained Mongolia's situation to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. He agreed with my remarks. He said they would look into it, and mentioned the possibility of a 'barter system'. If Mongolia is facing problems with regards to cash, then other forms of commerce could be considered. For instance, it would certainly be possible to send oranges, vegetables, or copper in one of the charters to Mongolia. To do this, one must be patient and dedicated. Everyone is welcome to come to Mongolia. When I do invite people they say "we will come once it gets warmer". I understand that it can get cold, it is -33 degrees. But this shouldn't stop anyone from coming to Mongolia. And those who do come during summer come for touristic reasons, to see Orkhon for instance. These visits hardly result in concrete projects.

I am looking at events from my own perspective, maybe this applies to other parts of Eurasia too. We took certain initiatives in this region, and maybe romantically, but we were the first to do this. I had the opportunity to work with President Demirel during the years 1998-2000. Our undersecretary was chief supervisor at the time. There was certainly more interest towards this region. We should never forget this geography. I understand that the conjuncture is changing, I am taking into account all these changes especially those in the South-East. But we should never overlook the importance of this region. Especially after the downing of the Russian jet, Russia will try to consolidate its dominance over the region, in the Caucasus and Eurasia. I mentioned all of these in the conference, I don't see any reason why I shouldn't share it with all of you here today. We must take the initiative. We all know Russia; Turkey is a part of NATO and it is impossible to cope with Russia's propaganda. You may clearly see Russia's stance in Sputnik; it is constantly making smear attacks against Turkey. The way to cope with this is not through social media, it is not by tweeting "we did not do that, we did not sell oil to DEASH". We must act accordingly. We must work to show our positive side in Mongolia. This can be achieved through partnerships, not just through economic and trade agreements or by selling and buying, but through partnerships.

There are 60 million cattle. 7-8 million of them are dead by the end of winter. Why? Because they don't practice stock farming. They don't know what it is. We will of course host you at our residence in Ulaanbaatar, but speaking of livestock, meat in Mongolia is not very tasty. They don't use spices, they don't cook it well, and they don't use flour or fry it. It is possible to implement an integrated policy from cutting the meat, to skinning it, preserving it, and selling it.

As I mentioned previously, there are 60 million cattle and yet they import 74% of

all milk and milk products from China. They don't make their own cheese. I have not seen one businessman in Mongolia in the past 2 years. I have a huge file in Ankara. Many businessmen go to Central Asia, and yes there has been certain changes, certain groups were interested in that region, but there is no interest in Mongolia and this is unacceptable.

85% of the construction sector in Turkmenistan is dominated by one Turkish firm, Polimeks. There is not one Turkish firm in Mongolia. One did come, and we provided all the support we could but it did not work out. I am aware that it is difficult to do business. It is particularly hard in Mongolia. They are keener on having lunch and establishing friendly ties. But it is very important to find the right partner. If you don't work with the public sector from the very outset and make the necessary sacrifices in terms of making profit, then it is very difficult for these projects to yield high returns. But one thing is for certain, their ties with Turkey are very strong. They see us as one of their own. They say "your history dates back to Mongolia, this is your home". It is important to respond to their interests. Since we have an advantage, we should look for partnerships in Erdenet or Tavan Tolgoi. If we don't forge strong partnerships, we might end up being a subcontractor.

For instance, when I went down to the mines someone asked me whether I recognized the Ford they were using. They said it was manufactured in Turkey. This is something we should be proud of. A businessmen was trying to get a hold of someone in Turkey to sell heavy equipment. I don't mean to say this is not my job, of course it is, but I spent six days trying to find the contact details of that person. Three minutes after speaking on the phone, "we should have lunch", he said, he thought I was the Mongolian ambassador in Turkey. Such things happen from time to time. And we should be more engaged precisely because of these reasons.

I should also add that there are certain shortcomings in Mongolia, too. I have conveyed these to the Ambassador here and our Mongolian friends. They, too, take the easy way out from time to time.

Korea is incredibly popular in Mongolia, and by no means am I belittling this. K-pop is incredibly popular in this region. From karaoke, to shoes, chewing gum, and soap operas. But there is not one Turkish TV show on Mongolian TV. Whereas in Serbia, which we do not have very close relations with, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* [a Turkish soap opera focusing on Suleiman the Magnificent] is one of the most popular TV shows. The same can be said for Chile. Why aren't we bringing Turkish TV shows to Mongolia, especially when we have brought it to other Central Asian countries? Mongolia is not a country with vast opportunities. For instance, TRT, or private production companies could supply one season of a show for free or at a lower price. They are streaming these TV shows illegally from Russia. These

are very important, especially as a way to be more engaged in the region.

Mongolians who grow up or go to school in Turkey and later return to Mongolia do not lose touch with Turkey. I am friends with most of them on social media. I have witnessed some of the conversations amongst them. Imagine if Ambassador Kılıç and I grew up in the U.K, would we speak in English? But, they speak in Turkish. They ask each other if they watched the football game or *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* and so on. They admire Turkey, this is the kind of effect Turkey has in Mongolia and it is extremely important to build on this. There are a lot of Mongolian students who have graduated from Turkey. Turkish is one of the most widely spoken languages.



**Prof. Dr. Konuralp ERCİLASUN**  
*Gazi University*

Since my area of expertise is history, my questions will be from areas I am not familiar with; from economy. My colleague Sencer briefly touched upon this topic, the ‘tough’ part of the topic, mines. And Mr. Ambassador mentioned the ‘soft’ aspect, which is animal husbandry. You previously mentioned that China is a big market for this country. However, Mongolia is not a big producer, and therefore doesn’t seem like a very favorable market. Mongolia is an exporter of raw mate-



rials. In this sense, from the way I see it, opening up to a big market would not result in revenues for Mongolia but rather a loss in its wealth at very low prices. I agree with the comments made by you and my colleague Sencer on our economic relations and engagement in Mongolia. I think we must approach this matter in two ways. The first is our presence and visibility in Mongolia. The growth of the Turkish economy and our economic relations with Mongolia is two-sided. Secondly, we should frame our bilateral relations in terms of Mongolia's economic independence. The deepening of our economic relations with Mongolia is another matter. I think we should be focusing solely on Mongolia. Geographically speaking, it is a dwarf trapped between two giants. For this precise reason, I believe that it is necessary for Mongolia to have a strong economy. Maybe Turkey can assist Mongolia in this. I was thinking of animal husbandry as an area which Turkey can help Mongolia with. You previously mentioned that it was not a developed sector. This is something I wanted to underline but you touched upon it in detail. This is certainly an area in which TİKA can be involved in. TİKA could bring this to the fore in order to improve this sector in Mongolia, and maybe it has attempted to do so in the past.

I was considering proposing the 'charter example' you gave earlier. We have been struggling with meat prices in the past three years, importing meat from Australia and other places. If this charter system could work for vegetables or fruit, it could certainly work for meat too. Last I heard, four years ago to be exact, neither Russia nor China allowed animals from Mongolia to enter into its border as a result of health regulations. In fact, this was to our benefit, if only we could have taken advantage of this opportunity.

Lastly, I will touch upon Turkish Airlines and tourism. Until Turkish Airlines started flying to Mongolia in 2012, there were flights from Moscow, Pekin, and Seoul. With Turkish Airlines, the flights to Mongolia increased to a total of four and I used to believe that the stop at Bishkek was indeed the result of a strategic calculation, but I was wrong, it was in fact the result of a mistake. But a positive one. It was the first time a direct connection was established between Mongolia and Central Asia. It takes three hours to travel from Bishkek to Almaty. It is quite easy to get to Bishkek by taking the highway from Tashkent, or from Tajikistan. This route is highly significant for creating a connection between Mongolia and Central Asia. If this was the result of a mistake, then it is a mistake that shouldn't be corrected. It is important for tourism to flourish in parallel to this. When I speak of tourism I am referring to tourism between Mongolia and Turkey. With regards to this, I presume there is a problem stemming from Turkey because I have come across the same thing in Uzbekistan. It is said that Uzbekistan is closed to tourism. However, during summer, tourists from the EU states and the US exceed the number of Uzbeks in Tashkent. And it is said that Uzbekistan is 'closed' to tourists.

We share historical ties with Uzbekistan, but there is not one Turkish tourism agency advertising Uzbekistan as a touristic destination. The same thing applies to Mongolia. This is not a problem stemming from Mongolia. This is precisely why I gave Uzbekistan as an example. This must be something stemming from Turkey. Which institution can assume this responsibility? I think it would be a good idea to work towards improving tourism in Mongolia with regards to flight fares of Turkish Airlines. Maybe certain tourism agencies could work in cooperation with Turkish Airlines within this framework.

**Assist. Prof. Ceren ERGENÇ**  
*METU, Asian Studies*

My area of expertise is China, so my question will be from here. I would like to ask the significance of Turkey-Mongolia relations in light of the region more broadly. You previously touched upon the impact of the recent crisis with Russia on Turkey-Mongolia relations and relations with Russia in the region.



In parallel to this, would like to ask about the role of China. As you mentioned earlier, OBOR “One Belt One Road” is a huge project worth 40 billion dollars. However, the content of the project has still not fully developed; they are considering any proposal that comes their way. I have been attending conferences for years. Everyone has been discussing the importance of this project for Turkey and the possible returns it might have. However, from our perspective, I am yet to hear about a concrete project. Mongolia is at the fore due to its geographical location. It has taken concrete steps with regards to the ‘Steppe Road’ Project. Would it be useful to think of Turkey-Mongolia relations within the context of OBOR?

**Prof. Dr. Fırat PURTAŞ**  
*TÜRKSOY & Gazi University*

We have had various occasions to work in cooperation with Mongolia. We invited Mongolian artists to a few of our events. We held an International Forum of Museums in Mongolia last year. However, we have not made a lot of progress in institutionalizing our relations with Mongolia. We have not been able to maintain



our connections with regards to Mongolia's 'observer' status or within the framework of a goodwill protocol with the Ministry of Culture.

We had taken certain initiatives while a government was being formed in 2012. However, the crisis in Mongolia also had impact on us and we failed to realize our projects. We will be paying particular attention to this in the coming days and we believe we will be able to achieve our objectives with our embassy's support.

Based on my previous experience, I have made the following observations; as you mentioned earlier, they have taken a lot of interest in Turkey. They are keeping a close eye on the developments taking place in our country, especially with regards to Russia, I presume. We can also mention 'inner Mongolia' which has a population as big as 'Outer Mongolia' and a very influential culture and language. What is the impact of 'Inner Mongolia' on 'Outer Mongolia's perception of the world? We are fully aware of the effect Russia has on this. We are, at least, taking advantage of this with regards its connections with TÜRKSOY [International Organization of Turkic Culture], but I am curious whether China has a part to play, is it able to convey its position? I would also like to know whether, as TÜRKSOY, we can assume a certain role in the ASEM summit, to which Turkey will not be attending.

**Rafet ASLANTAŞ**  
*Anka Institute*

Thank you Mr. Ambassador for this informative presentation, and for providing us with up-to-date information on Mongolia.

I have worked in the public sector for many years, in the military to be exact. I am currently the Director of a think-tank striving to undertake academic studies. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we are particularly interested in maintaining a perspective which sees eye to eye with reality. Diplomatic missions are, of course, one of the most significant missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am extremely pleased to have heard your thoughts from this perspective today. I hope you will have the opportunity to voice your opinions and thoughts in the future in in other occasions, we will gladly support you and our esteemed ambassadors.

Mongolia is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world. It has a population of 3 million. However, it is a country that has failed to prove itself in the realm of technology. Moreover, when observed closely, from the perspective of social-psychology, one can observe that pride is a prevalent attribute, written in their genetic codes dating back to Genghis Khan. Mongolia is also a country which lacks self-confidence, a direct result of being underdeveloped.



This region is highly important. In this region, where military and political doctrines take precedence, we see, also from what you have conveyed in your presentation, that a ‘Swiss model’ is trying to be implemented. This could possibly be a point of exit in the near future; if Mongolia frees itself of the effect Korea has.

I believe that it would be beneficial to look at this from the perspective of our national interests. Indeed, there is a certain balance in global affairs. However, rather than working in the name of consortiums, like those in Africa or the Middle East, it would be much more useful to prioritize our national interests, to work towards our own gains and to form partnerships in the realm of business, politics, and military. You mentioned of more than 100 agreements, particularly on military and education. This is, of course, a positive development, however, we always prefer our relationships to spill-over into economy. This is what makes it permanent.

One way of increasing visibility in a country is by opening an embassy, composed of its intelligence service, personnel, military personnel and attachés, which reflect the power of the country. Personally, I believe that we are successful in achieving this. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a strong foundation. However, it would always make a country stronger if you support this through institutions in the short, middle and long terms. Am I mistaken? We have witnessed this before, and we prefer uniformity and consistency. We always prefer our personnel to be consistent. This is precisely what constitutes institutional power, we all saw this. Before I conclude, I would like to say that I hope to keep in touch with you in the future and support you in your future work.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is currently on the agenda. We are one of the founding members, but it seems like the UK has made a greater contribution. If I am not mistaken, our budget is 2 million or slightly above 2 million. My question is, was this Bank founded in response to the West's exploitative economic structure, or as a possible alternative to today's worsening economic conditions? How will we turn this to our advantage? I believe we have a good understanding of the region as a whole. I would appreciate it if you could kindly explain what the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is, in relation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, for instance, and what we could foresee in this context. Thank you.

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tümen SOMONCUOĞLU**  
*Gazi University*

I would firstly like to thank Mr. Ambassador for this informative presentation. It is certainly favorable for all countries, regardless of being neighbors or not, to maintain friendly relations and to engage in partnerships in different spheres, whether in military or education. I will not refer to concrete projects. I would like to ask where we envisage Mongolia to be in the middle and long-term. What kind of policies do we want Mongolia to pursue? What kind of policies would serve our national interest? What do we wish to gain from our relations with Mongolia? Is improving relations a goal in itself, or do we have other aims?



**Murat KARAGÖZ***Turkey's Ambassador to Ulaanbataar*

I would like reiterate my thanks to the scholars and analysts here today. It was certainly eye-opening for me, too. I would like to thank AVİM for organizing and hosting this meeting. I would like to convey my thoughts in order of the questions asked.

It was mentioned that China is a big market, an exporter of raw materials. This is correct. However, any investment made in Mongolia would yield great added-value. This is what I was suggesting when I gave the example of animal husbandry. You are correct, China can certainly buy raw materials from Mongolia. However, Mongolia is, rightly, in pursuit of producing its own products, as in products that can be called 'Made in Mongolia'. This is the only way to create its very own brand. In the meantime, it has certain characteristics which are likely to result in added-value for Mongolia, this is what it's aiming at. It is one of the largest producers of cashmere, and it wants to advance towards this. Like I mentioned earlier, there are 60 million cattle in Mongolia, half of which are small cattle, we should be thinking about how we can make use of this. There are also Tibetan Yaks in this region. Mongolia is thinking of ways to use them more productively.

Turkey has reached out to the furthest parts of Africa or East Asia. We share deep historical ties with Mongolia, maybe this would be an additional factor of motivation. My dream, and you may think this is utopic, is to allocate resources to the manufacturing sector, particularly the leather industry in Mongolia. We have means and skills to do this. This is what I have been referring to. I said earlier that the meat is not very tasteful, we could invest in gastronomy. If we look at the overall picture it is possible for this to happen. The most popular dinners are those we host at our residence. Yes, we have a chef from Bolu, but because the Mongolian cuisine primarily consists of meat, and because they don't produce anything else, we have to bring everything from Turkey.

Besides Mongolian cuisine, there are also very nice Japanese, French, and Italian restaurants; they have the purchasing power. You may see it for yourself when you visit Mongolia. Life in Mongolia is, unfortunately, costly. For instance, a meal at a restaurant would cost as much as a meal in any European country. Consumption is able to meet this supply. Mongolia has moved up from being a 'low income' country to 'upper middle income'. For three consecutive years Mongolia has maintained an income per capita of 4,000 Dollars. The World Bank has verified these figures.

I agree with your remarks, however, these things could be achieved. It is possible to reverse the present condition. Mongolia has a different potential. You will cer-



tainly see it for yourself if you visit Mongolia. Our visibility in Mongolia should be increased and Turkey has a head start. Turkey, with its impressive economic performance particularly in the last 10-15 years, its regional power, soft power, businesses circles, and added-value, has succeeded in becoming a part of the West without appearing exploitative.

The ‘resource nationalism’ I mentioned before, also visible in Canada, the Netherlands, and the UK, creates an atmosphere of hesitance. Indeed, you may see foreigners investing in the country but there is a degree of hesitance towards them. However, this doesn’t apply to Turkey. They see Turkey as a partner. This is a great advantage. We should be able to make use of this.

TİKA is already a brand on its own. Their office in Mongolia was one of the first offices they opened. We work in close coordination with TİKA, and we are making every effort to deepen our partnership, as Ms. Nilüfer would also know. I keep in close contact with TİKA; both with our friends in Mongolia and Ankara. Mongolia is a country which receives aid. This is why these agencies have a lot of prestige there. JICA, KOICA, and GIZ are quite strong in Mongolia. USAID no longer



has an office in Mongolia, and of course, there is TİKA which is very prestigious. The only problem is, which they are also aware of, is the need to work in close collaboration. We must give precedence to the needs of Mongolians rather than our own. We need to work on improving health standards, education and providing various social services.

We discussed animal husbandry. TİKA has a project on this. My concern is that continuity must be achieved with these projects. It is not sufficient to give briefings to representatives from the Ministry of Industry and Agriculture, for instance. Or to take them to Urfa to see greenhouses or botanical parks in Antalya. We need continuity and sustainability of these projects, and it is important that we keep track of them together.

They requested additional support to improve their emergency services, as Karakorum, where our historical heritage can be found, is an intersection where serious traffic accidents take place. There has been traumatic experiences there.

For instance, they do not have x-ray machines, and are therefore unable to make the necessary responses in emergency situations. Training can be provided in these areas. I made several visits to these sites, a group of experts also came from Turkey. It is now necessary to turn these into concrete projects and programs. My point is, these should have long-lasting effects. They should be permanent. It is not only about opening up kindergartens or pre-schools, or realizing one or two projects. Maybe I am mistaken, of course, not everyone has to agree with me.

We can talk about tourism and Turkish Airlines for hours. I conducted a lot of research during my studies at university, and I have written an article while in Mongolia which was published in Daily Sabah and various newspapers in Mongolia. I wrote a piece on why Turkish tourists should visit Mongolia and all the things Mongolia has to offer. It is necessary to look at Mongolia as a whole, there is a need for a ‘fam trip’.

On every visit I make to Istanbul, I make sure to see the Director of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies. Our tourism professionals must take interest in Mongolia. There are a few touristic agencies which do take interest, however they are very few in number and size. We have Turkish tourists who wish to travel to Mongolia, but we must encourage this even more.

I don't quite agree with your remarks about Turkish Airlines. There are 21-22 flights from Kyrgyzstan per week. For this reason, they are not dependent on this particular flight. A passenger travelling from Mongolia wishes to have, and rightly so, a comfortable journey on a wide-body aircraft with good services. They don't want to pay a high price and they would rather travel for 6.5 hours instead of 10.



The stop in Bishkek can turn into a nightmare. Only 7-8 passengers travel in an airplane with a capacity of 160 passengers. They resort to other means of transportation. They always prefer to travel through Russia. I agree with you, but that connection is never severed. They identify themselves as a Northeast Asian country, but they maintain their ties with Central Asia, just in different forms. They feel particularly close to Kyrgyzstan, especially with regards to democratization. There are Kazaks living in Mongolia. They are slightly more distant to the others. They wish to maintain a relationship with 'like-minded' countries on the basis of democratization, respect for human rights, and free-market economy. In this regard, Bishkek doesn't quite work in the way you explained. I completely agree with what your remarks on tourism and I think we need to provide more support for it.

Prices must drop. Mongolia will benefit immensely if wide-body aircrafts start flying to Mongolia. Since these planes refuel in Bishkek, it is Kyrgyz firms that make the profit. We are doing everything we can to explain this to Mongolians. The aircraft crew stay in Kyrgyzstan, whereas they should come and stay in Mongolia. More tourists should visit Mongolia, the planes should be wide-body aircrafts. As I mentioned earlier, the planes should be made more comfortable. Turkish Airlines was chosen as one of the best airlines in the world. Its average fleet age is 6.2. It has numerous Airbuses, Boeings, and it flies to every part of the world. It has flights to Buenos Aires, Asmara in Africa, and it could certainly fly to Mongolia too. It has three flights to Japan every day. One to Osaka and two to Tokyo.

Boeing 737 800 or 737 900 are two planes which fly to Mongolia, they are narrow-body aircrafts. They only have one corridor with a capacity of 160 passengers. The reason for this a provision in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which set a limit of 500 passengers per week. Mongolia is implementing this rule for its own national interests; so that its own airlines (MIAT) doesn't go bankrupt when Turkish Airlines starts having flights to Mongolia. We have been trying to explain that this would not be the case, but this has become increasingly difficult especially after the crisis with Russia. They like to give Georgia as an example; were they say the national airlines went bankrupt due to Turkish Airlines and they do not want the same thing happening in Mongolia. So, a propaganda has taken root against Turkish Airlines. This is very serious.

Several of you have touched upon the Russian factor in Turkish-Mongolian relations, and this is subject to change, but especially after the downing of the Russian jet our efforts have increased.

Myself, the embassy, the Turkish government, H.E. President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu included are all trying to counter the propaganda that is depicting Turkey as an 'unsafe' country and drawing connections between the downing of the Russian jet plane, DEASH, oil smuggling or claiming that Turkey is training DAESH militants in camps and so on. This has an effect on the entire Eurasian region.

The Mongolian government refrained from taking sides. They did not make an official statement, but we had meetings behind closed doors. They said "Ambassador, we have lived side by side with Russia for years, we are neighbors, but Turkey is also our 'third neighbor'. Our only wish is for you to make peace with Russia and return to how things used to be".

Ms. Ceren Ergenç touched upon China, with good reason. 'One Road One Belt' is very important. What makes OBOR important for Turkey is the Middle Corri-

dor. It has not yet been put into action, but, when I refer to the ‘Middle Corridor’, I mean a project which cross-cuts Turkey, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and its connection to Mongolia. However, we haven’t been able to arouse interest in Mongolia thus far. This has several reasons. Firstly, it is still unclear where this project is headed. This may also clarify the question on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. With regards to the OBOR project, it makes you dizzy just by looking at the map, there are arrows pointing in all directions. There are two routes for Russia; the sea route and the Silk Road, and there are dimensions which stretch out to Afghanistan and India. So it still quite blurry.

This might be an intentional step taken by China, to spread the project over a longer period of time, so it could be keeping it ambiguous intentionally. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, rather than being an alternative, as the professor mentioned earlier, was established to form the basis of the \$40 billion projects on infrastructure, transportation and communication and in such a way that, in my opinion, works towards China’s priorities. The US was quite hesitant towards this idea, but the UK joined the Bank. Again, some EU states were hesitant and some were on board. Turkey and Mongolia are amongst the founding members.

You mentioned the Swiss model. This is also how they describe it. This is slightly utopic but they are trying to become more like Turkmenistan, which is the only ‘neutral state’ in that region. It is indeed possible to assume the status of being ‘neutral’. There are various examples of this. But Mongolia is seeking to get this status recognized by the United Nations. I have not quite understood what this would bring for Mongolia, and I don’t think Mongolia has quite figured it out either, but they are trying to implement the steps Turkmenistan took in 1995. The draft might be approved in the following months. Maybe we could support Mongolia on this if it doesn’t affect Mongolia’s engagements with the West and its contribution the world peace and security. I would also like to add, here, that Mongolia is amongst the top countries which contribute to global peace and security. Mongolia currently has soldiers in Afghanistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and other challenging geographies.

I completely agree with your perspective on the Mongolian state. We should all be looking at things from the same perspective. We must avoid institutional narrow-mindedness. I have said this to TİKA, to the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, to Turkish Airlines, and to our Embassy; there is just one country, one flag and that is the Republic of Turkey.

In the middle and long-terms, we must continue to pursue increased engagement and we should make more effort to understand the region and become more familiar with it. And this, we all know, can only be achieved by resorting to all aspects of diplomacy. We should ensure that high-profile visits are made on a regular

basis. These are relations between joint economic commissions, security and intelligence.

It is indeed troubling when the population of Mongolia becomes a reason for ending discussions. “Oh they are so small” they say, and that is that. They think that it is not worth investing in. But we shouldn’t look at it this way. Those countries that don’t think this way win. They become prestigious.

South Korea was in a terrible place in the 1950s, but look at it now. It is at an entirely different position. It takes interest in its neighboring regions. If you ask me, the value-added of Korea is not as big as Turkey’s, but it is close. Indeed, Korea is advantageous in terms of its geographical location. Yes, it may have around 30,000 Mongolian citizens. However, there are 3,000 Mongolian citizens in Turkey, too. There are 130-140 mixed marriages and 900 students. We opened a military attaché office, we are making military and other aids. We are active in the field of education. It is important to turn all of these into concrete actions. We should also mobilize the business circles around this.

The ASEM Summit is very significant. There are no problems with regards to the Asian dimension of it. One of the coordinating countries was Mongolia. I went and they assured me there was nothing to worry about. They told me to look into Europe. As you may imagine, certain countries have caused problems. But there is hope. If we make headway with regards to the accession process and particularly Cyprus, then we could possibly join ASEM by spring and attend the Summit. They occasionally ask me whether the President or the Prime Minister will be attending the meeting, and it is unfortunate to say that Turkey will not be attending.



**Nilüfer KAMER**

*TİKA, Department of Central Asia and Caucasia*

H.E. President Erdoğan had made an official visit to Mongolia as Prime Minister, accompanied by Ambassador Mustafa Sarnıç. It was an incredible welcoming ceremony which took place in front of the Parliament. These are my own impressions of the event; I can say that I had never seen anything of this kind in Turkey before. A country with a population of 3 million had taken incredible interest in our Prime Minister's visit. The welcoming ceremony was carried out precisely according to plan. There was no delay. H.E President Erdoğan, Prime Minister at the time, initiated several TİKA projects. The last time H.E Erdoğan visited Mongolia was for the opening ceremony of the Bilge Highway, and his most recent visit drew a lot of attention; this was our impression.

I wanted to share my thoughts with you.

**Alev KILIÇ**

*Ambassador (R)  
Director of AVİM*

Thank you.

Dear scholars and participants, I would like to thank you all for being here today. It was certainly worthwhile. It is definitely hard to come by such a well-rounded presentation by an Ambassador who has spent three years in Mongolia. What I



learnt today at this meeting is invaluable. The scope of this meeting went much beyond the research I did prior to this meeting, and my interest in Mongol intensified. I have come to a conclusion that, as AVİM, it would be on point to approach Mongolia based on what Mongolians envisage for themselves, for their sui generis status within Eurasia.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to Ambassador Murat Karagöz for devoting his time for this meeting and for sharing his experiences with us here today. Also, thank you everyone here for participating. We hope to see you at another AVİM meeting in the near future.









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