



State Banquet for the President of Turkey

Guildhall

23rd November 2011

The Lord Mayor

Alderman David Wootton

Mr President, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Chief Commoner, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr President, it is my very great honour to welcome *you* and Mrs Gul to Guildhall and the City of London. As someone who has lived and studied in London, you will know that a Banquet in this magnificent hall – where the City has entertained heads of state for over 6 centuries – is one of the greatest honours we can bestow. It is my privilege to present this address in a silver casket to you, which I hope you will accept as a token of our great esteem.

That esteem is founded on the historic partnership between our two countries – a partnership given even greater depth and impetus in recent years.

The links between the City and Turkey are indeed ancient. By 1511, the City of London was trading with Turkey and the Levant. One of my predecessors as Lord Mayor, Sir Edward Osborne, was instrumental in strengthening the partnership between our two great trading nations. The Levant Company, or the Turkey Company, was one of the very earliest English stock companies. Members were known as Turkey Merchants, and, for many years, membership was restricted to freemen of this City - a tribute to the importance we have always attached to our relationship.

In recent years, Lord Mayors of the City of London have carried on this vital commercial diplomacy, visiting Turkey to find ways of building-up our bilateral trade, and political partnership. My own visit in January will be the first major overseas visit I will make during my year in office.

My visit forms part of our efforts to deepen the partnership between our countries. British foreign direct investment in Turkey, in the first half of 2011 alone, totalled \$500 million. And we expect our bilateral trade to have risen by over 40%, between 2009 and the end of this year.

I look forward to working with our Turkish partners to meet our Prime Minister's target of doubling bilateral trade by 2015 – and helping to create jobs and economic growth.

Mr President, we can achieve much together. Turkey's progress in recent years has been extraordinary, with growth in the past year of nearly 9%, and we look forward to seeing Turkey develop even further, as an economic and political power. Your economy, driven by a young and dynamic workforce, an entrepreneurial spirit, and an ever-greater openness to international partnership, echoes your historic commercial values of providing high-quality goods and services, for the benefit of everyone.

In October, our Governments entered into a Knowledge Partnership, which will promote innovation, entrepreneurship and investment between our countries – primarily, in the critical areas of Science and Technology.

And earlier today, the second meeting of the UK-Turkey CEO Forum took place – launched by our respective Prime Ministers in April this year. The Forum will play a major role in building a dynamic, productive, bilateral business relationship. Crucially, it will help encourage smaller businesses in both our countries, to share expertise.

And I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, on an excellent address to the CBI Annual Conference on Monday

setting out with great clarity, a very cogent analysis of the current economic situation.

The United Kingdom has recognised Turkey's growing importance, through the Strategic Partnership between our two countries, covering the whole spectrum of our shared goals. And we honour Turkey's critical role as a positive example for the newly-emerging democracies of the Middle East and North Africa.

This is not to say, Mr President, that we do not face challenges: combatting terrorism – also a challenge for the United Kingdom – and the devastation caused by the recent earthquakes. Turkey responded swiftly and capably, to deal with the needs of its people. We in the City of London wish to provide whatever assistance we can, and were privileged to make our own contribution to the Relief Appeal.

Mr President, the City, the United Kingdom and Turkey share great histories, but also a great, shared, future. And I am honoured that we have been able to deepen our partnership this evening.

In 1867, the Sultan, the Ottoman Emperor, was the guest of honour at a State Banquet here at Guildhall. In reporting this great event, the Times newspaper described the setting and decorations as "gorgeous, almost beyond recognition".

Mr President, the splendour of this evening's Banquet shows the importance we continue to attach to our partnership with Turkey, and with you, as our most honoured guest. In his Address at the Banquet, the Sultan said that he "wished to establish, between his people and the other nations of Europe, that feeling of brotherhood, which is the foundation of human progress".

Much has changed in the past century and a half, but we can all endorse that admirable sentiment – and look forward to a continued and strengthened fraternity between our nations.

So it is with great pleasure that I ask you all, save you, Mr President, to rise, while I propose the toast to:

The President of the Republic of Turkey.

