



SÜDOSTEUROPA- GESELLSCHAFT

in cooperation with



Supported by



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung



International Conference
Berlin, 29 and 30 May 2008

EU and Turkish Perspectives on Black Sea Regional Cooperation

SPEECH BY MURAT ZONGUR,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF UBCCE

Suedosteuropa-Gesellschaft – Widenmayerstr. 49 – 80538 Munich – Germany
Tel. +49 89 21 21 540 Email: info@suedosteuropa-gesellschaft.com
www.suedosteuropa-gesellschaft.com

Dear Ambassadors, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is my privilege today to address such a distinguished audience as the Secretary General of the recently founded Union of Black Sea and Caspian Confederation of Enterprises (UBCCE).

At the outset, I would like to thank the Southeast Europe Association for including UBCCE among the organizers of this event and for giving me the opportunity to convey the views of this young organization on the wide range of possibilities that the business community has in cooperation in the Black Sea and Caspian Region.

First of all let me give you a very brief overview on UBCCE and its activities and then I will proceed to the role that can be played by the business sector for the economic development of this emerging part of the globe.

UBCCE is a non-governmental organization composed of central, private, voluntary, nationally representative, horizontal business organizations from the countries neighbouring or having strong geographical ties with the Black Sea and Caspian Region. As the first private, voluntary and non-governmental business organization of the Region, the Union ensures permanent contacts with 19 member organizations from 15 different countries following the new memberships of Federation of Austrian Industry (IV), Bavarian Business Association (VBW), Atameken Union of Kazakhstan and Confederation of Employers of Ukraine (CONFEU) approved in our recent General Assembly held in Istanbul. I am sure, Mr Rainer Ptok, Director of International Economic Affairs of Bavarian Business Association, who is among us here today as one of the speakers, will highlight us on their view of the Black Sea and Caspian and the reasons why they wanted to join our organization.

Establishing institutionalized cooperation and facilitating communication among business organizations of member countries are among our priorities. Assisting the economic and social development of the Region through fostering trade and investment activities and entrepreneurial spirit, promoting the social and economic interests of the companies represented by our member organizations and contributing to the functioning of free market economies in member countries are among our other main objectives. After all, UBCCE's aim is to become a reliable partner for *BUSINESSEUROPE* in the Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

when we look at the main characteristics of the Black Sea and Caspian Region, what we realize in this increasingly strategic part of the world is that there are significant economic, political and social diversifications between the countries. The Region offers enormous economic opportunities both for the countries of the Region and countries outside of the Region with their unsaturated markets and high growth rates as the highest developing part of the world after Southeast Asia. However, the Region, rich in natural resources, has currently a limited trade potential with some of the countries still trying to complete their transition to properly functioning market economies. Foreign Direct Investment especially in non-oil sectors and public-private partnership need to be developed. However, relatively low labour costs and skilled workforce are among the competitive advantages of the Black Sea and Caspian. The use of existing financial institutions like the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development could be beneficial for the modernization of the economies of the Region. The support of the European Union through the Neighbourhood Policy and the Black Sea Synergy can also open new perspectives both for our Region and Europe. We believe that the big economic potential can be improved further with joint and coordinated action and the private sector organizations in our countries may contribute to activate this potential through working together with a “strategic view” based on “partnership and union”.

From a business perspective we long of course for more private companies, more jobs and employment and functioning market economies for sustainable economic growth and expansion and creation of an area of shared prosperity which would hopefully give positive results for regional stability.

UBCCE and its members can contribute to this process by:

- 1- Providing information on economic developments in the Region like we have started doing through our Quarterly Bulletin being currently communicated electronically
- 2- Identifying trade obstacles and investment opportunities in the countries of the Region

3- Supporting trade activities of companies and especially that of SMEs and helping them establish new partnerships. The soon to be launched Business Country Desks project of UBCCE will be a concrete step taken in that direction to promote business between member companies of member organizations.

4- Supporting the promotion of entrepreneurial spirit and especially innovation and competitiveness can be another contribution of our Union. UBCCE is forming actually three Thematic Committees under the names “Entrepreneurship and Innovation”, “Regional Economic Integration” and “Business Environment Development” to coordinate its actions in these areas.

5- Lobbying to governments and different authorities for speeding up necessary reform and make responsible and documented proposals for putting forward solid solutions leading to development could be another contribution. Our Union foresees the preparation of position papers on issues relevant to our Region. “Mare Negra and Caspium Strategy Paper of UBCCE” projected to be released in late autumn reflecting the views of a business organization on its possible contributions to the economic environment of the Region taking into account the Black Sea Synergy of the European Union will be our first document in this sense. We hope to release this Strategy Paper during the Second High Level visit of our Union to Brussels and present it to EU Commission and BUSINESSSEUROPE circles. We believe that the organization of events on issues of interest for the business community can also be a useful tool to be used in that direction. The First Business Forum of UBCCE organized in Baku last October on “Foreign direct investments in the Black Sea and Caspian Region” was a quite successful start for us where we had around 300 participants from different countries of our Region. With this occasion let me announce you that our Second Forum is scheduled to be held in Tbilissi, Georgia on October 23 on the theme “Invest in Georgia, Invest in the Region” with the support of local partners.

Last but not least, we also hope to be admitted as “observer member” to BSEC in the coming days through the intermediate of which we believe to contribute more to shaping up the future of our Region.

Well, thank you very much for your attention. With this occasion let me thank once more to the Southeast Europe Association for this Conference and I hope that we will continue our cooperation in the future.