

**ADDRESS BY H.E. MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU, MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
SIXTH ISTANBUL CONFERENCE ON MEDIATION**

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(Check Against Delivery)

Mr. Secretary General,
Honorable Members of the High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure to welcome you at the Sixth Istanbul Conference on Mediation.

The Conference turned into a traditional event which brings together prominent political figures, academics and experts from the field of peace and reconciliation.

The presence of nearly 200 students of political science and international relations at this platform is the biggest investment we can make to the future of conflict resolution in the world.

The need for effective mediation is more than ever before:

We are living through an era of profound changes in every aspect of human experience. Multiple transformations are taking place causing systemic disruptions and painful instabilities.

The conflict resolution landscape is affected by these changes.

The post-Cold War euphoria about the descent of conflicts is now gone. Violent conflicts remain as a feature of international affairs.

It is estimated that around 2 billion people, or one third of the world's population, currently live in countries affected by conflicts.

Violent conflicts do not necessarily happen in the form of conventional wars between states. In fact, in most cases non-state groups, terrorists and criminal groups are involved.

Today's conflicts have a tendency to become more internationalized and more protracted.

There is also a shift in the drivers of the conflict. Material interests or competition between nation-states are no longer the dominant motives.

We are witnessing emergence of a new set of challenges including terrorism, radicalism, climate change, poverty, extremism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and antisemitism.

In short, Ladies and Gentlemen, the phenomenon of conflict became more complicated. Therefore, conflict prevention and resolution efforts have to match the complexity of the conflicts worldwide.

And preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution became more crucial.

Where does Turkey stand in all these efforts?

Against this background, we made mediation and conflict prevention a central priority of our Enterprising and Humanitarian foreign policy.

In fact, Turkey is one of the first nation states that formulated the link between "Peace at Home and Peace in the World" as a principle of statecraft. This was the motto articulated by the founder of our Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a century ago.

This is not a simple preference, but a necessity given Turkey's location at the epicenter of a geography hosting a great number of conflicts.

Therefore, we have undertaken various mediation and facilitation efforts and developed numerous regional cooperation initiatives.

A decade ago, we launched the "Mediation for Peace Initiative" together with Finland at the United Nations.

Today, the UN Friends of Mediation Group has 59 members representing all continents, regions and major international organizations.

Over the past ten years, this Group made critical contributions to mediation, such as helping the adoption of four UNGA Resolutions on mediation, and the preparation of three UN guidelines on mediation.

Last month, we hosted the Group's 10th annual Ministerial Meeting in New York at the margins of the UN General Assembly.

Besides the UN, we took action to contribute to the mediation agenda of the OSCE and the OIC.

Turkey led the efforts to develop mediation capacity within OIC and its Member States. We took the model of group of friends of mediation at the UN and the OSCE this time to the OIC. We co-chair this group.

Turkey also launched a mediation training program in the OIC.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Technology is fundamentally changing all aspects of our lives. The impact of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence is a subject for discussions in the conflict resolution world as well.

In 1850, when the Prime Minister of Great Britain saw the first telegram message he cried “This is the end of diplomacy”. This is also valid at the age of machine learning. But the need for diplomacy remains and the diplomats have to keep up with technology.

This is why I announced our digital diplomacy initiative at the 11th Ambassadors’ Conference back in August.

This initiative involves improving digital literacy of diplomats and building institutional capacity for monitoring global developments, setting up early warning systems for potential conflicts and optimizing the use of digital tools in diplomacy.

Earlier this year, the UN released a Toolkit on Digital Technologies and Mediation. This ground-breaking document demonstrates how technology could support the communication between the parties and foster inclusivity.

Despite the evolving technology and growing connectivity, mediation is and will remain a human-intensive endeavor.

This brings us to the importance of experience and insights in conflict resolution. I would like to commend the Secretary General for the establishment of a High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation to advise him on mediation initiatives and support ongoing mediation efforts.

We are particularly pleased to host this very distinguished and senior Board here in Istanbul. We look forward to their discussion.

Mr. Secretary General,

Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of the entire mediation community for the importance you attach to the field of mediation and the support you provided so far.

The “surge in diplomacy for peace” elevated the place of prevention and mediation in the work of the United Nations.

This is a major service for global peace and stability. We support your efforts and truly appreciate your presence here today.

I welcome you all once again and hope you will have time to enjoy beautiful Istanbul.

Thank you.