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March 8, 2021

**The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20520**

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I would like to congratulate you for your well-deserved appointment as Secretary of State. Knowing the famed reputation you have gained in your dedicated service to the State Department and to the international community, I am very excited to work with you and other dynamic leaders in the Biden Administration to enhance the longstanding diplomatic and economic ties between the United States and Turkey.

I am the Chairman of the Turkey-U.S. Business Council (TAİK), Turkey's oldest and leading bilateral trade organization. Our members support billions of dollars in foreign direct investment into the U.S. and proudly employ tens of thousands of Americans. In Turkey, our member portfolio represents more than 70 percent of the Turkish gross domestic product (GDP).

TAİK's mission is to bolster trade and economic relations between Turkey and the United States. We work with American and Turkish companies to enhance their strategic partnerships and promote Turkey's strengths as a destination for American investment. We encourage business development and cooperation between the U.S. and Turkey and strive to improve the conditions for bilateral trade, foreign direct investment, and joint investments in our respective countries.

The economic relationship between our two countries is not just vital for Turkish and American livelihoods; it is the foundation upon which our decades-old alliance can be strengthened. We believe that through trade and greater economic interdependence, we can bring forth more security, understanding, and increased cooperation within our critically important strategic relationship.

It is our hope that a stronger economic partnership will reaffirm the historic ties between our two countries, and usher in a new era of stability and partnerships in the U.S.-Turkey relationship. We believe closer ties between Turkey and the United States, as two strategically significant NATO members, will benefit our peoples and foster regional and global peace and stability as well.

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The U.S.-Turkey economic relationship has grown rapidly in recent years. In 2019, bilateral trade between the United States and Turkey reached \$20.7 billion, nearly doubling in just a decade. That same year, our two nations made a commitment to increase bilateral trade to \$100 billion. We at TAIK have mobilized our resources in pursuit of this ambitious goal, with the aim of creating greater prosperity for both of our countries.

We trust that our economic relationship has significant untapped potential. For example, in the coming years, we envision Turkey becoming a major importer of U.S. LNG and agricultural products. We also strongly believe Turkey will be a new and reliable partner for U.S. companies seeking to diversify supply chains following the coronavirus pandemic. Since its outbreak, we have seen a substantial increase in trade flow, with companies like Walmart shifting parts of their supply chain from China to Turkey.

Late last year, TAIK commissioned a report by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to determine how to successfully reach the \$100 billion trade goal. In accordance with the report's findings, TAIK has developed three task forces – digital, electronics, and joint projects in Africa – to help Turkish companies in those industries successfully integrate into U.S. supply chains and reduce U.S. reliance on China. We are eager to cooperate with your office to identify additional ways to promote positive economic outcomes for citizens in both of our countries, especially within the context of helping people recover from the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

We are hopeful that the Biden Administration will join us in finding new ways to strengthen the historical relationship between our peoples. Potential strategies include the negotiation of a U.S.-Turkey free trade agreement to solidify our economic partnership and the creation of a U.S.-Turkey binational commission to address successes of and challenges to the bilateral relationship. We believe continued diplomatic and economic engagement is the best way to advance the interests of our two great nations, and look forward to engaging with you and your colleagues in the State Department.

I very much look forward to working with you and meeting you in the near future.

Respectfully,

Mehmet Ali Yalcindag
Chairman
Turkey-U.S. Business Council (TAİK)

