

6th BALKAN FORUM IN EDİRNE

The 6th edition of the international Balkan Forum with main theme “multidimensional regional integration/vision 2023 cooperation” will this year be held in Edirne in cooperation with the governorship of Edirne and TASAM (Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies).

Among the participators of the Forum held on 2-3 May, there will be statesmen from Turkey and Balkan countries, think thank board members, civil society organization board members, academicians, writers, businessman, experts, diplomatic representatives, and press members.

The opening speeches are going to present by the following names: **Bekir Bozdağ*** the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, **Mehmet Müezzinoğlu** the Minister of Health, **Hasan Duruer** the Governor of Edirne, **Süleyman Şensoy** TASAM Chairman, and representatives from guest countries. The location for the three days lasting Forum is the Margi Hotel in Edirne.

Chairman of TASAM, Şensoy said: “The medicine for a ‘Balkan Spring’ is integration”

Mr. Şensoy said that with the now five years lasting global economic crisis, the Balkan economies lose ground continuously. There are various signals for a possible new process in the Balkan to which it can be referred as the ‘Balkan Spring’. This possible process is a consequence of the economic competition of the Balkan with primarily strong Western European economies and many other actors. In these days in which the historical breakpoints and the balance of power are reconsidered in the context of transformation, some factors will contribute to not only regional but also global sustainable stability and security. First, increasing and deepening the cultural and economic interaction and paying attention to commonalities rather than differences. Other factors contributing to stability and security are the creation of a win-win situation, and strengthening of the confidence increasing measures. The mutual abolishing of the visa duty between Turkey and some Balkan countries creates a new trade and human regime which in turn contributes to the regional integration of the Balkan. Şensoy continued as follows: “The EU aims at solving the issues related to the Balkan through the creation of free movement of property and persons through the establishment of transitional borders. It has been expected that except Croatia, the other six Balkan countries won’t be ready for EU membership before 2020. The situation of these countries depends on how they will realize the EU reforms and standards.

The security concerns of the Balkan countries and their political structures cause a lower economic interaction level between them. That is why these countries for their economic development, are mainly focused on EU membership programs. However, taking transportation costs in account, economies with

weak domestic market and lacking ties with neighboring economies cannot reach the optimal point of efficiency and therefore will mainly be in a depending position. Consequently, the regional countries have to strengthen their domestic markets and regional economic ties. In this context, the Balkan countries need to follow a complementary and parallel economic integration with the EU. The institutionalization of the cooperation will for both the EU and the Balkan create positive results. Moreover, dealing with political issues and security concerns will be easier due to the development of the economic ties. In light of this, the presence of Turkey in the Balkan creates historical opportunities for bilateral and multidimensional cooperation”.

Important topics related to the regional integration of the Balkan will be discussed

During the two days lasting Forum the following topics will be discussed in five sessions: **“The political integration of the Balkans: will the Balkans Europeanize?”**, **“European Union Enlargement: Place of The Balkans in the Union”**, **“Cultural Integration in The Balkans: Is It Possible to Balkan Upper ID?”**, **“Economic Integration of Balkans: Economic Structure of Europe and Balkans”**, **“Security for Everyone: Common Safety Of Balkans And Europe”**.

The 7th meeting of the Balkan communication network will be held in Edirne as well

The Balkan communication network is a meeting for communication, consultancy, and cooperation between the strategic think tanks in the Balkan. The Balkan communication network was established in 9-10 June 2005 led by the Strategic Research Center of the Turkish Foreign Ministry. The participating countries in the network are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldavia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Turkey, and Greece. Since the establishing conference held in Ankara in 2005, the network had meetings in Sofia (2006), Bucharest (2007), Tekirdağ (2008, 2009, 2010), Skopje - Ohrid (2011), and Tirana (2012).

During the 5th conference in Tekirdağ the membership of Moldavia, Montenegro, and Slovenia was approved by the network.

The Balkan communication network was established to provide a platform for continuous communication and cooperation between the regional think tank organizations. Besides, the network functions as an intellectual basis for mutual confidence and understanding between the Balkan countries and their people. The cooperation between the think tank organizations carries the potential to create alternative and constructive perspectives for the decision makers.

* *Will be confirmed.*

For detailed information and the conference program:

http://www.tasam.org/tr-TR/Etkinlik/472/6_uluslararası_balkan_forumu

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