

TRT WORLD
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CONFERENCE REPORT

Opening Ceremony Inspiring Change in an Age of Uncertainty

Speakers

İbrahim Eren
Director General and
Chairman, TRT

Bekir Bozdağ
Deputy Prime Minister
of Turkey

Binali Yıldırım
Prime Minister of Turkey

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Opening Speeches **Inspiring Change in an Age of Uncertainty**

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TRT WORLD
RESEARCH CENTRE

Opening Ceremony Inspiring Change in an Age of Uncertainty

This is a report on a public session titled “Opening Ceremony”, held as part of the TRT World Forum 2017. The views, themes and discussion points expressed in this conference report are those of speakers and participants present at the TRT World Forum 2017, and do not reflect the official view of TRT World Research Centre.

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Summary

Unceasing demands for change and potential threats today challenge the contours of the global political agenda and inevitably urge numerous actors to come up with a vision for change. By bringing together politicians, academics, diplomats and NGO leaders of all backgrounds, discussions varied from the redefinition of the global agenda to the politicisation of xenophobia and Islamophobia. The welcoming speech was delivered by the Director General of TRT İbrahim Eren and followed by Opening Speeches by Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ and Turkey's Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım.

Throughout the speeches, speakers mostly emphasised the urgent need for objective and focused media, particularly in the current discourse. In his welcome speech, İbrahim Eren emphasised that the biggest motivation behind the establishment of TRT World was to create a vision of giving a voice to the voiceless and empowering the powerless. While speaking to the early times of TRT World, Mr Eren pointed out how it was embraced in parts of the world where the truths were largely being ignored.

Stressing the need for multiple voices in the media, in a world where it is almost extinct, Bekir Bozdağ said that most of the happenings in various parts of the world were not able to find daylight. Therefore, TRT World's mission was to bring to the forefront not only what is visible, but to also shed light on the truth and act as a global base in the fight against discrimination, radicalisation, Islamophobia and various other global threats.

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, in his opening speech, stressed that an anthropocentric approach should occupy the media, particularly in a world where the rough voices of war and crimes against humanity mostly undermine the voices of human suffering. By aiming to place the human experience at the centre of their story without discrimination, TRT World intends to disrupt the global game and become the voice, mind and conscience of the oppressed. The Prime Minister added that by becoming a hub for these voices, Turkey is taking serious steps in the fight against terror and extremist acts that bring about further human suffering and displacement in different parts of the world.

'Inspiring Change in an Age of Uncertainty' appears to be a mission for those who encourage hope as a major component of the fight against terror and xenophobia. In a world under threat of pervading intolerance and extremism, TRT World Forum intends to shed light on the shadows of uncertainty and open up a space for all those who want to be a part of this change.

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Prime Minister of Turkey, Binali Yıldırım exposed the disinformation and pollution of information that exists in the global media by referring to the injustices in the world.



Introduction: Inspiring the Change

The world is witnessing a refugee crisis spawned by war, repression, persecution and economic desperation. We are witnessing violent conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, and other parts of the world, which have resulted in the displacement of local populations. Terrorist groups around the world target innocent civilians and continue to recruit young men and women with their perverse extremist ideologies. What used to be some of the world's most progressive and open countries are now looking inward rather than becoming more active members of a truly global society. However, we are hopeful of a global community with fewer borders and a greater sense of unity and common purpose. TRT World's first annual Forum brought together diplomats, policy makers, academics, decision makers and opinion shapers to inspire change and encourage hope for those who need it the most. In a selection of panels, various and distinguished speakers discussed the rise of right wing ideologies and xenophobia, changing global power dynamics, corporate social responsibility, how to make humanitarian aid more effective, future prospects for the region as well as the influence of digital technology - all under the umbrella of inspiring change in the age of uncertainty.

Need for a New World

In a period when the world is experiencing a growing global uncertainty, there is a strong need for a new perspective on world events that places the human at the centre of the story.

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım stressed the critical position of TRT World in terms of providing accurate and objective news from an anthropocentric outlook, particularly in a world where the rough voices of war and crimes against humanity mostly undermine the voices of human suffering. Echoing the words of Malcolm X, “If you are not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing”, Mr. Yıldırım addressed that TRT World has been established to tell people the truth and be an authentic voice for those who cannot make themselves heard through true journalism. In this regard, the channel was born in reaction to the existing media mindset, as the mission of Turkey is to serve the truth, to be the voice and conscience of the oppressed.

Global outlook and stability appears to be declining and poses as one of the biggest potential challenges the world is facing today. As we enter another year of global uncertainty, there is an increase in terrorism and wars across the world. In addition to radicalisation, there is also a rise in

xenophobia and Islamophobia, which is marginalising people and making societies more divided and fragile. As Mr. Yıldırım stressed in his speech, humanity should pause and reflect on where mistakes have been made, as leading nations could not fulfill their responsibilities and provide global justice. The gap between the rich and the poor, the relatively advantaged and the relatively disadvantaged has grown even larger, creating a suitable global environment for terror to burst and spread. Instead of taking responsibility, the international community still continues to develop even more modern weapons and techniques to combat terrorism. With this type of understanding, terrorism cannot be removed.

Mr. Yıldırım asserted that the United Nations has been unable to produce solutions to the problems occurring in various contentious regions. He added that the Security Council had lost its ability to take effective steps and described it as an unequal and unfair system that failed to reflect the will of most countries, Reiterating the Presidents famous motto that “the world is bigger than five,” he called for reform of the Council in a way that allows the inclusion of all world powers rather than the five permanent members.

Another issue raised in the opening session was the refugee crisis. Binali Yıldırım addressed that the world cannot turn a blind eye to the 55 million refugees by weaving boundaries with high walls. Rather the issue should be dealt in a comprehensive way as a global solution. Necessary steps to remove civil wars and injustices should be made. In addition to this, discriminatory acts such as racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia are on the rise; marginalising people and making societies more divided and fragile. The world should instead come up with an embracing language that is grounded in respect and tolerance. If not, such trends ultimately serve the interests of extremist and radical ideologies that eventually lead to violence.



Director General and Chairman of TRT, İbrahim Eren emphasised TRT World's vision and mission in telling the truth.

TRT World in Search of Change

The global crises faced by the global community, and the inability of media outlets and political institutions to handle them, necessitate the emergence of new channels to deliver the truth to the globe. Being the most rooted broadcaster in Turkey, Mr Eren said, TRT has been a pioneer in broadcasting in terms of its content and technic since 1964 and always kept a fine balance between objectivity and truth. In an era of declining global distrust, and in which objective news is negatively influenced as a result, TRT World has entered the field and given new impulse to international broadcasting. With the help of passionate, brave, visionary and powerful people from 51 countries, the channel has risen to be a competitor amongst international news organisations, despite being at the very start of its journey. When popular movements in the Arab world were triggered by the self-immolation of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi and people rose up against their authoritarians for the first time in a long time, it left an enduring effect over governments and leaders in the region. According to Mr. Yıldırım, this period of instability required a media that could be the voice of the region and speak the global language of the world at the same time. Turkey responded to this need by establishing TRT World in order to translate Turkey's geography, its people, and politics into a global language.

Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ emphasised the new breath TRT World has brought to global journalism by keeping human dignity at the top of its agenda. In a world where univocality has been the main feature of global journalism, TRT World was established with the purpose of introducing a new perspective to the globe with its anthropocentric stance in any case and issue. Mr Bozdağ said that amongst multiple media outlets, it is hard to hear a different voice regardless of their leanings and interests and added that they can not reflect the reality on the ground. Therefore, there is an even greater need for media organisations to offer a different perspective and a different voice. In this regard, TRT World has a purpose of shedding light on neglected matters and giving a voice to the silenced. By placing the human at the heart of each story, TRT World hopes to promote a global conscience – revealing a deeper understanding of the diversity of lives around us.

Turkey and the World

Turkey is greater than Turkey itself said Bekir Bozdağ, as the country has been home for people from all around the world who have lost their homes and found refuge within its borders. He added that TRT World's mission is to be the voice and mirror of these people and provide a venue of equality for all.

Today more than ever, the world needs to talk about the rising levels of xenophobia, racism, islamophobia and all other diseases that feed into extremism and threaten not only the countries in which they reside but the entire world. Binali Yıldırım pointed out Turkey's position as a nation that has not kept silent regarding human tragedies around the world. In the case of Rohingyas in Myanmar, it

carried the issue forward to the UN and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation and has sent humanitarian aid teams to Rohingya. As a result of the Syrian civil war that has been ongoing for 7 years, there is now a massive humanitarian crisis. Turkey hosts over three million Syrian refugees. Furthermore, the country has taken political responsibility by initiating the Astana process for a peace settlement and ceasefire. It is therefore no doubt that Turkey is taking every possible step to show support to countries facing crisis and continues to act as the moral compass of the world. Turkey is also fighting against terrorist organisations like DAESH, PKK, YPG and PYD - that is fed from the instability in Syria and Iraq - while also continuing to combat terrorist organisations that attempted to change Turkey's legitimate democratic government with a blooded coup.

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım addressed that despite these facts, Europe has been a source of radicalisation as thousands who have made their way into Syria and Iraq to join DAESH are in fact Europeans and not only Muslims. The Prime Minister also highlighted the increasing number of foreigners coming to Turkey from the West and using Turkish territory as a means to cross over to Syria to join DAESH. Despite this, Turkey sees terror as an enemy of humanity regardless of affiliation and continues to actively contribute to the global coalition to combat DAESH. Mr. Yıldırım emphasises that discussions should involve the reasons why these people choose to abandon their relatively prosperous lives in a free society and join a terrorist organisation.

In such a context, need for a change imposes itself. According to Mr. Yıldırım, Turkey has been an advocate of this change for the last 15 years and it adopts a pioneering role in this sense. He adds that Turkish foreign policy is maintained on the basis of reducing its enemies and increasing its friends. As Turkey develops, the surrounding region will also develop and apply policies with an understanding of progress. Turkey is an obvious meeting point between different economic and strategic basins and it plays a reconciliatory role between the West and the East as it does between the North and the South. The country has the widest

representative network of the world's richest 236 foreign missions and its partnership policy for Africa, Asia, Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean is an important item in the foreign policy. In this respect, Turkish relations have improved six fold with Africa and with Latin America in the last 15 years. Similar figures apply to East Asian and ASEAN countries. In other words, according to Mr. Yildirim, Turkey is a permanent player in the Anatolian territory and is trying to transform and develop in a wide hinterland, extending from the Far East to Latin America, Balkans and Europe. It is a country that has been in the course of civilisations for centuries, situated between the West and the East, both geographically and culturally. Istanbul is a city that separates the two continents yet at the same time it also unites.

Topic of the forum, "Inspiring Change in an Age of Uncertainty" gains a special meaning in a context where Turkey has already made solid steps towards change. Mr Yildirim asserts that Turkey's main aim is to lead the change, regardless of the ambiguity. He stresses that terror is an end product and without reflecting on the causes and conditions that create terrorism, there can be no solutions. He acknowledges that the United Nations cannot bring global peace and for that reason its structure needs to change.

İbrahim Eren stated that TRT Forum was initiated with the vision of bringing people together from all around the world and putting major global issues at the centre. He emphasised that what brings us together is our pursuit and desire for change. The anthropocentric approach of TRT World reflects itself in the forum's structure as it brings together a wide range of people to discuss a variety of issues at a time when change is needed most. Speakers at the forum emphasised that TRT World will be one of the global bases in the struggle against diseases such as terrorism and xenophobia. Today manipulations in the media blur the picture, which may lead politicians to come up with wrong conclusions. Therefore, it becomes an important duty to counter that by rightful means in order to evoke a balanced and accurate perception. As a result, each speaker agreed that TRT World has a big global responsibility to inspire change.



Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ emphasised the new breadth TRT World has brought to global journalism by keeping human dignity at the top of its agenda.

