

“TURKEY – EDUCATION SECTOR STUDY” CONFERENCE

I would like to thank Mr. Vorkink for sharing his valuable knowledge and now give the floor to Mr. Ahmet Tıktık, Undersecretary of State Planning Organization, to deliver his opening speech.

SPO Undersecretary Ahmet Tıktık – Mr. Vorkink, the distinguished country director of the World Bank, other valuable representatives of the World Bank, esteemed private and public representatives of the education sector, distinguished guests, I would like to welcome you all. Good morning.. On this last week day, I hope we will have a good conference all the day long.

On this occasion, I would like to congratulate and thank the World Bank for launching such a study on this important matter, which has also provided us with the opportunity to assess the system and the current situation and to make self-criticism.

In fact, I would like to dwell upon a number of issues. I don't want to take much of your time since intensive panel sessions will follow this opening session.

The first thing I would like to emphasize is that, as Mr. Vorkink said, Turkey has to undertake the educational reform not because the World Bank, the European Union, IMF and the OECD want her to do it.

Indeed, I totally agree with Mr. Vorkink. We have to do this for ourselves because we are faced with an explicit fact, which is competition and the ability to compete.

In fact, not only Turkey but also Malaysia, the USA and the EU are faced with the act of competition

As long as globalization continues with an increased pace, all the countries, companies, institutions, individuals all around the world

will be faced with the fact of competition. One of the most important factors in this regard is the ability to compete. Education is one of the means to acquire the ability to compete in world markets and business markets.

When we have a look at the trends in education or in labor markets, we see that manual works and routine works are on the decrease and that there is less demand from the labor markets, whereas the labor market demand for more skill-intensive and multi-disciplinary skills are on the rise. Therefore, routine works, manual works and the sectors based on such are on the decrease and are shifting to countries with lower per capita income levels.

Besides, we see that certain sectors are climbing to higher level in the chain of values in the world. Such sectors require a high level of skills, which can be acquired through education.

This is the first point I would like to emphasize. That is, the employers and markets are increasingly demanding persons with education facilitating higher skill levels.

The second point I would like to mention –as an economist and as a planning and development specialist- is that the welfare level of a country is measured with regard to the rise in the per capital national income. Economists measure welfare based on this indicator. Growth is also measured this way. As you all know, there are tax inputs, but most importantly, there is a human capital stock.

Human capital stock has implications on the creation of welfare in three important respects. The first one is the level of human capital stock. To what extent do we manage to employ our people? The second one is the sectoral breakdown of this human capital stock. That is, to what extent has this human capital stock has paved the way for the sectors by which we are active in the markets? Are these sectors

operating efficiently? This also has significant implications on our welfare and growth rate.

The third one is the educational level of this human capital stock. When we analyze by comparing Turkey with the EU, we unfortunately see substantial differences. For instance, the share of agricultural sector has lately declined to 30 percent. Thirty percent of total employment is employed in the agricultural sector, and we are well aware of the level of productivity in the agricultural sector. The share of employment in the agricultural sector is around 3.7-4 percent in the EU, which is much lower than our rate of 30 percent.

From the viewpoint of educational level, the average schooling period of our 22 million employed people is 7 years, which is around 11-12 years in the EU. Furthermore, the share of graduates of tertiary education in total employment is 11 percent in Turkey and 24 percent in the EU. These figures demonstrate that we have to exert significant efforts to achieve progress in this area.

We have achieved significant reforms in the education system; we should not be unjust to ourselves. We really congratulate our Ministry of National Education for extending the period of basic education and updating the curriculum. I also congratulate the other institutions that have contributed to these reforms. Meanwhile, we observe a significant contribution from the private sector.

We are trying to understand the trends worldwide through the PISA Program of the OECD, the international experience of the World Bank and the efforts of UNESCO and the European Union. Findings of the Lisbon Strategy demonstrate the trends both in our country and across the world education sector.

We have also made noteworthy investments in physical infrastructure, we must also recognize this fact. The number of students

per classroom in primary education was “48” ten years ago, and is “37” now.

The third and last point I would like to mention is a kind of self-criticism of our education system. I hope that the human resources managers also make this self-criticism. We must involve the human resources departments and agencies of both the private and public sector, in this self-criticism. As you all are well aware, we are faced with a concept of “lifelong learning”.

The stock of knowledge is constantly evolving, renewing and expanding. Now, what we need is a multidisciplinary education, rather than focusing only on subjects and disciplines. Problem solving skills have to be enhanced. We are now faced with the concepts of “team work”, “innovation” and “creativity”. We must be able to keep up with the requirements of these new concepts.

I believe that this study will be helpful in looking to our education sector from a new perspective, in reaching a common ground, and in giving impetus to our reform activities in this sector.

I would like to express my gratitude again to the World Bank and our friends who have contributed to this study.

I wish success to you all.”