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PRESS RELEASE

7th Institut du Bosphore Annual Seminar: Open and Vigorous Debates Istanbul, March 17th&18th 2016 #Bosphore2016

Institut du Bosphore held its 7th annual seminar in Istanbul on 17 and 18 March 2016.

Both Co-Presidents of the Institut du Bosphore Scientific Committee, **Ümit Boyner**, Board Member, Boyner Holding & Vice President of the TUSIAD High Advisory Council and **Anne Lauvergeon**, President of the "Innovation 2030" Commission, were present alongside **Christophe Bouillon**, President of the France – Turkey Friendship Group at the French National Assembly, **Cansen Başaran-Symes**, President of TUSIAD, **Hakkı Akil**, Ambassador of Turkey to France, **Hélène Conway-Mouret**, French Senator representing French citizens abroad & former Minister, **Eric Danon**, General Manager of CSFRS, **Charles Fries**, Ambassador of France to Turkey, **Beril Dedeoğlu**, International Relations Professor at Galatasaray University & Former Minister of European Affairs in Turkey, **Augustin de Romanet**, Chief Executive Officer of Aéroports de Paris, **Thierry de Montbrial**, Founder and President of IFRI, **Jean-François Leguil-Bayart**, Professor of Anthropology and Sociology of Development at Yves Oltramare Chair Holder (Religion and Politics in the Contemporary World), Graduate of the Institute of International and Development Studies, **Didier Billion**, Deputy Director of IRIS, Publications Director and Board Member of the Institut du Bosphore and **Pierre Lellouche**, Member of the French Parliament (Les Républicains), Les Républicains' Spokesman for Foreign Affairs, Former Minister, Member of the Paris City Council and Scientific Committee Member.

This henceforth perennial event enabled all participants to exchange and confront analyses and perspectives. Moderated by **Philippe Gélie**, Deputy Editorial Director of the International Department of Le Figaro and **Jacques Hubert-Rodier**, Editorialist at Les Echos and President of APDF, these discussions, held at the same time as the EU-Turkey Summit on the refugee crisis, were exceptionally frank regarding the refugee crisis, the terrorist challenges as well as the European stakes. They have once again demonstrated that Turkey and the EU were faced with mutual challenges.

Two roundtables entitled "Europe in a Variable Geometry versus Fortress Europe" and "European Union, France and Turkey: Challenges for a Better Cooperation", have opened pathways towards a renewed cooperation and the first signs of an institutional reform of the European Union.

As to scenarios regarding the future of the European Union and the integration of Turkey, participants indicated that differentiated integration could be a solution for Turkey, as has been the case for other countries such as Great Britain: "We must play down variable geometry." This could indeed allow Turkey to find its own place in a framework that would not necessarily be that of the core of the Eurozone. A framework that must surely be designed in a constructive and positive perspective for both parties: "Any half-hearted proposition would be indecent."



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Some participants called to mind the fact that Europe in any case needed to be rethought and rebuilt, emphasizing certain errors: the manner in which Schengen was conceived, or the fact that some countries have adopted the Euro without being ready.

The debate also brought into question the reasons for the cold waters between Turkey and Europe in recent years, some blaming Turkey's drift from European values, others underlining the fact that the European Union has turned its back on Turkey : "The European Union, by freezing negotiations , left free rein to abuses in Turkey. "The French participants regret that the European Union is no longer attractive and have drawn an irrefutable conclusion. They described a Europe that goes from one crisis to another: "We are in a kind of steeplechase of the crisis"; a Europe faced with a great failure: that of youth unemployment; a Europe that is struggling to talk about growth and innovation; a Europe that puts too much distance between its institutions and its citizens; a Europe that no longer remembers the fight that it led at its beginnings, nor why; a Europe that no longer has a battle to fight.

All participants emphasized their wish for convergence between Turkey and the EU, along with a revival of the accession negotiations, even though they regretted the fact that the first step of this reconciliation has been taken under duress through the negotiations on refugees.

All agreed that Turkey needed the EU and the EU, Turkey. The costs of a "non-accession" were mentioned. The idea that if Turkey and Europe had not drifted apart, we would be stronger on an international level, especially in managing the Syrian conflict and the crisis of migrants as well as on issues of economic competitiveness and energy cooperation, was also underlined.

During the second roundtable, speakers were again tough on the European Union governments, their foreign policies lacking, to their mind, consistency and realism, also increasingly often, humanism. A Europe where extremism is rising, a Europe rebuilding its walls. They wondered: "What Europe do we want? An identitarian Europe or a universalist one?" A question to which they replied: "Europe must remain true to its values and stop doubting."

Roundtable speakers have pointed to the role of civil society, which should help make the idea of the EU-Turkey convergence seem attractive. From this perspective, the Seminar highlighted a positive reality: from a business perspective, European Turkey is already a reality: "Every sign points to the European Union." And to the question "Why do companies feel more European than States", the answer was "Because there is more trust than rules."

In a world of multiple challenges, the Institut du Bosphore, essential vehicle for dialogue between Turkey, France and the European Union reiterates its willingness to be part of the process of strengthening and deepening democratic values and is already looking to organize its 8th Annual Seminar and multiple initiatives that will punctuate its activity in the months ahead.

INSTITUT DU BOSPHORE

First ever think-tank dedicated to French/ Turkish relations founded in 2009 on the initiative of TUSIAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association), the Institut du Bosphore aims to reinvigorate and strengthen dialogue between Turkey and its European partners. Setting up this platform for dialogue and free and independent debate between business, society and intellectual figures has been both revealing and natural.

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