

REGARDING THE RECENT SPEECH OF TURKEY'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ABDULLAH GÜL

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, there has been much reaction, and justly so, to the virulently anti-Semitic remarks of outgoing Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir at the recent Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in Malaysia. His remarks, crude, insensitive, and untrue, have been roundly condemned by many world leaders—though certainly not enough who were at the OIC Conference. Unfortunately, the publicity over his remarks has overshadowed another speech by a Muslim leader, Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gul. That speech is more tolerant and farsighted. It speaks well of Turkey's current government and the policies it seeks to enact. Foreign Minister Gul argues that Islam, tolerance, and modernization are compatible, and highlights the Turkish experience. I believe the speech is well worth our colleagues reading, and I am pleased to bring it to their attention.

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY ABDULLAH GÜL, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, DELIVERED AT THE OIC BUSINESS FORUM DURING THE 10TH SUMMIT OF THE OIC MALAYSIA, 15 OCTOBER 2003

Excellencies, distinguished guests, it is a particular honor and privilege to take part in this Welcoming Dinner among such a distinguished group of guests and speakers.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute for this well-thought occasion to discuss such a topical subject.

Tonight I will briefly share with you Turkey's understanding and practice of the relationship between Islam and Modernization, and the challenge we face as Muslim societies.

Let me start by challenging the choice of a word in the title of our dinner: "Islam versus Modernization". I would decline to see Islam and modernization as competing concepts.

The Turkish experience and many other efforts in the Muslim world in political, economic and social development rest on the belief that it is perfectly possible to advance a society in all fields while Islamic faith and culture continues to play an important role in people's individual lives.

Our challenge is to prove that traditional and moral values can be in perfect harmony with the modern standards of life.

Not only that. Our values can contribute to and strengthen the modern world. They can even be enriching for modern societies.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, I acknowledge that the contemporary Muslim societies, at times, have had temporary difficulties in coping with the universal developments in the fields of politics, economics, science and technology.

Yes, they have not always attained the highest standards of democracy, equality, or social rights yet.

However, the good news is that there is a growing awareness of the shortcomings and a desire to overcome them.

There are even positive steps in this direction. Today's meeting is an example of this

healthy debate. These are all important indications.

I am confident that the new generations of Muslims, the youth, have the consciousness and the capacity to attain a glorious future which will surpass their history.

Their history as cultivated, tolerant, developed and good governed people.

Peoples which have developed sophisticated legal systems, free trade networks, health institutions and schools.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, leaving aside the theoretical discussions on the issue, I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on our own experience. Our experience as a government, less than one year old.

To many people, it seemed like a paradox: A government that was formed by a party known to be based on moral and traditional values was implementing a most spectacular economic and political reform campaign in Turkey; reforms that even astonished the liberals at home.

There was nothing to be surprised about. We had put in front of us a mission to accomplish: We were to prove that a Muslim society is capable of changing and renovating itself, attaining contemporary standards, while preserving its values, traditions and identity.

We acted on the premise that highest contemporary standards of democracy—fundamental freedoms, gender equality, free markets, civil society, transparency, good governance, rule of law and rational use of resources were universal expectations. We believed that Turkish people and other Muslim nations fully deserved to have these expectations met.

We believed that our societies could only benefit from the realization of these standards. And indeed, Muslim societies have the necessary historical background and moral and spiritual strength to adapt themselves to modernity.

We believed that encouraging political participation, increasing transparency and accountability would make regimes stronger in the long run. The result would be self-confident and cohesive societies which have an interest in peace and harmony.

Our strength came from being eye to eye with our people. The big support we got during and after the elections showed our strong ties with our grassroots. Our experience has differed from the others by not relying only on the elites.

We began our reform from the very day we formed the government: We decreased the number of ministries from 35 to 23, thus making the administration more streamlined and efficient.

This was followed by a Public Administration Reform project aimed at the decentralization of most public services. This would give the Central Government more time and space to tackle the global issues while at the same time speeding up the delivery of the services.

The Penal Code, the Civil Code and the Press Law are all being further modernized.

During the eight-month times Turkish Parliament adopted there major political reforms packages. These were related to the process initiated by the previous governments to upgrade the Turkish legislation on fundamental rights and freedoms in conformity with Europe.

Through the reforms and other measures, my Government achieved the following:

Fundamental rights and freedom were extended to the most liberal standards. Some residual restrictions were removed.

Additional facilities were provided for the fulfillment of cultural and religious rights.

The principle of zero tolerance to mistreatment and torture became the basis of the relevant laws and their implementation.

The civilian nature of the administration was consolidated in keeping with the European standards.

We became party to international conventions against corruption.

Full transparency of public expenses, including the military, was secured.

Capital punishment was formally abolished. This decision was further consolidated by the ratification of the relevant Conventions.

Economic reforms complemented the political ones. Priority was given to the rational and effective use of our resources.

Having told all these, I do not mean that everything is perfect in Turkey. I believe that social and political development is a dynamic process. It can always be improved, bettered, deepened.

The important thing is to give the societies the possibilities and instruments to renew themselves.

The important thing is not to ignore the social expectations and sensitivities.

On the other hand, we know that there is no single or a simple formula to achieve this goal. We need to act in recognition of our peculiarities and different historical experiences.

Yet, as Muslim societies we share a common core that is rich and beneficial. This core is fully compatible with what we see as universal values.

These values are "universal" because no one can claim monopoly over humanistic values that are the common inheritance of civilization. Islam has made highly significant contributions to this common civilization.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my belief that the maladies of the Muslim societies can be cured. Shortcomings can be overcome. Institutions can be reformed.

However, the problems that inflict some of the Western societies, like racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, materialism, violence, drugs, etc. seem to me most difficult to cure. This is another important challenge that should be tackled by all. May be as a theme of another meeting like this one.

Thank you.

COMMANDANT OF THE COAST GUARD ADVICE RECOMMENDATIONS ACTS

HON. WALTER B. JONES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Coast Guard is our Nation's fifth military service. Since their founding in 1790 as the Revenue Cutter Service, the USCG has served our Nation in peace and war. The Coast Guard fought pirates off the coast of Virginia in 1793, engaged British Warships in the War of 1812, piloted ships ashore during the D-day invasion, and deployed 8,000 personnel to Southeast Asia during Vietnam. Most recently during Operation Iraqi Freedom, more than 1,250 Coasties deployed to the Persian Gulf to protect sea-lanes, guard ports, and clear mines for Coalition ships.

The Commandant of the Coast Guard, like his Department of Defense counterparts, is the fourstar senior military officer responsible for providing advice to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the President on matters under his jurisdiction. Also like the other service chiefs, the Commandant of the Coast Guard is called to testify before Congress on the operation of that service. However, despite the