President Tschapke,
Dear Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today.

It is also a privilege to be able to share my views on Turkish foreign policy with the members of one of the highly respected institution in Germany, namely “Preussische Gesellschaft Berlin-Brandenburg”. Since the Ottoman Empire and Prussia had very good relations and that interaction is actually the basis of today’s Turkish-German relations, it is only natural that I accept to address this audience without hesitation.

I want to talk to you today about Turkish foreign policy in the light of criticism that it is “shifting course.”

Over the years, our foreign policy developed and gained many dimensions, always centered on the basis of the principle of “peace at home, peace in the world,” in line with the changes in the domestic and international environment.

Today, the dynamism in Turkish foreign policy is based on internal progress and changes in the international setting. Otherwise, there is no change in the values and principles that has so far led us to forge a strong alliance with the Euro-Atlantic community and build peaceful relations with our neighbors.
As for the international environment, at the end of the Cold War Turkey found itself at the epicenter of a new geo-political landscape hosting many risks and opportunities that would define the future of our globe. We also realized that in the post-Cold War era the notion of security could no longer be confined to merely military terms, and that historical, social, cultural, political and economic factors increasingly enter into play and affect the security environment. It is in this particular context that Turkey felt itself well-poised to play a role in its region and beyond towards the attainment of peace and stability.

Indeed, with its fast growing economy; social dynamism; improved democratic standards; unique historical ties with its surrounding environment; and rich cultural diversity, Turkey’s soft power is more relevant and effective than ever in a wide geography.

Added to this, we could also see that the center of gravity in world politics has changed considerably over the last decade. Indeed, economic power and political influence have been shifting and diffusing around the world, particularly towards Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Similarly, the circle of international decision-making is growing wider and new configurations of countries are emerging, which bring new energy and perspectives to the conduct of international affairs.

Countries like China, Brazil, South Africa, India, Saudi Arabia and Korea hold much of the economic opportunities for the future of the world. They are also indispensable partners in pressing international challenges, including those related to climate change, proliferation and sustainable
Turkey in many respects is among those emerging powers, as evident by its membership in the G-20. Apart from the responsibility this entails to assume a greater role in responding to the manifold challenges of our time, it also compels us to build new partnerships around the globe. Our foreign policy particularly towards these new economic powers and markets, is being carried out in a way without weakening our ties with Europe and the transatlantic alliance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking back, I can say that we have rather come a long way in achieving the goals we have set for ourselves. Indeed, by making use of the existing opportunities and taking the right steps at the right time, we have started putting in place the necessary cornerstones for creating a zone of cooperation and dialogue around us.

As a result, today we have excellent relations with almost all our neighbors, which represent a truly diverse group including countries like Greece, Russia, Georgia and Syria. We have become increasingly active particularly in the Middle East and the Balkans with creative bilateral cooperation schemes and regional integration projects.

The most significant strides in Turkey’s quest for full membership to the EU have been made within the last decade thanks to the sweeping reforms undertaken in Turkey. Today, Turkey continues to stay the course and take the necessary steps to fulfill the membership criteria. As such, the EU membership remains a strategic goal for Turkey.
In parallel to that, we have also taken great strides in developing our relations with the emerging powers of Asia, Latin America and Africa. In this context it is worth noting that Turkey is now one of the three strategic partners of the African Union, enjoys observer/partner status with a diverse group of organizations such as OAS (Organization of American States), ASEAN and the Arab League, plays a leading role in the OIC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Of course, expanding and deepening our outreach as such made us even more sensitive to the conflicts in those regions and propelled us to be more active in helping their resolution. We have done so through various facilitation/mediation initiatives and regional cooperation schemes we have launched over the recent years.

In this context, the two different trilateral dialogue processes we have started among Turkey, Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia, the trilateral cooperation initiative among Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, our efforts to reconcile differences among domestic political parties in Iraq and Lebanon, and our facilitation of dialogue between Iran and West are particularly worth note.

We also support the reform dynamics in countries around us and remain ready and willing to share our own democratization experience with those wishing to benefit from that.

Likewise, the Alliance of Civilizations initiative we have co-sponsored with Spain represents the strongest response ever to the radicals and extremists
trying to polarize the world along cultural and religious fault lines.

Turkey’s role in this project as a predominantly Muslim nation with contemporary universal values makes it even more relevant and powerful.

Within the United Nations another important area where Turkey has started playing a prominent role is development issues. Turkey has now become an emerging donor country filling the gaps and acting as an enabler in the developing world through many bilateral and multilateral assistance projects. In this regard, the Least Developed Countries, which are a source of many of the political, military and economic challenges in the globe, are particularly important and Turkey.

In terms of sustainable development, energy security and diversity is yet another crucially important aspect and again, Turkey, by virtue of its geo-strategic location at the center of major producer and consumer countries, plays an essential role in securing and diversifying global energy flow with a multitude of oil and natural gas pipelines crossing its territory.

Both our mediation/facilitation initiatives and development assistance efforts also show that we are not merely a free rider of the new international system, but rather take over increasing responsibility for the global goods it entails.

Our approach to the recent developments in the Middle East, for instance, has from the very outset been a principled one emphasizing promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and overall the accountability of the regimes. We know that our active foreign policy is appreciated by our traditional partners.
Of course this brief overview of Turkish foreign policy might give the wrong impression that everything is going well and that Turkey has indeed achieved all its objectives, particularly with respect to the one relating to the "zero problems" neighborhood policy.

Despite the many achievements made so far, we are not yet where we want to be. In particular, we still have a long way to go in normalizing our relations with Armenia, resolving the Cyprus question and bringing lasting stability to the regions surrounding us. Our EU accession process is also not moving forward with the pace it can and should.

That said, on some of the issues such as Turkish-Armenian relations and Cyprus, we are doing all we can and getting results require the cooperation/contribution of everyone concerned. After all, “zero problems” policy is an aspiration and we will continue to do everything possible to achieve that goal. We also carry on with the reforms needed for the EU membership irrespective of the political obstacles created by some members.

On the other hand, one should also see that Turkey’s success in stabilizing its neighborhood through bilateral and regional cooperation will benefit everyone and thus it deserves the support of its allies and partners. We have come rather a long way in a relatively short period but there is still a long way ahead of us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding I would like to make some remarks on Turkish-German
relations. As I have mentioned at the beginning of my speech, our relationship has a very deep historical background. Our political relations have always been good. Turkey and Germany are two friendly countries that are acting within the spirit of cooperation. We regularly and frequently meet at all political and governmental levels on a yearly basis. Just the high frequency of contacts sets an example.

The trade volume between Turkey and Germany was around 24 billion Euros in the first 10 month of last year. Germany is today Turkey’s second biggest trade partner. Around 4,300 German companies are operating in Turkey.

As you all know, our relations do not have only political and economic dimensions. Turkish community living in Germany is another dimension of our bilateral relations. We consider the Turkish community living in Germany a bridge between our countries.

An estimated 800,000 Turks in Germany have chosen to take up German citizenship throughout the course of the past two decades and have become respectable contributors to this country in all walks of life. Roughly 2.5 million Turkish citizens, generations of people, have eventually settled here. There is mutual agreement on the need to improve the integration of this second group into Germany, as it is now a recognized fact that they are here to stay.

Happily, a very large number of Turks have taken prominent positions everywhere in Germany. And, both governments are committed to making this the rule rather than the exception. Our policy is very clear: Simply, we want our citizens to be respectful, responsible partners in German society,
in which they can share and contribute to their new homeland both in good and bad times. We want them to feel secure and self-confident. I want to underline that any vision on the bright future of Turkish-German relations has to entail addressing the human factor in the broader sense of the word.

Thank you for your attention.