CONCEPT

“Why are not we aware of this [MDGs and Atatürk] connection?”

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Your Excellences, faculty members, NGO Colleagues, students, ladies and gentleman welcome.

As first, I’d like to thank to Prof. Edward Foster, Dean Lisa Dolling enabling us to jointly present you this conference with a great honor at the Stevens’ campus.

I am also grateful to Professor Stephen Kinzer, whose initial confirmation during the first week of January had led us today.

Further, I would like to thank to Dr. Aysegul Durakoglu, and to the all Volunteers and Planning Committee of the Conference.

The concept of the conference might sound very challenging. Indeed, I would’ve ever come up with it if my organization has not been associated with the UN as well as if I had not an opportunity to attending the Annual UN General Assembly since 2006. So, my sole inspirational point was the UN General Assembly gatherings, which I’ve listened from 50 to 100 countries each year, and each of theirs annual MDGS Reports. Also attended 2010 MDGS Summit. For all these, I would like to thank to the Department of Public Information NGO Relations of the United Nations for the given such opportunities to the associated NGOs.

Within my knowledge, academically, there has been no work on the relation between Ataturk and the Millennium Development Goals that mainly UN-GA Annual Gatherings’ outcomes inspired me to compare both the Ataturk’s revolutions and MDGs.

To that extend, my aim via this conference has been to create this link between Turkey’s Development Agenda in its very first 15 years and the Millennium Development Goals, and bring this connection to the attention of general public. It potentially might aspire others, in particular, the least and developing countries for reaching the MDGs by 2015. Or, with a subtle hope that this conference might lead
to a better understanding of the MDGs by general public that is not only a UN thing or but it is, specifically for peoples of the world and nations developments at large.

By bringing up the connection in between 1923-1938 and the first period of the MDGs as 2000-2015, we aim to propose a development model for the Least Developed and Developing Countries in addition to the Millennium Development Goals.

Another primary reason for this conference to happen is this: Since 2006 we have been attending the general assemblies. While presenting their highest profiles, countries also report in which parts of the Millennium Development Goals they have been successful and unsuccessful. These reports have inspired me to think about this concept. When I compared these reports to Turkey’s development between 1923 and 1938 with the economic, educational, women rights and social conditions of those days I asked myself "Why are not we aware of this connection?" “Why do not we present this concept to the world?“

These country profiles show that any country can take the model of Turkey’s development between 1923-1938 and make it their primary development model. In addition, the 8th section of the Millennium Development Goals is about Global Partnership (and International Peace!). Ataturk, with his “Peace at home, peace in the world” vision has been the pioneer of this. Right after the establishment of the Republic, he made peace cooperation with Greece. Greece proposed Ataturk for the 1934 Nobel Peace Prize. Looking from this angle, Ataturk is a pioneer in our century for education, women’s rights, in particular, in the Least Developed and Developing Countries and the Islamic world. It is important to acknowledge and own these and link with the MDGs, because anything that has been achieved in Turkey also has been the result of Ataturk’s well-established development agenda and programs.
The Millennium Development Goals are very crucial and it is also the ground of the conference. For instance, the concept is neither only Ataturk nor only the Millennium Development Goals. It is a combination of it that is supporting each other. It is kind of the other part of the whole.

If Millennium Development Goals are not achieved, or if enough progress is not done, then no one is going to be secure and safe in this world, no one. That’s why we were lucky as a nation. We had a leader who introduced this development agenda from the early 20th century. Why not own that? And of course, everything requires modification, adaptation and development, after updating it then we can link this agenda with developing countries.

If looked closely everyone can realize that Turkey’s development program is in the foundations of not only the Millennium Development Goals but also UN Declaration of Human Rights and UNESCO.

We dedicate the Inaugural Session of the conference to the EIGHT of the Millennium Development Goals: Global Partnerships and International Peace because the scope of this conference is not limited only with Turkey or Ataturk because Ataturk’s ‘Peace at home, peace in the world’ concept is significant worldwide.

The common goal of this conference is this: To intrigue and inspire academicians, writers, thinkers, artists, and people from other fields to think about this connection that hopefully and potentially will reflect in their research projects and intellectual works.

I thank you.