

Dear participants, dear speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I wish to sincerely thank KAS, its head in Turkey, Mr. Sven-Joachim Irmer and all his colleagues in the Foundation for their invaluable help and support.

Their contribution was, indeed, invaluable, but not "*priceless*": in fact it carried a heavy price: as you know, KAS covered all the expenses for the organization of this event. Yet, most of all I wish to thank Mr. Irmer because he believed in the significance of this first-time event and fervently embraced it from the beginning.

I also wish to express our gratitude to all the distinguished speakers who were with us and shared their knowledge and expertise. Their contribution was as beneficial for you, dear participants, as it was also for us, the organizers!

I admit that preparing and finally hosting this event was an extremely useful and gratifying experience for all of us involved; we fervently hope that we can repeat it in the future, for the benefit of you, dear participants, as the leaders of tomorrow. Actually, this is our aspiration and ambition, to institutionalize this event and repeat it every one or two years, because we deeply believe in its usefulness, being as I said during my welcome address, a unique investment for the future of our Black Sea region.

By the way, we learned a lot during these three days, thus we will work hard to enrich the event by also following some of your proposals and suggestions; we will try to make it perhaps more interactive and always keep it connected to the real issues confronting our BSEC Member States.

I am sure that today you know much more about the KAS Foundation and the BSEC Organization than you knew when you arrived in Istanbul three days back. You learned how they function, what their aims and objectives are, you were informed on their multifaceted activities, on their advantages, yet also on the difficulties and other various issues they have to address.

So, our hope is that by knowing more you can better appreciate their overall contribution for establishing a culture of dialogue and understanding in our geostrategic region, which gains importance every day.

We actually hope that with all this wealth in knowledge that our participants acquired, you will become the most ardent supporters of KAS and BSEC; that from your position - whatever or wherever that might be - you will contribute for rendering both Organizations not only better known, but also more effective and more useful.

I again wish to sincerely thank all that worked so hard and tirelessly for achieving this beautiful result for which we can all be proud of.