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## OTTOMAN LEGACY AND TODAY'S BALKAN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Multicultural coexistence is very important because the development of a civilization can only be understood by analyzing the structures of cities and cultural life in these cities.

During the Ottoman State, the Balkans became the center of world politics in the 16th century. This is the golden time of the Balkans. I say this not because we have borne the Ottoman heritage, but that this is a historical fact.

Hence the Ottoman history is a history of the Balkans, a history of Balkan central character in world politics. At that time, all the main trade routes were in the Balkans.

Also during the Ottoman period, Thessaloniki became the main center of economic trade. The whole of the Mediterranean trade was through Thessaloniki.

Also in the 19th century was Mehmet Ali Pasha. He was an Albanian, but he became not only a leading figure in the Ottoman state, but the founder of modern Egypt. If he had not had an Ottoman tradition, the Egyptians would have not seen any Albanian in their life.

What I'm emphasizing is the Ottoman heritage. Ottoman centuries in the Balkans were success stories.

What is Turkey? Turkey is a small Balkan, a small Middle East, a small Caucasian. More Bosnians live in Turkey than in Bosnia. More Albanians live in Turkey than in Albania, more Chechens than in Chechnya, more Abkhazians than in Abkhazia. And we have Kurds, Arabs and Turks together. Why is all this? Because of the Ottoman heritage. For all these Muslim nationalities in these regions, Turkey is a safe haven.

In short, our story is the same, our destiny is the same and our future will be the same. Just as in the sixteenth century when the Ottoman Balkans rise occurred in the center of world politics, we will do the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East with Turkey, the center of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve this. We will re-integrate the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus, on the principle of regional and global peace in the future. Not just for us, but for all mankind.