

BIO-ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

[The Honorable Abdulkadir Ates](#)

Minister of Tourism

Turkey

Almost a month ago Professor Keles, my teacher from the university, came to my office and delivered a book. On the cover of the book was written 'Biopolitics – The Bio-Environment'. I was just looking at the book two days ago, knowing that this conference was coming but not having much time. I had paid a lot of attention to the environment at one time. Reading this book made me realize that in academic life the sciences are changing rapidly. In the five years since I gave up academic life, this subject has changed greatly. We were concerned about the environment and tried to teach courses on the environment and environmental problems at universities. However, today the topics seem to have changed drastically. Scientists now look more systematically at these issues. They consider the environment and its problems as a whole system, rather than taking a fragmented or piecemeal approach. Therefore, after looking at the books and thinking about their content, I came up with a few important points on the role of this conference and the kind of contribution similar efforts may give to the world. Before getting to this subject, please allow me to welcome everyone of you to my country and especially to the beautiful city of Istanbul.

As you may already know, today we try to develop and make people's lives easier without destroying the environment and upsetting the ecological balance of our planet. A thousand years ago, people were merely trying to survive. They were hunters and had good relations with the environment. In those times no concern with biopolitics or the bio-environment existed.

However, this relationship with the environment changed when the human race became more advanced and achieved more than just survival. They started to satisfy their egos and their demands became greater and greater. Then the problems appeared. It is not necessary to outline how this happened since it is common knowledge. Plans upsetting the environment paralleled the demands to fulfil society's needs. This is the so-called economical planning or economic development. During that time, the most important aspect was gross economic development. The environment or ecology was a secondary issue.

Today, however, talks are initiated about the impact of an ecological crisis on economic development. In the past we were mainly concerned about the economical development. At present, because of the situation created, we are concerned about environmental problems and the ecological imbalance on our planet. The problem of an ecological crisis has become the first priority.

As far as Turkey is concerned, economy and ecology have to go hand in hand. In a country like Turkey, we cannot give priority to economic development or be solely concerned about the environment while neglecting the unemployed. People must not be deprived of the basics, a healthy environment to live in, clean drinking water and good health facilities. Consequently, development is an imperative. The effort should be to achieve an economic standard for people but at the same time to be concerned about the environment. This is the concept we try to implement. At the same time, we are aware of a reduction of the livable environment throughout the world and the fact that the biological richness of our planet is being endangered. Our responsibility is not only for the present, but also for future generations. Many things happen over which we have very little control, such as population growth, industrialization, governance, incorrect resource and technological applications.

In the past, humanity searched for improvements in industrialization. This remains an issue of significant importance. There is still fear and danger of a nuclear war, although the situation is not as dangerous as five or ten years ago. In order to overcome all the above problems one thing should be done: change human production habits, and then change consumption habits. However, it is not possible to take very drastic, harsh steps in order to achieve this goal. We cannot promote these changes very quickly without creating new social and political problems and while being aware of the drastic reduction of the earth's limited resources. For this reason, we have to take another gigantic step.

We believe that this organization and this kind of conference really help to achieve the above goals. People need to be educated in biopolitics. In order to create a new way of thinking and a new philosophy about living habits and the necessity for new information and new ethics for a new planetary lifestyle.

In the 20th century, everything has been measured according to a per capita income. Countries are ranked according to their per capita income. We hardly believe that this will continue to be the criterion for measuring the advancement of the countries in the 21st century. There is no sense in having high per capita income if people consume vegetables with hormones and breathe polluted air, children drink milk tainted by radiation and clean drinking water becomes increasingly unavailable, as already occurs in several parts of the world. In the 21st century all standards must be changed and the world must be redefined.

In order to be successful along these lines and to solve the problems, we have to change the educational system as well as our value systems. The need is to give priority to Bio-Ethics in education and train new teachers to teach the theory of life and the philosophy of living to the next generations. We have to change the curricula in schools so as to help the new generations to learn more about the delicate balance of ecology and

environment.

Additionally, priority will be given for bio-ethics to be taught in our universities and promoted within voluntary organisations. An important role should be played by the media and other communication services.

As a politician, I am aware of the need of a new breed of politicians able to think about these problems. They should not pay so much attention to the short term gains, but be more concerned about the long-term objectives. These politicians should believe in planning and accept their responsibility not only toward human beings or their electorate, but also toward the whole bio-environment and all living things. Care for plantations, sea and air pollution should be the task of the new kind of politicians.

Many problems could be emphasized such as climatic changes or the ozone layer depletion. Let me mention a few things about Turkey.

As a first step we created the Ministry of Tourism. We are very seriously trying to develop Turkish tourism. However, tourism for us does not have only an economic side. Tourism has environmental aspects. We try to maintain our natural environment as clean as possible, not upsetting the ecological balance in Turkey. Previous planning paid a lot of attention to this area. Environmental impact studies are required before any kind of permission is given to construct a tourist facility anywhere in Turkey. In 1987, one of the reports of the World Environmental Commission mentioned the need for sustainable development. In our sixth five-year development plan, we accepted this principle and every action in industry, tourism and agriculture follows sustainable development principles as our guide. This is especially true in the tourism sectors.

The Ministry of Tourism does not allocate any incentives to tourist development within a 3-kilometer radius of land and space along the Mediterranean Sea or coastline. We would like to protect our shores and not see the ecological balance upset in those areas. In 1988, in an area named Tourgeis, we invested a lot of capital to build a tourist complex. However, after some time it was discovered that this area was the habitat of the Caretta caretta sea turtle, and an important breeding ground for that species. Even though millions of liras had already been spent, that project was given up and the area left to the turtles. Being very aware of the environmental problems, before undertaking any kind of action or decision, we consider the environment first.

The Honorable Dr. **Abdulkadir Ates** is Minister of Tourism of Turkey. He graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Ankara. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. Degree on Economic Development Planning from the University of Pittsburg, U.S.A.. He was Assistant Professor of economics at the Hacettepe University in Ankara and visiting Professor at the Pittsburg University, U.S.A.. Since 1987, he has been elected as Deputy of Gaziantep at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.