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Supporting Inclusive Dialogue at a Challenging Time in Turkey

Peace and the Economy

London, 8-10 January 2019

DPI held its first activity of 2019 on 8-10th January. Entitled 'Peace and the Economy', this roundtable meeting was organised in cooperation with the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Institute of Global Affairs and was attended by a small diverse group of Turkey's prominent business people and organisations, including company CEO's and heads of business associations.

Following on from a 2017 comparative study visit to Northern Ireland on this topic, the meeting, provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the links between peace, stability and economic growth and what role the private sector can play in conflict resolution processes. The event began with a warm welcome from Kerim Yildiz, DPI's CEO and Nick Stewart, Chairman of DPI.

An introductory session with LSE's Mary Martin (Senior Research Fellow, LSE Ideas) and Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic (Senior Research Fellow Department of International Relations), focused on modern ways in which the private sector can be positively engaged in conflict resolution. First of all, they outlined the business world's attributes which can contribute greatly to the security and development sectors. In addition to financial resources, they pinpointed areas such as their presence on the ground, relationship and knowledge of local communities and their ability to connect multiple actors at multiple levels. Vesna and Mary went on to discuss examples of private sector intervention with participants, such as their helping to promote integrated local development plans in Colombia.

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Dan O'Brien, Chief Economist at the Institute of International and European Affairs, then provided an insightful examination of the connections that can be drawn between peace, stability and economic growth using data from country case studies around the world. Noting that there is always reason for both optimism and pessimism, Dan showed that economic interdependence has increased the cost of conflict but also highlighted that economies can grow even when political and geopolitical risk factors are significant.

The discussion went on to focus on the Northern Ireland case with Dermot Ahern, former Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, sharing his first-hand experiences of the Northern Ireland peace process and the economic impacts brought about by the resolution of The Troubles. Speaking about his role in preparing the groundwork for peace in Northern Ireland, Dermot stressed that it is at times where it seems as though room for talks is limited, these are the precise moments in which frank discussions can take place behind closed doors with opposition groups.

The final session saw Dr Esmond Birnie, Senior Economist at the Centre for Economic Policy at Ulster University analyse the links drawn between political stability and the economy from the Northern Ireland example and highlight the lessons that can be learnt from this resolution process. In his presentation, Esmond proposed that the links from politics to economic growth in Northern Ireland were not all that obvious when examining the economic policies of its regional government. He also questioned the perceived causation from economic growth to peace, showing that prosperity and political stability actually had a mixed correlation in Northern Ireland, highlighting that the worst violence and instability occurred when the economy was growing rapidly in the early 1970s.

Participants engaged in fruitful discussion over the course of the event which, on Thursday 10th January, culminated with an evaluation session. Participants reflected on the usefulness of the meeting and the effectiveness of hearing academic case studies along with real-life experiences of the private sector and conflict resolution. Looking ahead to what might be of most use in future business-focused DPI meetings, participants expressed their interest in hearing further examples from case study countries. During this monitoring and evaluation session, discussion also covered the challenges and difficulties faced by the media today. This Roundtable proved a timely opportunity for a diverse group from across Turkey's private sector to come together and to reflect on their role as business people in the light of international experiences.

As for all DPI events, a report and a photo gallery has been published on our website:

www.democraticprogress.org.

This roundtable was part of a series of activities planned in the context of the project: *'Supporting inclusive dialogue at a challenging time in Turkey'*, supported by the EU and the Irish, Netherlands and Norwegian governments. A full transcript report from this meeting will be produced and made available on the website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerim Yildiz', written in a cursive style.

Kerim Yildiz
Chief Executive Officer
Democratic Progress Institute