



## Transcript

# Chatham House Prize 2010: Award Ceremony

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**Simon Henry:**

Currently the 16th largest economy and forecast to be one of the fastest growing economies in the world over the next decade, and certainly the fastest in Europe; it's a market that no serious business can afford to ignore. One of the priorities which you [President Gül] have also been instrumental in fostering is securing energy resources for both Turkey and Europe. Turkey's central and strategic location, straddling Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, makes the country a vital transit route and a market of course for oil and gas. For these reasons Turkey really is a key country for Shell.

The 87th year of the Turkish republic was celebrated only ten days ago, and we have been active in Turkey since 1923, the same year that the Turkish Republic was actually founded. I am very pleased to be able to say that our partnership with Turkey is as strong as it ever has been, across a range of businesses including supply, distribution and marketing of fuels; chemicals; natural gas and the manufacturing and marketing of lubricants.

Of course Turkey is also a country with a young and a growing population. People are the key to any business, and Turkey's highly educated managers and entrepreneurs, and that growing skill base and the willingness to embrace technological innovation, all point to an exciting and prosperous future for the country.

So please let us all congratulate His Excellency Mr Abdullah Gül, President of Turkey, on your accomplishments. Thank you Mr President.

**David Lidington MP:**

Your Excellency, President Gül, Madame Gül, Dr Julius, Sir John, Dr Niblett, Your Excellencies, distinguished guests and colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman,

It is a great honour to have been asked to represent Her Majesty's Government this evening in order to celebrate President Gül's important achievements, both in international diplomacy and in political reform in Turkey. I know that the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Foreign Secretary have already congratulated the President during their meetings with him, so while Chatham House is a fiercely independent body, I think that the President will be in no doubt about the pleasure felt by the British government at the award which has been given to him tonight.

President Gül is widely recognised throughout the world as a man that has brought his own brand of statesmanship and moderation at a time where those political qualities have been sorely needed to address the various complex issues relating to Turkey's role in the region as well as those associated with Turkey's own social and political developments. The President is a statesman who always thinks strategically and works to achieve stability, justice and prosperity. We in the United Kingdom are proud to have such a friend.

Distinguished guests, when our Prime Minister visited Turkey this summer in order to launch a new dynamic in relations between our two countries he said in his speech in Ankara on 27 July, that Turkey is vital for our security, and vital for our politics and our diplomacy. The Prime Minister recognised the pace of reform in Turkey over the last decade: the ending of capital punishment, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and a new openness and atmosphere of tolerance towards Turkey's minority groups. President Gül has been at the heart of those important achievements.

Today Turkey's strategic position in the world and in wider international affairs now brings significant opportunities for our two countries to work even more closely together. The United Kingdom will continue to be Turkey's strongest supporter for membership of the European Union, a process that President Gül himself launched when he was foreign minister five years ago. We will also work with Turkey on Middle East issues and in Afghanistan, where Turkey is a much valued partner.

So let me salute the President for everything he has achieved on these important and at times frustratingly difficult issues. His strategic, progressive and pragmatic approach has been an inspiration, and has played a key role in

forging the close relationship which the United Kingdom and Turkey now enjoy, as together we pursue better security and increased prosperity for our peoples, in a common spirit of partnership and of good will.

**Rt Hon Jack Straw MP:**

Mr President, Mrs Gül, Your Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you so much to whoever started the clapping, much appreciated that everyone else joined in. That was a joke by the way!

David Lidington referred to the fact that Britain was the strongest supporter of Turkey's accession to the European Union across the whole of the EU, and we are. There is something remarkable about this because the issue of Britain's relations with the European Union, has not only caused from time to time divisions between the political parties but has caused deep divisions inside Britain's two main political parties, some of which continue to reverberate in both. But on one thing, since it was first decided in the then Common Market that Turkey was a candidate country, there has always been unanimity, and not the unanimity of ignorance, but the unanimity of engagement – that Turkey's place was that of a full member of the European Union, and Britain's duty was to do everything that it could to facilitate and encourage and secure that goal.

It is for Turkey to make its own decisions about its future, but it is for the rest of Europe to make its decision in turn about where the future of Europe lies. As a key member of the European Union for almost forty years it has been our very clear strategic judgement that Europe needs Turkey and in many ways, Europe needs Turkey even more than Turkey thinks that it needs Europe. And it is for that reason that across the parties, we will continue to fight as hard as we possibly can to secure that goal for fair treatment of Turkey's application, and frankly to beat down some of the prejudice that Turkey has met on the way towards membership.

Now, one reason that there is such determination in the United Kingdom in favour of Turkey's membership is because we think it is strategically correct. Second, it is because of the respect that is held for Turkey and for Turkey's growing position in the world. But I would like to suggest a third reason. That is because of the leadership that we have seen from Turkey of Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül over the last several years. A leadership which has reached out not only to Europe but across the world and which has developed, and improved, and deepened all kinds of relationships and alliances.

I first got to know a man who I am privileged to count as a personal friend – and his wife, Hayrünisa, as is my wife Alice who is here – eight years ago. President Gül became first of all Prime Minister and then Foreign Minister, a slightly eccentric order, but explicable in terms of the history of Turkey, and

he and I developed a close relationship, not least in those pressured months leading up to the decision by the EU on 3 October 2005 in Luxembourg. And what I recognised in then Foreign Minister Gül was a man of exceptional talents, abilities and qualities. A man who was tough in negotiation for his country, but completely and utterly to be trusted, and a man inspired by the deepest religious and ethical values. And it's also been a wonderful privilege to get to know his wife Mrs Gül, for both my wife and myself, and to recognise the support that President Gül receives from his wife, but also the very singular contribution that Mrs Gül makes to the lives of people as First Lady in her own right in Turkey.

So I have to say as a personal level as well as a British Member of Parliament and a representative here of my party, how delighted I was when I heard that Chatham House had decided to award the Chatham House Prize 2010 to President Gül. Because I can think of no worthier recipient for that prize, no better recognition for this country to both honour and salute one of the great statesmen, not just of Europe, but of the world. So if I may, many many congratulations President Gül and Mrs Gül.

**Dr DeAnne Julius:**

Mr President, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Chairman of Chatham House, and as the last speaker of this evening, it's my very pleasurable duty to thank all of you who have made this evening so special. Robin has already expressed his thanks and our huge debt of gratitude to our patron, Her Majesty The Queen, for coming tonight to present the prize in person. Her Majesty's long personal involvement in improving international relations is truly second to none. A special thanks to you President Gül and Mrs Gül for travelling to London to receive this award. Your achievements and the remarkable transition that Turkey has made in the last decade to such political and economic success has provided all of us with much to celebrate along with this prize.

And while the Chatham House Prize focuses on recent achievements that we have heard so much about, personally I was quite struck yesterday by the speech that you gave at Chatham House to our membership, laying out a broad historical perspective on international relations. The world has certainly changed in virtually every dimension since the time of the Ottoman Empire let alone the British Empire, and we all know that empires come and go, but they also shape our enduring national values. In that sense it is natural that both our countries retain a strong outward orientation and a commitment to play a very active role in the future development in international relations. The G20 meetings in Seoul attended by both of our Prime Minister's are just the latest steps in this effort.

I would like to thank the many guests who have some from near and far, in particular the guests who have come from Turkey. Attending this event has also provided the opportunity for you and for your counterparts in British business and British government to deepen those relationships. Special thanks to our sponsors, to Royal Dutch Shell our lead sponsors, and all of the others sponsors listed in your programme. The support that you provide to us at Chatham House for events such as this is vital for our continued independence and success. And I think that the breadth of the international companies that have sponsored this event attest to the important role that Turkey plays in the world economy today. Finally, I would like to thank the staff of Chatham House itself, particularly the team lead by Camilla Seymour, our head of members' events, who worked so hard and so diligently to make sure that everything went well on the night, thank you very much. I would now like to close this award ceremony and wish you all a safe journey home.

Thank you.