

Turkish prime minister opens 2009 CIBJO Congress, speakers urge jewellery industry to maintain strict CSR standards

Istanbul, Turkey, May 4, 2009 -- The prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has opened the 2009 CIBJO Congress, which began yesterday at the Sheraton Istanbul Ataköy Hotel in Istanbul. In his speech to the packed gathering, he stressed his government's support for the jewellery industry, and underscored Turkey's ability to maintain economic viability even during the current global crisis.

"Turkey is a great example of a what can be achieved economically by a democracy living in peace. We are today the 17th largest economy in the world and the sixth largest in Europe. In 2002 we attracted only \$1 billion in foreign investment. In the coming year we expect that figure to reach \$22 billion."

In his opening remarks, CIBO President Gaetano Cavalieri referred to the changing nature of the jewellery industry, and its effect on how business is managed. "The days of a paternalistic jewellery industry, in which some only supply raw materials, while others manufacture and others trade, are over," he said. "All stakeholders reserve the right to benefit equally from their skills and natural assets, and to be part of the decision-making process. There is also no longer a hierarchy of rough producing countries, manufacturing and trading countries, and consumer markets. Today, some of our most dynamic and promising jewellery consumer markets are located in countries that produce rough, manufacture and trade."

"The international and inter-connected structure of our world economy, which was well illustrated by the lightning speed by which the financial crisis spread from country to country, will also be our salvation. It also is, in many respects, the major factor that sets this crisis apart from the Great Depression of the 1930s. For while the most severely affected economies recover, they will do so in the slipstream of the emerging and growing economies, largely in the East," Dr. Cavalieri said.

In his address to the congress, İmam Altınbaş, the chairman of the Turkish Jewellery Association (JTR), the host of the event, stressed the importance of maintaining strict standards of Corporate Social Responsibility in the jewellery industry. "The only thing we can't accept to put into risk is the consumer's trust, in this chaotic environment," the JTR chairman said. Meanwhile, we need to develop a common reflex act for all threats that would harm the consumer trust and confidence."

Mr. Altınbaş said that the jewellery industry's CSR strategy must address the needs of whom he referred to as the true "heroes of the industry." These, he explained were "first and foremost, hundreds of thousands of workers working in precious metal and stone mines, mostly in the underdeveloped countries; the enterprises that turn the raw material into finished jewellery, again in developing countries and millions of workers and artisans working in those companies; thousands of designers who give soul into merchandise with their creative touch; and the manufacturers, entrepreneurs and businessmen that put their hearts into this business, who all are indispensable rings of this chain."

In his address to the congress, Eli Izhakoff, chairman of the World Diamond Council and the CIBJO honorary life president, said: "Corporate Social Responsibility is a not realised through a single act. It is a way of life. We cannot ever assume that, because the

incidence of certain activities has been reduced to the degree that they are almost imperceptible, we can rest on our laurels. Good corporate governance, like good medicine, is best managed through preventative care.”

“The World Diamond Council strongly believes that, while on the one hand it is important that our industry continues to play a positive economic role in the countries in which we operate, it is imperative that we do all that we can to prevent the violation of human rights in diamond rich areas, wherever they occur. We condemn such violations most strongly and demand that proper action must be taken,” he said.

The opening session of the 2009 CIBJO Congress included session of the current state of the world jewellery industry, within the framework of the global crisis, and aspects of the Corporate Social responsibility, including a an outline of the education programme that has been developed for the World Jewellery Confederation Educational Foundation. Copies of presentations delivered during these sessions, as well as photographs of the congress, are available online on the dedicated congress website at <http://congress2009.cibjo.org>.

The 2009 CIBJO Congress is being held from Sunday, May 3, through Tuesday, May 5.