

The Dewhurst Award

Remarks at the World Petroleum Council Congress Opening Ceremony

Rex W. Tillerson, Secretary of State, Istanbul, Turkey, July 9, 2017

"Well, thank you very much for the very kind recognition, and it is a real delight to be with all of you this evening. I want to thank Dr. Toth. I certainly want to thank the World Petroleum Congress for this very prestigious award and the recognition.

When I was notified that I would receive this award not quite a year ago, I thought I would be interrupting my retirement, where I would like to be fishing somewhere in the mountains of North America to take a leisurely trip to the beautiful city of Istanbul to spend several days enjoying the city, seeing good friends and colleagues, and having a leisurely journey back home. It didn't quite work out that way. (Laughter.)

But it is a true delight to see all of you and I'm quite humbled by this recognition. And as with all recognition I received as a result of my leadership of the ExxonMobil Corporation, I have to share it with the men and women of ExxonMobil, because I'm here because of what they did, not because of what I did. (Applause.)

And in that 41 and a half years that I spent in this marvelous industry, there were some real constants throughout all of it, and you know all these well: that energy is fundamental to economic growth and prosperity, it's fundamental to lifting people out of poverty the world over, that it requires massive investments over long periods of time and requires enormous risk-taking and risk management. And what's so extraordinary about this industry is all of you and all of those who stand behind you largely do it without notice from the public. There's much more notice of that device you're carrying in your pocket than there is of what you enable around the world.

And some crucial elements for what has always been true to our success is still true today, and the fundamental ingredients require a strong rule of law and international order, a respect for contract sanctity, and a level of integrity between partners and counterparties. And whenever those elements are present, investors will make the massive investments, they'll take the risk, and they'll persevere through the challenges in order to achieve the objective.

The other common element required for success throughout that 41 and a half years that I've spent - and it's what I miss the most - I miss all of you. I miss you as colleagues, I miss you as partners, I miss you as competitors. I miss the healthy debates, the collaboration, the breakthroughs that were achieved that I witnessed during that 41 and a half years that have continued to deliver energy on a massive scale and a reliable way with incredible technology and innovations that I simply still stand in awe of. And all of that is you and the people that stand behind you.

And so the other critical element is that human talent, and that's why we must continue to invest in that human talent and attract that human talent to this industry. It is their innovation, their creativity, their technical skills that, when integrated, when all put together, achieve the remarkable accomplishments of resource development under the most difficult conditions. And they do it with reliability safely, protection of the environment, and again, with integrity.

Again, I'm humbled to receive this recognition. I do want to say a couple of words about the congress. I want to congratulate Minister Albayrak for the hosting of the congress by the Turkish National Committee. I know this is going to be a very successful event and an important one. And the congress clearly demonstrates a high level of the crucial importance that energy plays to everyone's life, and I know that will be discussed in great detail by many others who are here.

Turkey is also an important partner in our efforts to promote greater energy security because it sits at the crossroads. It's just a fact of geography that Turkey sits at the crossroads of vital energy resources along supply routes and routes to consumers. The United States looks forward to engaging with Turkey on projects that will increase global energy security, such as the Southern Gas Corridor and the Eastern Mediterranean Gas. These projects will enable Europe to diversify its energy sources, thereby improving its energy security. Whether you represent a resource-rich country with development opportunities, a transit country for vital infrastructure, or a consuming country, there are well-established principles that are proven to create the conditions to ensure reliable energy supply to the world.

Before closing, I do want to take note that I'm here in Istanbul, we're all here in Istanbul at a momentous time. Nearly a year ago, the Turkish people - brave men and women - stood up against coup plotters and defended their democracy. (Applause.) I take this moment to recognize their courage and honor the victims of the events of July 15th, 2016. It was on that day that the Turkish people exercised their rights under the Turkish constitution, defended their place in a prosperous Turkey, and we remember those who were injured or died in that event.

In closing, I do want to thank the World Petroleum Council members for selecting Houston, Texas for the site of the 2020 World Petroleum Congress. We look forward in the United States and this United States Government to hosting you as well, to building off what I know is going to be a very successful event here in Istanbul, and I'm sure the organizing committees in Houston will be watching closely so they can take the lessons learned home with them.

And on behalf of the United States, let me just say I hope I am there in 2020. I'll be there in some capacity - (laughter) - one way or another because I am never going to forget my friends and my colleagues, my partners, and this extraordinary industry of delivering energy to the world. You are remarkable, all of you. Thank you. (Applause.)"