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Remarks at Signing Ceremony

Mister Mayor, esteemed members of the Kecioren Council, and other distinguished guests,

The Urban County of Fairfax, Virginia is pleased and honored to enter into a Sister Jurisdiction partnership with the City of Kecioren.

Fairfax and Kecioren have much in common. Fairfax, the largest county in Virginia and has a population similar to Kecioren.

Like Kecioren we are a vibrant and thriving business-friendly community. We are both extending rail through our urban areas and we are both investing in revitalization and beautification efforts. Both Fairfax and Kecioren have made education our highest priority.

Fairfax is proud of having a world class school system. We are well known for having a diverse and accepting population, with over a hundred languages spoken by children in our schools whose parents have come from other countries to make Fairfax their home, including Turkey.

Many thanks go to the American Turkish Friendship Association located in Fairfax that has served to bring elected and government officials together with the active Turkish American population in the Metropolitan Washington area.

Before leaving home for this trip a Washington Post reporter asked me why I thought it was important to make the trip to Turkey and forge a sister jurisdiction partnership with Kecioren. I answered that I thought it was of great value to me to gain a better understanding of the culture of my Turkish American constituents. This trip has helped me to personally experience the warmth and friendship of the Turkish community and see firsthand your rich history.

This partnership will also allow both of us to share information, practices and approaches to solving our shared local government challenges in the areas of education, public works, energy efficiency, human services, transportation and economic development.

Most of all, the personal friendships and relationships that will result from this partnership will prove valuable in ways we can't predict.

Mayor Mustafa Ak also brings to the partnership his extensive municipal regional leadership which will further broaden our collaborative opportunities.

I am joined today by my partners in State Government: Minority Leader and Senior Senator in the Virginia General Assembly Dick Saslaw, Freshman Senator Barbara Favola, who represents areas of Arlington and Fairfax, and State Delegate Bob Brink, who represents Arlington, in particular the area surrounding the Pentagon.

On behalf of our delegation and my colleagues on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, I thank you for this opportunity and for the unforgettable hospitality you have shown us and look forward to being able to reciprocate.