

**Acceptance Speech on receipt of  
Japanese Emperor's Order of the Rising Sun.  
Residence of the Ambassador of Japan,  
Neuilly-sur-Seine, 30 January 2014.**

- Ambassador Kodama, Executive Director Maria van der Hoeven, former IEA Executive Directors Robert Priddle – who is here today – and Nobuo Tanaka – who unfortunately cannot be here, but sent me a special message this morning – Ambassadors, Shinichi Kihara (Director, International Affairs Division, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry), dear colleagues, thank you all, thank you for being here this evening.
- Mr Ambassador, it is an exceptional honour for me to receive the Japanese Emperor's Order of the Rising Sun.
  - I have now dedicated over 30 years of my life to energy. Through that period there have been many high points, but very few of them can compare with the satisfaction and gratitude I feel this evening in receiving this award.
  - The fact that it has come from Japan makes it all the more special as I have such respect for the way your country – despite having so few energy resources – has been able to prosper by working tirelessly to develop smart energy policies, such as by making itself a world champion of energy efficiency.
- My IEA colleagues – past and present – deserve much of the credit for this award as without their support none of the achievements I am being recognised for this evening would have been possible. I thank each and every one of them with all of my heart.
- However, if you all allow me, I would like to dedicate this great honour to a single person. The man who gave me my wings. That man is my father – Professor Kemal Birol – who is now 87 years old and is living in Ankara with my mother, Bilge Birol – the woman who has been the sacrificing angel of our family.
- My father came from a small town in the centre of Turkey called Tokat. His parents did not have much money and he went to school under

difficult conditions. The family house had no electricity, so through primary school he did his homework – alongside several of his classmates – outside on the footpath under the street lights. He told me many times how much he enjoyed being out there with them, especially when the weather was good.

- Thankfully, it did not harm his results. He was the top student in all of his classes and this – together with his family's difficult financial situation – saw him admitted into a government programme to leave home for boarding school for a free education when he was 12 years old.
- Again, he remained top of his classes, and his excellent grades saw him admitted to the Medical Faculty of Istanbul University when he was 18.
- Straight after graduating he met my mother. There is a rather romantic story of a young doctor continually riding his white bicycle up and down the street in front of the family balcony of an elegant, young Ankara lady, but I will not elaborate. After marrying, they built a family, having my younger brother and me.
- My father was a very hard worker who personified the Turkish saying – to dig a well with a small needle. In the early years, in order to look after our family, he worked at four different jobs at the same time.
- Through years of tireless work he became a well known and respected doctor in Ankara, where he practiced up until his retirement about 10 years ago. Throughout his career, he took particular care of poor patients, just like the state had done for him years earlier. Often he would not charge them and sometimes would even pay for their medication out of his own pocket. He did not do this to be recognised or to be applauded, but because he felt it was the right thing to do.
- Some of you would not be surprised to learn that my father was also passionate about football. He played at a serious level when he was a student in a team that was then in the first Turkish Football League. He was very fast and I have several newspaper clippings that refer to him as “Kemal, son of the wind”.

- But, today, my father has slowed down and is now living a very quiet life, watching the world from his quiet corner. I am not sure if he will be able to hear my voice when I tell him that I am dedicating this award to him, to Professor Kemal Birol, the man who gave me my wings.
- Mr Ambassador, after having the privilege of working for some 20 years now at the IEA with some great Japanese colleagues who have become friends, I have come to realise that there are many similarities between Japanese and Turkish cultures. One of those similarities relates to the elegant bird – with its long legs and its long neck – known as the Crane.
- I understand they are called Turu in Japanese and Grue royale in French. In Turkish, they are known as Turna and are considered to be a most trusted friend in our culture. They are used to convey important messages in many Anatolian stories, such as news from far away friends, from mothers, from fathers, from lovers. They are the trusted ones as they are always loyal and can always be depended on.
- And, I understand, in Japanese culture, the Crane is also revered for its loyalty. They are loyal to the very end. For example, if one is injured, its mate will not leave it alone and will stay right there alongside it.
- Mr Ambassador, just like the Crane, you can be certain that I will remain loyal to the principles that have enabled me to be recognised with this rare decoration this evening. I consider it to be an immense privilege and great honour for me, for my entire family, and for all my colleagues in the IEA.
- Thank you.

Dr. Fatih Birol

30 January 2014