Hi, I am Yaşar Tonta, a professor of Information Management at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey.

I am pleased and honored today to join you in celebrating the World Book Day, initiated by UNESCO some 20 years ago to promote books. Books are perhaps the most powerful “game changers” in our lives. We owe the Renaissance mainly to books. Books made it possible to disseminate knowledge and opened up new horizons before the humanity. Books are the main driver of scientific and social progress in our societies, and reading books is “what makes the world go round”.

Books became the main weapon to fight illiteracy. Thomas Jefferson saw the link between literacy and democracy more than 200 years ago. Books and libraries are the bastions of democracy. They help us rear our children to become informed citizens to build and nourish democratic societies. UNESCO’s Director-General Ms. Irina Bokova sees books as “invaluable platforms for freedom of expression and the free flow of information”, which are the main pillars of democracy. Books play a crucial role “in promoting more inclusive and sustainable pathways to development.” We should therefore promote books and reading to ensure scientific, technological and social development. We should promote books to further democracy and protect it more jealously.

April 23 is also the day when the foundations of the Turkish Republic were laid down back in 1920 and therefore celebrated as the National Sovereignty and Children’s Day in Turkey. With these sentiments, I wish you all a happy World Book Day. Thank you.

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