

Foreign Minister of Turkey to kick-off Middle East Seminar Series

Cambridge, MA –The Harvard Kennedy School and Brandeis University will inaugurate the new Crown-Belfer Middle East Seminar series on September 29, featuring Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Minister Davutoğlu will discuss Turkey's role in the Middle East during the closed-session lunch. Co-sponsored by the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University and the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School, the series aims to assemble professors and experts from the Boston area universities and encourage debate on issues in the Middle East and U.S. policy within the region.

"This is an ambitious new program that we hope will unite Boston universities in an intense focus on U.S. policy in the greater Middle East. We look forward to welcoming Foreign Minister Davutoğlu as our inaugural speaker," said seminar co-chair Nicholas Burns, Professor of the Practice of Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School.

As Foreign Minister, Davutoğlu's innovative approach to Turkish foreign policy combines its Ottoman history, Muslim culture, and experience with the West to inform Turkey's place at the center of world and Middle East affairs. From 2003 until his appointment as foreign minister in 2009, Davutoğlu served as chief advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and as ambassador-at-large. Outside of government, Davutoğlu is also known as one of Turkey's most distinguished political scientists. As a professor, he has published several books and was head of the department of International Relations at the Beykent University in Istanbul.

"With a stellar record as a scholar and now an influential practitioner, there is no one more appropriate than Foreign Minister Davutoğlu to launch the kind of high-level discussions of the Middle East that we envision for the Crown-Belfer Seminar," said seminar co-chair Shai Feldman, Director of Brandeis' Crown Center for Middle East Studies. "Our goal is to make the new Seminar series THE address in the Boston area for such high level discussions."

Working with the Middle East Initiative at the Kennedy School, the Crown-Belfer Middle East Seminar plans on holding conferences to bring together scholars from the Middle East, U.S. and Europe and will organize Track-II discussions between non-officials on the Israel-Palestine conflict aimed to set groundwork for official negotiations.