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## **SPOTLIGHT: TURKEY TO DOUBLE TRADE VOLUME WITH IRAQ TO 20 BLN USD**

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Xinhua (13 January 2019)

### **BAGHDAD**

After the landmark visit of new Iraqi President Barham Salih to neighboring Turkey, Turkey expects to double its trade volume with Iraq to 20 billion U.S. dollars in 2019.

Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Fatih Yildiz told reporters in Baghdad on Friday that "our goal in the trade volume between the two countries is 20 billion dollars as the first stage if some obstacles are removed."

Yildiz said the biggest obstacle is the double taxes collected on the goods coming from Turkey to Iraq via Kurdistan region.

Thousands of trucks carrying goods from Turkey to Iraq have to go through the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq, imposing double taxes on the trucks as they have to pay tariff on the border crossing points between Turkey and Kurdistan region and then checkpoints between Kurdistan and Iraq.

Yildiz pointed out that Salih promised to remove such obstacles during his last visit to Turkey on Jan. 3.

Yildiz said that the two countries have a special relation, and that Ankara's priority towards Baghdad is to preserve Iraq's unity and territorial integrity.

According to information derived from Trade Ministry and Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data, Turkey's trade volume with Iraq soared to 10.6 billion dollars in 2017 from nearly 870.7 million dollars in 2003 when the Iraqi war broke out. In 2017, Iraq ranked fourth among Turkey's export markets.

Sabah al-Sheikh, a political expert, told Xinhua that the latest U.S. sanctions on Iran opened the doors wide for the Turkish goods to dominate the Iraqi market to replace the Iranian goods.

"The products that have been purchased from Iran will be supplied by Turkey now, and this is a real opportunity for Turkish businesses," al-Sheikh said.

"Iraq will find it difficult to depend on trade with Iran despite the close bilateral ties because of the sanctions, and then it will try to fill the gap with Turkish products," he added.

Late last year, the United States has restored sanctions on Iran's oil industry as well as its banking

and transport industry.

Washington withdrew from the landmark 2015 Iranian nuclear deal in May 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Iran, targeting its shipping, financial and energy sectors.

On Jan. 5, Salih paid a visit to Turkey aimed at opening a new page of better mutual relations as the region is witnessing complex developments.

A statement by the presidency office said Salih and the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to "expand cooperation horizons ... (and) exchange views on the developments in the region."

For his part, Erdogan said at a joint press conference with Salih that "Turkey is seeking to develop cooperation with Iraq in the areas of security, energy and investment, and contribute to building in all over Iraq. We are keen on continuing coordination with Iraq in all fields."

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