

Esteemed Governor, Mayor of Keçiören, District Governor of Keçiören, Vehbi Koç –father of our family–, dear guests and friends,

I would like to voice my gratitude, on behalf of the whole Koç family, for your acceptance of our invitation and presence here with us, with some of you coming from even outside the province.

This is a most memorable day for us. The year was 1923 when my father bought the orchard house we will open in a few moments as Vehbi Koç Ankara Studies Center. All four siblings in our family were born in this house, on the same bed, in the same room, right there in that corner bedroom. Our father was born in Çoraklık, in a house, which unfortunately did not survive the time. It wasn't in existence even back in the day this one was bought. My late mother would always visit this house in early summer, and stay for 2 months before proceeding to Büyükdere, Istanbul. Our garden would provide us marvelous Ankara pears, delicious apricots, humble but tasty and crunchy apples, and very sweet grapes. In those days, Dr. Yusuf Hikmet was our neighbor, in the house behind ours. Thereafter, MP for Ankara, Fevzi Daldal moved into that house. Right across the street lived Hatice Hanım. Her grandson Atilla is here with us. To the lower side of the orchard was located the glorious mansion of Recep Peker, right next to the house of MP Ekrem Bey. In a nutshell, the neighborhood was a most elegant one. If I remember correctly, this house underwent renovations when it was bought, and saw some repairs here and there since then. Finally, the most extensive restoration effort brought it to its current form. The hero of the struggle for national independence, Field Marshall Fevzi Çakmak also lived in this house. His days in this house made this place even more special for us. This is the brief story of this building which will shortly be opened as a culture center by the Governor Erdoğan Şahinoğlu and the father of our family, Vehbi Koç.

In the olden days, this neighborhood was full of houses in vineyards. Now, our house is a lone relic from those days. Yet, we are delighted to have saved this old house to relay Ankara's history and the story of Vehbi Koç to future generations. Of course, this place is not comparable to Sadberk Hanım Museum; it is a more modest center. However, this is only the beginning. As the years go by, its archives, document collections, and library will naturally grow. This will serve mostly as a center for academic studies on Ankara. We wish that it would become a lively center, and it does not get forgotten in time.

Dear guests, in this warm and lovely day of September, we will eat lamb with pilaf -Ankara style-, and Turkish pancakes to remember those bygone days, and enjoy the show by Ankara's Seğmens. We also have a documentary on Vehbi Koç to show. I hope that you will like this documentary film produced by our journalist friend, Mr. Mehmet Ali Birand.

I would like to reiterate my heartfelt gratitude to all of you, and present my love and respect.