

**Statement by the President of the Republic of Turkey  
H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan  
14<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit  
(March 04 2021)**

**Honourable Heads of State and Government,  
Esteemed Ministers,  
Dear Secretary General,  
Valuable representatives of international organizations;**

I greet you with heartfelt sentiments and affection.

I am delighted to come together with you, albeit not physically, on the occasion of the 14th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

I pray to Allah that the Summit will be an occasion for beneficence for our countries, our region and whole humanity.

With this meeting, we take over the Summit Chairmanship from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as we hand over the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers, which we held for a year and a half, to Turkmenistan.

In your presence, Dear Brothers, I wish the President of Turkmenistan His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow success, and I express my gratitude to the Prime Minister of Pakistan His Excellency Imran Khan for his efforts and contributions.

**Dear Brothers;**

The COVID-19 pandemic which has turned into a global crisis has become a threat affecting all aspects of our lives. This scourge, which has so far claimed the lives of approximately 2.5 million people, has also inflicted great damage on trade and economy, as much as on health. Therefore, we have considered appropriate to hold our Summit meeting under the theme of "Regional Economic Cooperation in the Aftermath of COVID-19". We can only win the fight against this global debacle through strong solidarity, regional and international cooperation. To that end, we should make the best use of our Organization. For the sake of our common trade, no doubt, the compulsory restrictive measures must be transparent, proportional and temporary in their nature.

**Dear Brothers;**

During our Chairmanship, in line with the priorities we had announced, we have focused on strengthening the Organization and advancing regional cooperation.

We continued our work with determination despite the limitations brought about by the pandemic.

In these difficult times, as Turkey, we offered our capacity to the service of not only our citizens but of entire humanity.

We have provided medical assistance and support to 157 countries and 112 international organizations believing that "a friend in need is a friend indeed".

We have made great progress in our domestic and national vaccine development efforts.

We have significant potential to increase the commercial activities among us.

However, it is a fact that the desired level of economic cooperation could not have been achieved since the establishment of the Organization.

We must work relentlessly to achieve the 100 billion dollars intra trade target.

The implementation of Economic Cooperation Organization Trade Agreement, ECOTA, after 17 years, without further delay will be beneficial to this end.

ECOBANK, which we host in Istanbul, has become an important organization in financing ECO projects.

I consider it necessary to strengthen ECOBANK's institutional and financial capacity to meet the growing needs of the Member States.

On this occasion, I want to renew our call on the States that are not members to the Bank to consider doing so.

We have made significant progress in the field of transportation thanks to the infrastructure projects in the recent years.

We have completed Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Marmarail and Eurasia Tunnels, connecting Asia to Europe, and put them into service.

With the Osman Gazi Bridge, we have opened the Marmara Sea to traffic in North-South direction.

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, together with the Edirne-Kars high-speed train project and the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge on the Dardanelles that are all under construction, will reinforce this connection.

Under the leading hand of Turkey, our Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor Initiative, which aims at revitalizing the historical Silk Road, will enhance east-west interaction.

We are pleased that regular services have been started to China and from China to our country through this corridor.

The work on the resumption of the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad freight train services has reached its final phase.

I would like to take this opportunity to express that we deem the Belt and Road Initiative of China significant and support this initiative on a win-win basis.

Tourism and travel sector has been one of the fields where the effects of the pandemic are felt the hardest all over the world.

We have implemented a series of measures in line with the principles announced by the World Tourism Organization to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

We have already started preparations for 2021, in order for it to be a year that overcompensates the losses in our tourism industry.

We are ready to improve our cooperation with you in these sectors.

**Dear Brothers,**

It is very important to implement the ECO Vision 2025 document in order to achieve our mutual goals.

We support the establishment of the ECO Vision Fund to be used in the financing of the projects and programs envisaged in this document.

We should further embrace ECO and continue the reform process in order to transform our Organization into a result-oriented body and render it effective in the face of COVID related challenges and opportunities.

We should remind ourselves that unfortunately it would not be possible to revitalize the Organization without a strong budget.

**Esteemed friends,**

We can strengthen our economic and commercial relations through the elimination of threats to our security and stability.

Our brother Azerbaijan liberated its lands occupied by Armenia through an epic victory, opening the doors for a new era in the region.

From now on, our priority is to ensure security and stability in Nagorno-Karabakh, repair together the damage caused by 30 years of occupation by Armenia.

I believe that as an Organization we will stand in full solidarity with Azerbaijan during this process.

We hope that Armenia will become a part of regional stability through the peaceful steps.

I would like to repeat here once again that we do not and will never approve of anti-democratic interventions that disregard the will of the people.

In Afghanistan, located at the heart of Asia, a new turn has been taken to end many years of conflict and achieve peace.

The termination of the unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran and the return of all Parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and re-assuming their obligations under the Plan, will contribute to the economic prosperity and stability of our region.

In this regard, I invite all Member States to develop relations with our brothers and sisters in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in every field and to help them overcome the unjust isolation they are subjected to.

The fight against terrorism and international cooperation in this area has maintained its importance in pandemic conditions, as it has in every period.

Turkey resolutely continues its fight against terrorist organizations such as DEASH, PKK/PYD/, FETO in this period as it has in the pre-pandemic period.

Before I conclude my words with these thoughts in mind, I would like to salute each one of you for your participation.

On behalf of my country and my nation I extend my condolences to your citizens who lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I salute you all one last time with affection and respect.

I now give the floor to Secretary-General, H.E. Hadi Soleimanpour to deliver his speech.

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