

**Statement by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev
14th ECO Summit**

**Your Excellency, esteemed chairman
Distinguished chairperson, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan!
Esteemed Heads of State and Government!
Honorable Secretary General Mr. Soleimanpour!**

First and foremost, allow me sincerely felicitate all participants of the Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

I convey my deepest appreciation to His Excellency, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for his effective chairmanship of the Organization despite the pandemic and holding the high-level forum.

I extend my heartiest congratulations to His Excellency, the distinguished President Gurbanguly Malikgulyevich Berdimuhamedov, on the assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization by Turkmenistan.

I wish you great success in effectively discharging this responsible mission.
Distinguished participants of this meeting!

The Economic Cooperation Organization's space is a united region with tremendous potential and shared history, religion, culture and values.

From time immemorial, the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, trade and transport and communication have brought together our friendly countries.

It is highly symbolic that our today's Summit is taking place under the theme "Regional economic cooperation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic". Since the pandemic, which negatively impacted on the world economy, has also affected our countries.

This scourge clearly demonstrated our strengths and weaknesses, our obvious interdependence with each other and the need to further strengthen economic partnership.

In today's world, characterized by sharpening competition for technology and resources, investment and access to external markets, pooling our efforts and capacities and making the extensive use of the complementarities of our economies is acquiring increasing importance.

However, it should be noted that the trade, economic, financial, investment, transport/communications and energy opportunities available in the Organization have not been fully exploited.

In this regard, with a view to further expanding the multi-stakeholder partnership in the major areas of the "Economic Cooperation Organization 2025" Programme, I would like to put forward the following proposals:

Firstly, enhancing trade and investment linkages are undoubtedly the main drivers of economic growth.

Over recent years, Uzbekistan's overall trade volume with the Organization's member states has grown almost twice. Despite the difficult situation, last year we managed to maintain these volumes.

We firmly believe that the time has come to lift the trade and transport restrictions imposed by the member states of the Organization during the quarantine period.

Well, I think that the widespread adoption of digital technologies and electronic commerce in this area will make our trade relations much easier.

In this regard, the finalization and acceptance of the Mutual Trade Agreement proposed by Turkey should be expedited.

Secondly, the development of industrial cooperation based on the "Search for Complementarities" principle will improve the overall well-being of communities.

For implementation of this essential plan, it is advisable to outline a joint "Road Map", including specific directions and projects.

Thirdly, ensuring the free movement of funds, goods and services among member states, and expanding interbank links and financing are matters of urgency.

In particular, the revitalization of the ECO Trade and Development Bank under our Organization is of the utmost importance.

To further implement these objectives, we propose to hold in the nearest future a Banking and Financial Forum with participation of our countries' banking institutions.

Fourthly, expanding transport corridors and enhancing the transit capacity of our regions will enhance economic interaction.

We are interested in further development of "Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman", "Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China" transport corridors, as well as corridors providing access through Azerbaijan to Turkey and Europe.

In addition, the construction of the "Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar" new railway is of great importance for the integration of Afghanistan into our vast regions and for ensuring sustainable development.

In this connection, we hope to receive your support for our initiative to establish a Regional Centre for the Development of Transport and Communications Connectivity, as announced at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Fifthly, we have seen how relevant is the issue of food security during pandemic period.

We believe that it is necessary, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to develop and adopt a new food security programme for our Organization.

In this connection, we are ready to hold a regular meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Uzbekistan this year.

Sixthly, our region, rich in alternative and renewable energy sources, has great potential for developing a "green economy".

I propose to develop and adopt a Medium-term Strategy aimed at ensuring energy sustainability and the broad involvement of investment and modern technologies in this area.

Seventh, we are clearly experiencing the negative impact of environmental and global climate change issues in our region, particularly in the Aral Sea region. We need to pool our efforts to address this issue.

We consider it advisable to establish effective mechanisms for regional cooperation in this sector.

Eighth, cooperation in the health sector should be further strengthened. Unfortunately, today we are witnessing the increasingly political nature of global vaccination processes.

In this connection, experiences in joint vaccine development and utilization should be shared.

At the same time, we propose the establishment within the Organization of a system for monitoring the epidemiological situation and the advanced planning of appropriate measures.

In this regard, I declare our readiness to support the initiative of the distinguished President of Azerbaijan, H.E. Ilham Heydarovich Aliyev, to establish the Organization's Research Centre, which will conduct in-depth and comprehensive studies on all the aforesaid areas.

Esteemed participants of the meeting! In conclusion, I wish to reiterate:

There is no doubt that, together, we can bring cooperation within the Organization to the entirely new high level in the future.

Thank you for your attention!
