

**Statement by ECO Secretary General,
Ambassador Khusrav Noziri**

**Summit-level Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group
on Post-Pandemic Global Recovery
Baku, March 2, 2023**

**H.E. Ilham Aliyev, Honourable President of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Eminent Heads of Delegation,
Distinguished Participants,**

It is a distinct honour and privilege to attend and address this prestigious event in the magnificent city of Baku. I congratulate the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for convening this Summit-level Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group on Post-Pandemic Global Recovery.

The Economic Cooperation Organization commends, with deep appreciation, the Republic of Azerbaijan for successfully holding the presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement during these difficult times.

Historically, the NAM has been influential to advocate the developing countries as well as the most important and effective platform to promote unity among the member nations, which is a pre-requisite to overcome their contemporary challenges.

Excellencies,

Post-Pandemic recovery is crucial as COVID-19, with no exception, hit developed and developing countries alike, afflicting the world in unprecedented ways. The Pandemic took toll on human lives, nosedived national economies, shrank international trade, halted travel and tourism, disrupted educational system, overwhelmed health sector, laid off workers at an unforeseen scale, and hit the poor and vulnerable hardest. The cost and damage, it bore and inflicted, is beyond simple calculation.

COVID-19 manifested fault lines, transpired vulnerabilities, spotlighted the flip side of our progress, revealed the entrenched inequalities between the haves and the have-nots, exposing the vast and gruesome differences between the developed and developing world. However, no aspect of human life remained immune from the lethal impacts of the pandemic.

The Pandemic simply transfixed population across the globe. The outbreak of COVID-19 and its subsequent results offer a lesson. If we are to shield ourselves against such future tragedies and shocks, we need to be genuinely integrative and together for building back better.

Excellencies,

A lot has been done to offset the negative impacts of COVID-19. But there is still much to achieve. The developing countries continue to reel from the COVID consequences. They face perpetual poverty, existential climate crisis, life-threatening food insecurity, growing water shortage, crippling energy crisis, rapid resource depletion, humongous debt volumes, high default risk, and so on.

The developing countries are required to collectively advocate for debt restructuring to help create fiscal space to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic and achieve sustainable development.

The developing countries, being least responsible for and most vulnerable to climate change, will have to rise for securing climate finance as promised by the developed world. Post-COVID recovery would remain a wishful thinking if these immediate challenges are not addressed timely and jointly.

Excellencies,

Common and existential challenges such as climate change, transition to clean and green future, and utilizing trans-boundary resources, cannot be addressed by countries on their own. A common approach has to be adopted to better tackle emerging conventional and unconventional threats.

International cooperation and multilateralism are perhaps the best remedies to tackle all these challenges effectively. International organizations, being the strongest pillar of multilateralism, can play a monumental role in this regard. They provide platform to improve the bargaining position of its members. Their contribution is tremendous to the sustainable development of the developing countries and we consider their role highly critical to secure our progressive targets.

Excellencies,

The Economic Cooperation Organization throughout the four decades of its existence has been supporting and facilitating the process of sustainable socio-economic development in the region.

The ECO in close collaboration with its Member States took a number of steps and initiatives to dampen the shocks of the COVID-19, including the issuance of (i) a preliminary assessment concerning the potential impacts of COVID-19 on the region's economy; (ii) practical guidelines on cross-border facilitation measures to facilitate the unhindered intra-regional passage of essentially required supplies, especially food and medicines and (iii) report on regional healthcare and ICT infrastructure. Moreover, the Samarkand Declaration on Tourism Cooperation and a Roadmap on Facilitating Accelerated Recovery, Safe and Sustainable Development of Tourism were also adopted by the Organization.

Excellencies,

The inter-organizational cooperation has proved to be quite fruitful venture over the years. Non-Aligned Movement has steadily expanded its size and stature and is, today, the second largest international organization after the United Nations.

The ECO-NAM Cooperation will certainly yield dividends as both Organizations share multiple but identical areas of cooperation such as agriculture, science & technology, food security, energy & environment, etc.

I reiterate that the ECO attaches immense importance to establishing and deepening ties with the regional and international organizations and believes in multifaceted cooperation to advance the agenda of sustainable development. To that end, the ECO and the NAM may enter into mutually beneficial cooperative relations with vigorous assistance of especially Nine ECO Member States, which are also associated with the NAM one way or the other.

Before I conclude, allow me to thank the Republic of Azerbaijan for inviting me to participate in this splendid gathering. I would further like to avail this opportunity to recall and reiterate that also holding the current Chairmanship of the ECO, the Republic of Azerbaijan is a very important and active member of the Organization and has made tremendous contribution to develop and facilitate the ECO agenda of regional economic cooperation.

I believe that the outcomes of this event will help make great headways vis-à-vis post-Pandemic recovery as well as international peace and progress in line with the aspirations of NAM Leadership.

Thank you for kind attention.