

Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev,
14th ECO Summit

Thank you very much, my dear brother, dear President,

Thank you for this introduction while giving me floor.

I would like to inform all our colleagues that President Erdogan's constant support for Azerbaijan not only during the war, but throughout the time he is President and leader of Turkey played very important role in the liberation of Azerbaijani territories.

Turkey is our brother. Turkey is our great ally. And people of Azerbaijan are happy to have such an ally.

People of Azerbaijan and of Turkey and I am sure many people around the world clearly know the historic role of President Erdogan in not only transforming Turkey into one of the strongest centers of power in the world but also in providing security to the region.

Turkey plays an outstanding role in providing security and stability in a broader region. And as I many times said and want to say once again that the stronger Turkey is, the stronger is Azerbaijan and all its partners.

Mr. Chairman, My dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General,

First of all, I would like to express once again my gratitude to President Erdogan, President Ashraf Ghani, Prime Minister Imran Khan, my dear brothers for kind words of congratulations during their speech with respect to the victory and the restoration of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

I would like to commend the brotherly Turkey for its successful chairmanship in the Economic Cooperation Organization. I wish every success to the brotherly Turkmenistan for assuming ECO chairmanship.

Azerbaijan pays big importance to its relations with ECO Member States. Today, we will sign the charter of ECO Research Center. We are grateful to Member States for supporting the initiative of the late President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev and we will do our utmost for the efficient functioning of the Center based in Azerbaijan.

In 2020 Azerbaijan put an end to nearly 30 years of occupation of its territories by Armenia through military-political means. The military victory won over Armenia on the battlefield was also fully accomplished by political ways.

The United Nations Security Council resolutions of 1993 demanding immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from occupied territories of Azerbaijan remained on paper for 27 years. Azerbaijan itself ensured the implementation of these resolutions and restored its territorial integrity. The invaders were thrown away from ancient Azerbaijani lands of Karabakh. The armed forces of Armenia were fully destroyed within 44 days. Azerbaijan forced Armenia to sign act of capitulation on 10 November 2020.

The first country to support Azerbaijan during the war was the brotherly Turkey. We highly appreciate the statements of my dear brother Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey and his political and moral support.

On the 27th and 28th of September of the last year on the first and second days of the war brotherly Pakistan and Afghanistan called Armenia to put an end to its occupation, implement the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and expressed their support to territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

I express my deep gratitude to them for their support.

I also thank heads of state and government who supported us during the war.

During the time of occupation Armenia deliberately destroyed cities and villages, all cultural and religious sites of Azerbaijan in the occupied territories. Our mosques were used as stables for pigs and cows. Photos and video footages of these scenes are available in the internet. This is animosity against the whole Islamic world. International media has documented the facts of deliberate destruction and desecration of cultural and religious heritage of Azerbaijani people.

Attempts of Armenia, which insulted the feelings of all Muslims, to strengthen its relations with Islamic countries are therefore nothing but hypocrisy.

Azerbaijan has made valuable contribution to the solidarity among Islamic countries. We have called Muslim states for unity at numerous international forums.

Azerbaijan strongly condemns all attempts to associate Islam with violence and terror. We must combat Islamophobia and promote true values of Islam - peace, tolerance, justice. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to designate 15 March as an International Day to Combat Islamophobia upon the initiative of the brotherly Pakistan.

Now we have a huge task in front of us - reconstruction of the liberated territories. We will rebuild our cities and villages; restore the cultural and religious heritage in the liberated territories.

Azerbaijan was among the first countries to mobilize global efforts against COVID-19 pandemic. Azerbaijan initiated the Summit of the Turkic Council, the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, two international institutions which we are now chairing and the Special Session of the UN General Assembly at the level of the heads of state and government last year. These initiatives once again demonstrated our commitment to international solidarity and cooperation.

From the beginning of the pandemic, we are closely working with the World Health Organization. We have made voluntary contributions to the World Health Organization in the amount of 10 million US dollars. Azerbaijan has provided humanitarian and financial assistance to more than 30 countries in relation to corona virus.

Azerbaijan launched vaccination campaign on 18 January. We are among the first in the region to start vaccination.

We condemn unequal and unfair distribution of vaccines among developing and developed countries. Some countries purchase several times more vaccines vis-à-vis

their actual needs. It is clear that in such circumstances, some countries will face vaccine shortage.

Azerbaijan is planning to initiate a draft resolution on behalf of the NAM at the UN Human Rights Council on this matter and I invite ECO member states to support this initiative.

Azerbaijan is an important partner in providing energy security in Eurasia. The Southern Gas Corridor was commissioned on 31 December 2020. 3500 km long Southern Gas Corridor connecting 7 countries is one of the biggest energy infrastructure projects in the world.

Azerbaijan participates actively in regional connectivity projects, such as East-West, North-South, North-West transportation corridors, becoming one of Eurasia's main and reliable transportation and logistics hubs. Together with our partners we connected Azerbaijan's transport infrastructure with Lapis Lazuli transport corridor and created broad opportunities for multilateral cooperation in the area of transportation.

As I already mentioned, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict ended after the glorious victory of Azerbaijan over Armenia. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was left in the past.

Now we are looking into the future. With the aim of providing the peace and stability in the region, we have started discussing transportation projects connecting a number of states. Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran share the same vision for the implementation of the regional transportation projects. Armenia can also benefit from the process if behaves in normal way.

In this context, the new connectivity corridor which will pass through historic Azerbaijani land of Zangazur and link mainland Azerbaijan with its inseparable part Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Turkey will create new opportunities in the transportation sector in the region. We invite ECO member states to benefit from the "Zangazur corridor".

Thank you for your attention.
