

**Statement by the President of Turkmenistan
H.E. Ghurbanguly Berdimuhamedov
14th ECO Summit
(March 04, 2021)**

Distinguished Mr. Chairman!

Distinguished Heads of State!

Distinguished Secretary-General!

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the esteemed President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for organizing this Summit.

I would like to highlight and thank him for the successful and effective chairmanship of Turkey in the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Distinguished Heads of State!

Turkmenistan regards today's meeting as an important stage in the work of our Organization, both in terms of assessing and analyzing progress made and identifying prospects for the future. In general, I think we can note progressive nature of activity of the Economic Cooperation Organization and its positive impact on the course of regional partnership.

Today, ECO is a major and reputable international structure that is recognized worldwide. Over the years of Organization's existence, various agreements and decisions have been reached among the member countries on priority issues of interstate cooperation.

A lot of work has been done to prepare viable strategy aimed at using our great common potential for the mutual benefit and socio-economic growth.

A number of joint projects have been launched, among which I would like to emphasize projects in the transport and communication spheres, which play an important role in economic life of region today. The member states continue to take measures for effective development of regional trade, economic and investment relations.

The most important factor in the activity of our Organization is that it continues to distinctly follow the principles and goals laid down at its foundation almost thirty years ago when the Economic Cooperation Organization was enlarged with new members and formed its current membership. I am referring to the fact that ECO has maintained its focus as an instrument of economic cooperation, free from any political situation, and has expanded its ties with outside world.

And today ECO actively goes beyond regional boundaries by developing cooperation with other international organizations and many countries.

Being the ECO member-countries we can rightly consider all these achievements as our joint positive asset. But time does not stand still; it requires us to develop new

approaches to Organization's activities, taking into account current realities, trends in the world economy and direction of regional processes. In this regard, ECO is entrusted with great tasks corresponding to the specifics of our Organization and its unique geo-economic significance.

Here I would like to stress the unifying essence of ECO as a mechanism of an economic partnership of States united by geography, history, traditions and values, as a natural format for the implementation of joint projects based on our objective advantages and common interests.

Therefore, the main task of ECO today, in our opinion, is to ensure sustainable development in the region by economic means and to create opportunities for broad and constructive economic cooperation in the name of peace and prosperity. Because ECO has necessary potential not only to participate in global and regional economic processes but also to actively impact the trends in their development.

This is how Turkmenistan is considering its forthcoming chairmanship in ECO. I express my deep gratitude to all member states for the trust placed in our country. We view our chairmanship as a responsible and high mission, and we will make every effort to make it successful, effective in the interests of all members.

And now allow me to introduce you with main priorities of Turkmenistan's chairmanship in the coming period.

Our strategic goal is to promote comprehensive cooperation within the ECO framework in the economy, trade, industry, energy, transport and communications, as well as cultural and humanitarian spheres.

We intend to work with our partners to create conditions for further intensification of trade and economic relations between our countries. We aim to increase the volume of trade turnover and develop it through diversification.

To this end, Turkmenistan proposes to initiate the establishment of economic corridors in the ECO region.

We see them as a system of sustainable main routes for the movement of goods, services and investments. We believe that the most important component of this system of economic corridors is industrial cooperation, integration of production and technological potentials of our countries, and access to joint major infrastructure projects.

It is obvious that transport and communications are to play a key role in realizing the goals of economic development of ECO countries and their full participation in modern processes.

We see the ECO as a space network of convenient, cost-effective, high-tech transport and communication centers and routes in the Eurasian continent.

Our countries have a number of successfully implemented projects in this sector. As the most recent examples we can mention commissioning of a power transmission line Kerki (Turkmenistan) - Shibergan (Afghanistan), opening of 30-km railway section between Akina-Andkhoy stations in Afghanistan, launching International fiber-optic communication system on the route Imamnazar (Turkmenistan) - Akina

(Afghanistan) and Serhetabat (Turkmenistan) - Turgundi (Afghanistan), which were held in January this year.

We propose to consider implementing such large-scale and multilateral projects in different areas with participation of other ECO countries.

Creation of transport corridors and logistics centers is of particular importance today. Therefore, I believe that it is necessary to intensify ECOs project activities in this area and to identify the most promising schemes and routes.

In this regard, we propose to pay special attention to combined transport corridors along the East-West line, from the Asia-Pacific region to the European part of the continent and the Middle East.

We also suggest expanding cooperation in the Caspian Sea region. Because four out of five Caspian Sea states are members of ECO. With this in mind, we should actively move west and north across the Caspian Sea, to the ports of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea.

We also consider it important to establish energy corridors in ECO region and to diversify energy supplies with participation of our states. At present Turkmenistan together with its partners is constructing (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline. This is an example of fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Work is underway on the implementation of a project of power supply along the route (Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan) and (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan Pakistan).

However, I am confident that we need additional energy corridors, both within ECO region and beyond its borders.

We believe that in this regard our Organization could establish a focused dialogue with other interstate organizations of the continent such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Strategic interests of these organizations could be in line with those of ECO on a mutually beneficial and equal basis.

Separately, I would like to emphasize the great importance that Turkmenistan attaches to economic revival of Afghanistan as the most important factor in establishing lasting peace and harmony on Afghan land. We have been providing and will continue to assist this brotherly country in the restoration of its economy, energy supply, transport and communications systems, and in the construction of social facilities. We see a strategic perspective for Afghanistan in its close integration into regional and continental economic ties as a participant in significant joint projects in industry, energy, transport, communications, and logistics.

As Chairman of ECO, Turkmenistan intends to actively promote expansion of cultural, sports, educational, youth and tourism relations in the spirit of friendship, brotherhood, commitment to common moral and ethical values that unite our peoples and states. In this regard, we propose to pay special attention to cooperation

in the field of science and medicine, exchange of experience and knowledge in the fight against the corona virus pandemic.

Distinguished participants of the Summit!

Turkmenistan considers ECO as one of the factors of positive development of regional processes and sees in our Organization a promising potential for implementation of national economic growth programs of member countries.

At the same time, we understand that our common task is to effectively use the opportunities of ECO for well-being and prosperity of states and peoples, peace and progress in the region. As a Chairman of ECO, Turkmenistan will make every effort to achieve these goals.

In conclusion of my speech, I would like to propose holding the next Summit of the Heads of State of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Ashgabat on November 28, 2021, on the Day of Economic Cooperation Organization and, esteemed colleagues, I invite you all to visit the capital of Turkmenistan to participate in this meeting.

Thank you for your attention.
