

Speech by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan at the meeting of the Senior Officials of the Economic Cooperation Organization

Dear Heads of Delegation,
Participants of today's meeting,

Let me express my gratitude to the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for the excellent organization of today's meeting of ECO Senior Officials.

Turkmenistan regards the current meeting as an important stage in the activities of our Organization in the context of assessing and analyzing the path traveled and determining the prospects for the future. I believe that on the whole, we can characterize the work of the Economic Cooperation Organization as intensive, positively affecting regional cooperation.

Today the ECO is a large and authoritative international structure recognized in the world, over the years of which various agreements have been concluded between its members and decisions have been made on priority issues of interstate partnership.

Here I want to emphasize the role of the ECO as a form of economic interaction between states united geographically, historically, by traditional customs and values.

As everyone knows, on March 4, 2021, the chairmanship of the ECO passed to Turkmenistan. The chairmanship was carried out in accordance with the fundamental documents of the ECO and was aimed at the consistent implementation of previously adopted international treaties and decisions, saturation of the substantive part of the cooperation agenda.

As you know, the Turkmen side has prepared the Concept of the Chairmanship of Turkmenistan in the ECO for 2021. It identifies a number of key objectives. Among them, the intensification of investment activities in the ECO member countries, the creation of free trade and economic zones, the formation of new economic corridors, including trade, transport and logistics, energy, with an emphasis on ensuring stable international cargo transportation in emergency situations, establishing partnerships in the field sustainable energy, including renewable energy sources.

We have clear guidance for achieving these goals through the ECO Vision 2025, which is an important document.

Over the past period, the ECO member countries have done significant work for the proper implementation of programs and plans developed in accordance with the "ECO Vision until 2025".

Although the development of intraregional trade has been one of the constant and important goals of ECO throughout the organization's existence, the successes have been less than expected and they have proved to be difficult to achieve. In 2020, foreign trade between the 10 member countries accounted for only 8.3% of \$ 484 billion. Moreover, the global pandemic crisis has worsened the intraregional trade profile over the past two years.

At the 14th Summit of the Organization for Economic Cooperation held on March 4, 2021, the heads of state and government of the ECO member states reflected their vision of the ECO's work and discussed proposals for its further development, Turkmenistan in its Concept recommended to revise this document in order to harmonize it with new ideas and proposals. To this end, the ECO Secretariat has now created a special working group that carefully analyzes and makes valuable proposals on this document in order to meet our common expectations.

The implementation of a number of joint projects has begun, among which I would like to highlight projects in the transport and communications sector, which today plays a key role in the economic life of the region. The member states of the Organization also continue to take measures for the effective development of trade, economic and investment relations in the region.

The Turkmen side, together with partners, is carrying out concrete work to create conditions for the further intensification of trade and economic relations between our countries, and are aimed at increasing the volume and diversification of trade.

To this end, Turkmenistan has begun work on the creation of economic routes in the ECO region, which we regard as the main stable system that ensures the movement of goods and services, the development of investments. We see industrial cooperation, the consolidation of production and technological potential and the implementation of large joint infrastructure projects as key aspects of the economy.

Since we consider the ECO space as a system of optimal, cost-effective and high-tech transport and communication hubs and routes on the Eurasian continent.

In this direction, our countries have successfully implemented a number of projects. The most recent examples of this are the launch in January of this year of a power transmission line along the Kerki (Turkmenistan) - Shibargan (Afghanistan) route, the opening of a 30-kilometer railway line between the Akina - Andkhoy stations in Afghanistan, the commissioning of an international line fiber-optic communication along the route Imamnazar (Turkmenistan) - Akina (Afghanistan), as well as Serhetabat (Turkmenistan) - Turgundi (Afghanistan).

We propose to consider the implementation of similar ambitious and multilateral projects in various fields with the participation of other ECO countries.

We also consider the creation of energy clusters in the ECO space, the diversification of energy supplies with the participation of our states as a key task, At present, Turkmenistan, together with partners, is building the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, which is an example of optimal and mutually beneficial cooperation.

As you know, today in the afternoon the ECO Business Forum starts with the participation of representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and other heads of the CCIs of the ECO member countries.

If we talk about the prospects for our cooperation within the ECO, one of the most urgent tasks is the development of transport and economic corridors in Eurasia, Turkmenistan attaches great importance to the development of transport communications and multimodal logistics and supports the efforts of the ECO in this

direction.

It is gratifying to note that within the framework of this event, it is planned to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the KTI corridor (Kazakhstan- Turkmenistan- Iran) to create a mechanism for managing the corridors, with the participation of the heads of railway administrations of 3 countries.

Turkmenistan has been an observer at the World Trade Organization since July last year, which is an important step in strengthening trade ties. In this regard, we share the proposals for expanding our trade relations in the ECO region, comprehensively promoting mutual exchanges in this area and eliminating trade barriers.

I am sure that the exchange of views within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization will become another important step in deepening understanding of the processes taking place in our region, will contribute to joint efforts in solving today's challenges and outline plans for cooperation for the future.

It should be noted that in 2016, at the expense of its own resources and funds, Turkmenistan completed and put into operation the Kerki-Tmamnazar-Akina railway with a length of 88 kilometers, In July 2019, the opening ceremony of the 10-kilometer railway line at Akina station took place, and in parallel, construction began on the 35-kilometer Akin-Andkhoy railway line.

We urge you to seriously consider the possibilities of active participation of the ECO member states in these corridors.

In conclusion of my speech, I would like to emphasize that economic cooperation within the ECO should also be carried out through the use of cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Dear participants.

The Turkmen side is firmly convinced that effective regional economic cooperation in our countries, based on the principles of sustainability, interconnectedness and mutual respect, should become a factor in the development of the region's organization.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all of you on the upcoming celebration of our organization (ECO Day), which we will celebrate in the near future.

I would like to wish you all good health and great success to all the participants in today's meeting.

Thank you for the attention!