

SPEECH
of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan at the
25th meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers

Good morning your Excellences,

Members of delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me warmly welcome you in Turkmenistan and express my gratitude for your participation in this meeting. During our today's meeting we will discuss most important areas of our cooperation in order to strengthen our organization as powerful economic center, and to propose concrete measures for further development of our partnership.

As you know, in accordance with Concept of Chairmanship of Turkmenistan in ECO for 2021, a number of key tasks have been identified. Amongst them is increase of investment activities in the member countries; creation of free trade and economic zones; formation of new economic corridors, including trade, transport, logistics and energy channels, with accent on ensuring stable international cargo transportation in emergency situations; as well as establishing partnerships in the field of sustainable energy, including renewable energy sources.

At the same time, comprehensive support and promotion of cooperation in the fields of science, education and sports, scientific research in the fight against coronavirus pandemic, as well as expansion of interaction in agriculture, food security and other fields remains priority for ECO member states.

Fulfillment of these tasks requires establishment of appropriate coordination mechanisms; creation and provision of favorable political conditions in ECO; and constructive atmosphere of cooperation.

As you know, the volume of trade in ECO region in 2020 was equal to 49.8 (*forty-nine point eight*) billion US dollars. Of course this indicator cannot satisfy us. We

also are falling behind in integration interaction, which has certain negative impact on economic development of each member state.

We understand that level and quality of our cooperation was influenced by global economic crisis, pandemic restrictions and number of other factors. And we highly appreciate that ECO countries in current conditions made concrete efforts to implement number of large infrastructure projects, established new transport routes and additional platforms for economic dialogue.

These efforts must be further increased in order to provide ECO in near future with strong and stable position in highly competitive structure of Eurasian economic space.

I believe that our states have good prospects to achieve this goal. Here we attach great importance to "ECO Vision until 2025", considering it as basic document, which outlines general direction of our cooperation in medium term. At the same time, in its Concept of Chairmanship, Turkmenistan recommended adapting it to new ideas and proposals based on speeches of the Heads of ECO member states, which were made during 14th ECO Summit. To this end, ECO Secretariat has now created special Working Group, which carefully evaluates and makes valuable proposals in this context. We expect substantive and effective work of this group.

Clear priority of ECO activities is cooperation in the transport sector. Regional infrastructure of transit traffic, corridors and routes in ECO space should be optimized, expanded geographically and technologically. The goal is to achieve complete and integral participation of ECO in the system of transport and transit communication along "East-West" and "South-North" lines, between regions of Caspian and Black Seas with access to Europe and Middle East.

In this context, it is necessary to strengthen work on implementation of "Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman", "Afghanistan-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey" and "Caspian Sea - Black Sea" corridors. In this regard, we are ready for practical discussion of providing Turkmenistan's port facilities in the Caspian Sea for the interests of ECO.

Turkmenistan initiated and supported implementation of large infrastructure projects in partnership with ECO countries through active participation in regional and interregional projects.

Large-scale work is carried out to increase volume and expand geography of electricity export. Construction of 153 kilometers long Kerki-Shibergan power transmission line, which was completed earlier this year, is a part of "Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan" power transmission line project, aimed at creating infrastructure for the export and import of electricity between three countries.

Currently, the construction of railway lines from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan is underway. The construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline is also going on in full speed.

Information and communication technologies is another area of cooperation with great potential in ECO region.

As successful example in this field, we can mention cooperation of Turkmenistan with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in implementation of Trans-Caspian Fiber-Optic cable connection for creation of broad-band communications. It will also help digitize trade across ECO region.

An important component of successful integration of ECO into modern system of world economic relations is strengthening its partnership with United Nations. As you know, by initiative of Turkmenistan, the UN General Assembly in September this year adopted Resolution named "Cooperation between United Nations and Economic Cooperation Organization". This is first, but very important step towards systematic and focused interaction with UN and its agencies. We propose that ECO states, based on this document, may develop Action Plan in order to receive political and diplomatic support in UN for our projects, to involve all interested states, international financial and economic institutions for their realization.

In this regard ECO Secretariat is called to play important role in achieving these goals. I would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to esteemed Khusraw Noziri and his staff for joint work during Chairmanship of Turkmenistan and for

preparations of this meeting.

While highly appreciating competence and dedication of Secretariat, we believe that its team should keep up with current times and work in accordance with today's requirements and standards, introduce innovative methods and work more actively to increase its effectiveness and results. We are ready to provide all kinds of support in this.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all of you on the occasion of the Day of Organization of Economic Cooperation, and to express our confidence in great prospects of our organization, its potential, readiness and aspiration to work together to achieve goals for the benefit of our peoples and countries.

Thank you for attention.