

**National Statement by
H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Azerbaijan
at the 27th Meeting of the Ministers
of Foreign Affairs of the Economic
Cooperation Organization**

Shusha, October 10, 2023

Distinguished participants,

Since last meeting of the Council of Ministers, a number of high-level meetings of ECO have been held and important decisions have been taken in various areas. During its Chairmanship, the Republic of Azerbaijan hosted high level ECO events, including the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Health in Geneva, the 9th Meeting of the Council of the Head of Customs Administrations and the 4th Meeting of Attorneys/ Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States in Baku.

During our Chairmanship tenure, we have also held the 25th Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers and the 15th ECO-ASEAN joint Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of the High-level Week of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that such gatherings will further contribute to stimulating closer engagement with other regional and global partners.

As the ECO Chair, Azerbaijan has initiated a biennial resolution on “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization” which

was adopted by the 77th session of the UNGA on August 25, 2023. This year's resolution which went through an active negotiation process among ECO countries and other UN Member States, has been updated to reflect the current developments and trends in our regional cooperation agenda. We believe that this resolution will be an important reference point and follow-up tool in our engagement with UN institutions and other partners. We thank all Member States for their active contribution to this process.

Azerbaijan attaches utmost importance to strengthening educational, cultural and scientific linkages among the Member States and fostering the ECO's Specialized Agencies in these fields. As the host of the ECO Clean Energy Center we maintained active dialogue with UNIDO and other partners to enable all necessary conditions towards process on operationalization of this Center to be headquartered in Azerbaijan.

Once again, I would like to invite all our esteemed member states to be the part of this important initiative and to sign the Charter of the Center. Once up and running, the Center will act as a regional hub for facilitating green energy projects of the Member States.

Connectivity represents another important area of cooperation for boosting economic growth and prosperity within the ECO. We welcome the recent developments with respect to the establishment of transport communications between the Eastern Zangezur economic region of Azerbaijan

and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Soonest finalization of infrastructural projects and operationalization of this route will serve to mutually beneficial cooperation between these two ECO member-states, and will also add a new artery of connectivity to boost the transport and transit potential of entire ECO region.

Today's Meeting features special Treaty Event for those Member States that have expressed interest and are ready to sign ECO legal instruments, including the Charter of the ECO Research Center hosted by Azerbaijan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Throughout past three years, Azerbaijan has been continuously drawing the attention of the international community to the imminent threat posed by continuing illegal military presence on our sovereign territory.

Unfortunately, all our efforts to address this issue through dialogue proved to be ineffective in view of Armenia's destructive position, which was further emboldened by lack of adequate

reaction by involved international players.

In response to increased military and political provocations culminated with the brutal killing of 6 Azerbaijani citizens over a single in explosions of mines planted by Armenia's subversive groups, Azerbaijan started local anti-terrorism measures. In a span of less than 24 hours Armenia and its subordinate illegal separatist regime were forced to disarm and disband.

The Government of Azerbaijan has now mobilized its resources to promptly address the humanitarian needs of civilians on the ground. The working group led by Deputy Prime Minister was established and coordinates the efforts for addressing issues related to social welfare, humanitarian assistance, economic recovery, and infrastructure rehabilitation in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan.

The Government has also declared the plans for reintegration that includes security, municipal self-governance, socio-economic development and enjoyment of rights, in particular those related to education, culture and religion.

In view of Azerbaijan's such systematic and consistent steps, all the accusations of Armenia and some other third-parties on the so-called "ethnic cleansing" are false and groundless. Public testimonies of hundreds of local residents effectively nullify all the allegations on forced movement of part of the Armenian residents.

The UN mission to the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan also concluded that it did not come across any reports – neither from the local population interviewed nor from the interlocutors - of incidences of violence against civilians following the counter-terror measures. The team saw no damage to civilian public infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and housing, or to cultural and religious structures.

Despite all the efforts of Armenia to obstruct Azerbaijan's reintegration efforts, we are fully determined to move in the path of reintegrating ethnic Armenian residents as our equal citizens. Azerbaijan with its proud history of multiculturalism is fully capable and willing to accommodate its Armenian residents within its model of peaceful co-existence model.

Dear Colleagues,

The end of occupation of territories of Azerbaijan and restoration of our full sovereignty open new perspective for eventual normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including for the earliest conclusion of the peace treaty.

Peace is really within reach after 30 years of bloody conflict. We hope that this unique chance for full regional normalization will not be missed again.

Normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders will not only benefit these countries. This will also be a significant game changer in the South Caucasus and broader Eurasia and pave the way for utilizing the untapped potential for cooperation and prosperity.

Azerbaijan has continuously confirmed its readiness to move in the path of normalization and expects Armenia to duly reciprocate.

I thank you.