

**Statement of the
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan
Sirojiddin Muhridin at the 27th meeting of the
Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of
Economic Cooperation Organization
(October 10, 2023, Shusha)**

Dear Chairman,
Honorable Ministers of Foreign Affairs,
Secretary General,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Republic of Azerbaijan for warm hospitality and organization of today's meeting.

I believe that this meeting will be another important step in strengthening position of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the region and lay a solid foundation for the further expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation in priority areas between its members.

Cooperation with ECO, both on a bilateral basis with its member states and within the organization itself, is one of the priority directions of our foreign policy.

Increasing interaction within the framework of our organization in various areas of cooperation will undoubtedly contribute to addressing regional issues related to sustainable development and countering contemporary challenges.

This point is especially important in the current circumstances, when the world is experiencing unprecedented political and economic transformations, that force each of us to look for ways of reducing the negative impact of such shifts on development of our countries and create an economic model that will be quite immune to the negative impact of external shocks.

Tajikistan supports the ECO initiatives, as well as the areas of cooperation stipulated in the ECO-Vision 2025.

We are glad to see the establishment of transit corridors between different ECO-countries and welcome the signed agreement on the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway, which stands as a connecting link of the broader international North-South corridor. The commissioning of this section will significantly increase the transit potential of the ECO region and will contribute to the development of regional trade. In addition, this road, as well as the activation of other ECO transit corridors, will expedite to the building of integrated transport system.

At the same time, Tajikistan is actively involved in development of other routes, including the multimodal corridor “Tajikistan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-(TUTIT)”. Taking into account the importance of China's participation in this corridor, in September of this year, with the support of the Secretariat we initiated the first meeting of high-level experts on this corridor in the framework of ECO + China. At the result of this meeting there were adopted a report and a plan of actions, which lay down a roadmap for future implementation of this project.

Activation of this corridor as well as Trans-Caspian route will also increase transit potential in the East-West direction, connecting Asia and Europe through ECO region.

Dear colleagues,

In spite of the current situation in Afghanistan and weak infrastructure there, we are engaged in transit trade with South Asian states. Engaging Afghanistan in transit trade is crucial as part of our support to assist this country to reduce poverty and solve its social economics needs. In this regard, Tajikistan continue providing humanitarian assistance and its infrastructure as well as 6 (six) bridges on the border to support the Afghanistan citizens.

Dear participants,

In modern conditions, the formation of a “green economy” has become one of the urgent tasks of humanity. In our country, 98% of electricity is produced from renewable sources, that is, hydropower, and according to this indicator, Tajikistan ranks sixth in the world. Effective and rational use of Tajikistan's tremendous hydropower resources can provide a favorable ground for the development of “green energy” generation throughout the region.

Therefore, systematic implementation of goals of the ECO Strategy for Energy Cooperation 2030 will assist to meet the growing energy needs of the region and diversify energy sources. This aspect is very important for the transition to a sustainable energy on the background of future global energy security architecture, volatility in hydrocarbon markets and negative impact of climate change. It is important to create an infrastructure network for the supply of energy sources, as well as the creation of a single electricity market for stable operation of the electricity grid, reducing the expenditures related to supply of electricity and its cost itself.

I am glad to emphasize that we will soon be able to launch a unified energy system of Central Asia. Work on this project in close cooperation with our neighboring countries is being successfully completed. This energy network will play an important role in ensuring energy reliability in Central Asia, and its further expansion through establishment of the Regional Electricity Market – ECO REM will significantly increase the potentials of ECO regions as well.

As you may be aware, given the great importance of industry in the country's further development, the President of Tajikistan H.E.Mr.Emomali Rahmon declared 2022-2026 as the years of industrialization. In this regard, we are ready to consider and provide more favorable climate, based on investment agreements for building of industrial clusters and parks.

With a view to the significant economic power, huge human and natural resources, we firmly believe that our Organization will use its vast potential for sustainable development of our countries, as well as to the benefit of all our nations.

In today's rapidly changing world situation with its precarious economic conditions, ECO must look ahead to emerging challenges and take efficient steps to address them.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Tajikistan has always been and remains adherent to the objectives of ECO and will continue to support this Organization towards the achievements of its goals. Once again, I would like to congratulate the host country on successful chairmanship of the ECO, and wish every success to our Iranian friends, to whom the baton of chairmanship in our organization for 2024 is being passed through.

Thank you for your attention.