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Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the 16th Summit of Economic Cooperation Organization gets underway in Tashkent

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- Distinguished Shavkat Miromonovich,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished participants of the Summit,

I would like to express my gratitude to President of brotherly Uzbekistan Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev for the warm hospitality.

A successful strategic partnership is developing between Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Last year, I paid one state and two working visits to Uzbekistan. On my every visit, I witness the socio-economic development resulting from the implementation of comprehensive reforms carried out in Uzbekistan. I congratulate the leadership of Uzbekistan on these accomplishments.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev's first state visit after his re-election as the President of Uzbekistan was undertaken to Azerbaijan. It once again demonstrates how deep brotherly relations between our two countries are.

Azerbaijan as an ECO member actively engages in the organization's work. ECO Council of Ministers was hosted by Shusha last month. Yesterday, the Azerbaijani people were celebrating the third anniversary of the liberation of Shusha after almost 30 year-long Armenian occupation.

Azerbaijan's transport-logistics infrastructure is accessible to the ECO Member States. In recent years, Azerbaijan has invested billions of US dollars in its transportation infrastructure. East-West and North-South Transport Corridors passing through Azerbaijan has turned our country into one of the transport and logistics hubs in Eurasia. The construction of Azerbaijani sections of both corridors have already been completed. Currently, works are underway to expand the cargo handling capacities of the rail roads along these two corridors.

In the last 20 years, more than 310 billion US dollars have been invested in Azerbaijan's economy, around 200 billion US dollars of which being invested in the non-energy sector. This is an indicator of a good investment climate in our country.

We note with appreciation that Azerbaijan has been chosen as a host country for the ECO Clean Energy Center.

Particular focus is placed on the development of renewable energy sector in Azerbaijan. In addition to its rich oil and gas reserves, Azerbaijan also has 37 gigawatts of onshore wind and solar power and 157 gigawatts of wind energy potential in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea.

In the near future, Azerbaijan will also turn into a green and hydrogen energy exporter. The contracts and Memorandums of Understanding signed with the foreign investors - the leading green energy companies of the world, will enable Azerbaijan to produce renewable energy up to 10 gigawatts in the coming years.

This October, the 230-megawatt Garadagh Solar Power Plant was inaugurated in Azerbaijan. Developed by Masdar company, it is the largest solar power plant in the Caspian and the Caucasus regions.

From 2021 to 2023, hydropower plants with the capacity of 170 megawatts have been built in the liberated Karabakh and East Zangezur. By the end of 2024, the plants are expected to generate 270 megawatts of electricity. Within couple of years, overall capacity of the hydropower plants in the territories liberated from the Armenian occupation are to reach 500 megawatts.

For almost 30 years Armenia kept around 20% of the territories of Azerbaijan under military occupation. As a result of ethnic cleansing carried out by Armenia, more than one million Azerbaijanis were expelled from their ancestral lands becoming refugees and internally displaced persons.

In the Patriotic War of 2020, Azerbaijan using its legitimate right of self-defense under the UN Charter, defeated Armenia on the battlefield and itself enforced the implementation of 4 UN Security Council resolutions of 1993 that had remained on paper for 27 years.

During the years of occupation, Armenia wiped out 9 Azerbaijani cities and hundreds of villages. The Islamic cultural and historic heritage of our people was destroyed, namely 65 mosques out of 67 were razed to the ground. The remaining two were desecrated being used as stables for keeping cows and pigs.

As a result of the one-day anti-terror operation carried out on 19-20 September this year, Azerbaijan put an end to the illegal separatist regime in Karabakh and subsequently fully restored its sovereignty over its internationally recognized territory. We restored our territorial integrity and sovereignty by use of force and in line with international law and the UN Charter, and feel proud of that.

I am grateful to the ECO Member States that have already congratulated Azerbaijan on our historic victory.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan is determined to further strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the ECO Member States, and we express our readiness to host the next ECO Summit.

Thank you.

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