

**English Translation**

**Statement by**

**H.E. Mr. Seyed Ebrahim Raisi**

**The Honorable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

**at**

**16<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit**

**Tashkent- 9 November 2023**

**In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful**

*All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all universes, and blessings be upon our  
Master and Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), his pure family and chosen  
companions*

**My Dear Brother, Your Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the  
Honorable President of Uzbekistan,**

**Distinguished Heads of State, Prime Ministers and Senior Officials,**

Visiting Uzbekistan and meeting the honorable officials and hospitable people of this country has always been pleasant for me. At the outset, I would like to congratulate your Excellency on your appointment as the chairman of the 16<sup>th</sup> Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit, and sincerely thank you for hosting this important meeting.

I would also like to acknowledge with great appreciation the presence of honourable Presidents, Prime Ministers and other dignitaries from the ECO Member States at this significant regional meeting and extend my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Khusrav Noziri, the honorable ECO Secretary General and his colleagues.

**Dear Participants,**

This meeting is convened while it is for over a month that the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip have been subjected to the most severe bombardments by the occupying and racist regime of Israel. Till now, more than 10,000 Palestinians, including over 4300 children and 2800 women, have lost their lives in the largest genocide of the century in Gaza, while the existing international systems, including the United Nations Security Council, have failed and been unable to confront the heinous crimes of the Zionist regime.

The horrific crimes of the Zionist regime in attacking hospitals, schools, universities, and the Jabalia refugee camp, resulting in the martyrdom and injury of hundreds of defenseless patients, the wounded and refugees, revealed the aggressive nature of this regime and was a clear

manifestation of genocide and crimes against humanity. Enjoying political, financial, military and intelligent supports by the United States and some European countries, the child-killing army of the Zionist regime continues its war machine against the innocent people of Palestine. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the all-out support of the western countries, led by the United States, for the Zionist aggression to Gaza is the reason for the continuation of these crimes. It is now evident to the entire world that the U.S. is an accomplice to the Zionists' crimes and its hands are soaked in the blood of the Palestinian people.

Millions-strong demonstrations in different parts of the world indicate that Palestine rests at the hearts of the nations. Today, supporting Palestine and the oppressed people of Gaza is a measure of dignity for nations and the states supporting the Israeli regime are the most disgraceful creatures on earth. The ongoing massacre and crimes have unsettled all genuine and free individuals, and its dimensions and consequences will not remain limited to the west Asia region.

Today, stopping the attacks and delivering humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza is one of the most important priorities. We expect all free and justice-seeking people worldwide to capitalize all their capacities to stop these crimes. We believe that escalation of Zionist regime's crimes will further complicate the situation in Palestine and the whole region. The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines the urgent need for cessation of attacks and massacres, facilitating international aid to Gaza and lifting the Gaza siege.

I would like to ask you kindly to observe one-minute silence to honor the memory of thousands of innocent Palestinian martyred women and children and recite al-Fatihah for their departed souls.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Distinguished Participants,**

Since the last ECO Summit in November 2021 in Ashgabat, we have witnessed the continuation of regional cooperation in various fields. Our assessment of the collaboration process is positive, and we have seen increasing interest among the Member States in strengthening regional relations within the ECO frameworks. This is in line with our longstanding and intrinsic belief to reinforce the ECO. We believe that the ECO remains the most relevant and mature mechanism for economic cooperation in our region. The unique potentials for collaboration within the ECO have been established based on robust foundations such as a large and flourishing population, abundant natural and energy resources, exceptional geographical location, and, more importantly, a vibrant culture and common identity.

The strong determination of all ECO Member States to create a safe, stable and prosperous region, as well as to play an effective role in international systems, is a valuable common asset for all of us within the ECO. International systems are now more than ever undergoing transformation and changes in the contemporary era. We firmly believe

that this change must inevitably serve to strengthen the discourse of justice and liberation from the system of dominance and coercion. Today, multilateralism is openly opposing rampant unilateralism.

Emerging economies and developing countries are more capable than ever to play a role in shaping a new global order. A regional and multilateral economic cooperation network among countries can contribute to this effort. In this regard, the ECO and its cooperation mechanisms in our region have undeniable potentials and it is essential to devote increased attention and energy to harnessing this capacity. To assist the aspirations of change-seeking countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran has recently joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group.

Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with many independent countries and its international partners, is moving towards establishing a fair system based on respect and multilateral integration. In this path, the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to adopt a policy of good neighborliness and integration and take active parts in regional and trans-regional mechanisms and play a more effective role in establishing security and creating collective common interests.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Distinguished Participants,**

During the previous ECO Summit in Ashgabat, I highlighted some necessities leading to enhanced cooperation within the ECO, national and regional development for all of us, as well as the enhancement of the Organization's rank and status in regional and international relations. These included realization of further liberalization of intra-regional trade, strengthening and completing regional connectivity networks, developing cooperation in transit and energy trade, leveraging the benefits and advantages of the digital economy and knowledge-based industries, as well as the establishment of a new financial system for economic exchanges in the region.

All these necessities are still important and require attention. I strongly recommend that the ECO Secretariat and Member States focus earnestly on these necessities and agree on some measures to be incorporated in the process of revisiting the 'ECO Vision 2025,' scheduled for the coming year. The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to share its capacities in areas such as energy, transport, technology, and other areas of interest with Member States.

One of the areas still awaiting the serious attention and action of ECO Member States is intra-regional trade. It is expected that a significant and effective step be taken to implement the mandate given by the 'ECO Vision 2025' to establish a free trade area within the ECO Region, and also to

implement the ECO preferential trade agreement (known as ECOTA) after two decades. The free and smooth flow of intra-regional trade is undoubtedly one of the prerequisites for successful economic convergence and interactions within the ECO. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the rotating chairman of the ECO in 2024 has adopted “Resilient and Empowered ECO Region through Expansion of Intra-Regional Trade” as its motto. We expect all Member States to assist the Islamic Republic of Iran to take effective steps towards realizing this slogan.

Fortunately, Member States have shown more interest in ensuring cooperation on environment. We welcome it and look forward to taking practical steps in this regard. The reality is that many global environmental challenges, and consequently in our region, have originated from developed countries. These include climate change. No part of the world, including countries that had no role in the emergence of this phenomenon, is immune to its destructive consequences, such as floods, natural disasters, droughts, water scarcity and sand and dust storms. We welcome the meeting of the ECO Environment ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations Climate Change Conference and expect this meeting, in addition to enhancing coordination within the ECO region, results in attraction of financial resources, technical assistance, and necessary technologies to the ECO Region through existing international mechanisms. We also support the establishment of the “ECO Environmental Consultation Platform” which is intended to be a forum for the exchange of ideas and consultations among policymakers, scientists, and researchers in the ECO region.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Respected Colleagues,**

I would like to refer to Afghanistan as a significant country in the neighborhood of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a key member of the ECO. We are still waiting for the establishment of an inclusive and accountable government in Afghanistan with the effective participation of all ethnic and religious groups. As mentioned previously, the ECO should implement its advocacy programme for Afghanistan, assisting its noble people in reconstruction and economic development. The recent earthquake has added to the difficulties and challenges faced by the Afghan people. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as always, is ready to provide humanitarian assistance and is willing to facilitate the transfer of aid from other countries and regions to Afghanistan.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the unconditional support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the ECO and its activities. We are determined to allocate more resources and energy to enhance collaboration within the ECO. During Iran's rotating chairmanship in 2024, we will develop and implement some activities through consultations with the ECO Member States and the Secretariat. I hope that the next ECO Foreign Ministers meeting to be held late 2024 in Iran, would bring about positive decisions. It is also important that ministers in charge of technical issues

hold their meetings continuously to make timely decisions for advancing cooperation.

**It will be an honor for me to host you all in Tehran in an ECO Summit.**

I would like to close my remarks by remembering Palestine women and children martyrs, send peace to their departed souls and pray the Almighty God to free Palestine and al-Quds al-Sharif.

**Wassalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh**