

**ADDRESS BY H.E. RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN, PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE AT THE 16TH SUMMIT OF THE ECONOMIC  
COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)**

**(NOVEMBER 9, 2023, TASHKENT)**

Esteemed Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Secretary General,

Distinguished Members of Delegations,

I greet you with my most heartfelt feelings, affection and respect.

I am very happy to meet with you on the occasion of our 16<sup>th</sup> Summit.

I would like to thank my Esteemed Brother, President of Turkmenistan Mr. Serdar BERDIMUHAMEDOV, for the successful completion of the Presidency of ECO.

I would like to express my gratitude to my Dear Brother, President of Uzbekistan Mr. MIRZIYOYEV, who has now taken over the Presidency of ECO, for his exceptional hospitality, and beseech the Almighty to bestow on him success.

I wish that our summit, and the consultations we will hold, be beneficial for the stability and prosperity of our countries and our region.

Dear Friends...

We are going through a period when we are confronted with major challenges at the global scale.

The wounds caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the global economy and trade have yet to be healed.

Subsequently, we faced the destructive consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war, which erupted in our near geography.

Inflation, triggered by the exorbitant hike in energy and food prices, reached the highest levels of the last six or seven decades, further aggravating our troubles.

While we were seeking effective ways to cope with these challenges, the conflicts that broke out on the occupied Palestinian lands wounded our hearts.

Israeli attacks on Gaza are in their 34th day.

Women and children account for 73 percent of the nearly 11 thousand Gazans brutally killed by Israel.

The Israeli administration, fully supported by Western countries, continues to bomb schools, mosques, hospitals, universities and civilian settlements, infringing on all the values of humanity.

We are faced with a fanaticism that legitimizes even the massacring of children.

Yet, the Western countries, which always talk about human rights, freedoms and democracy, just keep watching Israel's massacres from a distance.

These countries and institutions are incapable of calling for "ceasefire", let alone criticize the murderers of children.

Those who turn a blind eye to the burning of our sacred book, the Holy Quran, under the excuse of freedom of thought, cannot even tolerate the Palestinian flag.

Many more instances can be counted, attesting to the hypocrisy we have been witnessing since October 7.

The developments remind us of the fact that we, as Muslims, have to strengthen our unity.

We continue our diplomatic efforts to achieve humanitarian ceasefire and prevent the spread of the conflicts.

We are also working hard to dispatch humanitarian aid to the region.

To date, we have sent 10 aircraft carrying over 230 tons of humanitarian aid to El-Arish Airport with the assistance of our Egyptian brothers.

Our preparations are underway to send two civilian humanitarian aid ships to the region.

An international meeting will be held in Istanbul on November 15 with the participation of the spouses of the heads of state and government, under the auspices of my spouse Emine Erdoğan.

A strong solidarity will therefore be displayed to alleviate our Gazan brothers and sisters' suffering.

The stance we are to display as the Economic Cooperation Organization is very important for the cessation of the bloodshed in Gaza.

It is important that we raise our voices collectively to defend our Palestinian cause.

Esteemed brothers and sisters...

A more transparent and fairer international economic and financial system is needed more than ever now.

In the current circumstances, we as Türkiye continue our human-oriented efforts to address these shortcomings in the international economic system.

With a population of 500 million and a total income of 1.5 trillion dollars, the Economic Cooperation Organization unquestionably holds an important position in this regard.

On the other hand, it is worrying that the trade between the ECO members stands at just 85 billion dollars.

I believe that this number does not benefit us.

We should intensify our efforts to increase our trade volume to 100 billion dollars in the initial phase.

We should boost our cooperation potential in areas from trade to energy, transport and environment.

We should put into force the Economic Cooperation Organization Trade Agreement, which is one of the goals laid out in our 2025 Vision Document but has yet to be implemented after 20 years.

More effective use of the Economic Cooperation Organization Trade and Investment Bank, the ECO BANK located in Istanbul, with the participation of all members will serve this goal.

Cooperation should also be strengthened in the areas of tourism and travel.

These issues were thoroughly addressed by our Tourism Ministers during their meeting held in October.

I would like to thank you for your support at this meeting for the selection of Erzurum as the ECO Tourism Capital for the year 2025.

I hereby invite you to Erzurum, crossroad of civilizations.

Dear friends...

We significantly contribute to the energy supply security of our country and region through important energy infrastructure investments, particularly TANAP, that we have launched in recent years.

We can play a bigger role in this area with the steps we can take together as ECO member states.

In line with the proverb, “unity makes strength”, it will be beneficial for us to increase our joint investments for cleaner initiatives such as renewable energy and hydrogen as well as for the development of new technologies in the energy sector.

I hereby invite all member states to sign the Charter of the Organization of Economic Cooperation Clean Energy Centre to be established in Baku, which is already signed by Türkiye.

Everyone should do their part in the face of global issues that have become a global threat.

In this spirit, we, under the leadership of my spouse Emine Erdoğan, launched the Zero Waste project in 2017.

Within the scope of this project, which has turned into a global initiative under the roof of the United Nations, we held the first in-person meeting of the United Nations Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Zero Waste, in Türkiye, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November.

I am confident that your support will continue for this initiative.

Dear brothers and sisters,

The ongoing developments have made more visible the importance of the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor.

We should continue to increase the efficacy of the Corridor, which benefits us all.

With this understanding, we should close ranks with regard to the challenges emerging across our common geography from Karabakh to Afghanistan.

With the complete end of the occupation that lasted more than 30 years in Karabakh, we observe that we are one step closer to permanent peace in our region.

This process will be facilitated by Armenia's fulfilment of its responsibilities towards Azerbaijan.

Establishing without delay the transportation lines that will connect Azerbaijan's western regions with Nakhchivan is of strategic importance.

As the Economic Cooperation Organization, we should collaborate for the establishment of sustainable stability and security in Afghanistan as well.

Türkiye continues its aid to the Afghan people recently hit by an earthquake in the Herat province.

Our Benevolence Train carrying nearly 510 tons of aid supplies, including food, medicine and clothing, set out for Afghanistan on Tuesday.

We will continue to stand by our brothers and sisters in their difficult times.

Esteemed brothers and sisters...

Representation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, an observer to ECO, at this summit by President Ersin Tatar is an important message in the face of the unfair practices our Turkish Cypriot brothers and sisters are subjected to.

As members of the Economic Cooperation Organization, it is our collective responsibility to make the voices of Turkish Cypriots heard, who are unfairly oppressed and isolated through illegal practices.

In this regard, I reiterate my call to establish and develop relations with the Turkish Cypriots in all areas.

I thank all my brothers and sisters who take steps in this direction.

May Allah forever protect our unity, solidarity and cooperation!

As I conclude my remarks with these thoughts, I greet you once again with respect.