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ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

BAKU DECLARATION

**of the 1st MEETING OF TOURISM SPECIALIZED
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE ECO MEMBER STATES**

Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

5 December 2023

BAKU DECLARATION

We, the representatives of the Educational Institutions from the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) responsible for Tourism Education and the Heads of Delegations participating in the 1st Meeting of Educational Institutions Specialized in Tourism of ECO Member States held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan on 4-5 December 2023,

Recognizing the pivotal role of the ECO in consolidation the efforts in order to enhance the cooperation for the mutual interest of Member States in the tourism education,

Keeping in view the Article II of the Treaty of Izmir and other important cooperative frameworks previously adopted by the ECO, including the ECO Vision 2025; and the Ardabil Declaration adopted at Fifth ECO Ministerial Meetings on Tourism on 5 October 2023, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation among Member States in the domain of tourism education and human resource development in the tourism sector,

Having in mind that through the coordinated efforts of the stakeholder from the High Education of the Member States may have the consistent meetings to discuss the prospects of the ongoing development and exchange best practices for building strong partnership between ECO Member States in the field of tourism education;

hereby declare the following outcomes resulting from our collective discussions and deliberations during this Meeting:

1. *Recognition of the Importance of Tourism Education:* We acknowledge that tourism education is essential for the sustainable growth and development of the tourism sector.
2. *Quality Tourism Education:* We emphasize the necessity for high-quality tourism education programs that meet global standards, foster innovation, and respond to the evolving needs of the Industry.
3. *Empowering Tourism Professionals:* We commit to equipping tourism professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their roles, including cultural sensitivity, environmental stewardship, and ethical responsibility.

4. *Sustainability in Tourism Education:* We underscore the importance of integrating sustainability principles into tourism education, emphasizing responsible and eco-friendly practices.
5. *Collaboration in Tourism Education:* We commit to fostering collaboration between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and government bodies to align tourism education with industry needs.
6. *Research and Data Exchange:* We emphasize the value of joint research and data exchange between academia and the tourism industry to inform best practices.
7. *Promoting the Natural and Cultural Heritage:* We recognize the significance of preserving and promoting the natural and cultural heritage in tourism education to maintain authentic and unique visitor experiences.
8. *Tourism and Economic Development:* We believe that the tourism education sector plays a vital role in fostering economic development, generating employment, and improving the quality of life, through local belongingness, in tourism destinations.
9. *Tourism Education and Awareness:* We underscore the significance of education and awareness in promoting responsible and ethical tourism and commit to fostering tourism literacy.
10. *Digitalization and Innovation in Tourism:* We recognize the role of digitalization and innovation in advancing the tourism sector, including sustainable practices and technological advancements.
11. *Tourism Educational Network:* We commit to establish “ECO Tourism Educational Network (ECO-TEN)” to implement above mentioned actions through regular follow up meetings.

Issued in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan on December 5, 2023.