

**Statement by Dr. Asad M. Khan, ECO Secretary General,
at the 7th CICA Ministerial Council Meeting,
December 17, 2024**

**H.E. Jeyhun Bayramov, Honorable Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan,
Esteemed Ministers,
Heads of Delegation,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,**

I congratulate the Republic of Azerbaijan on assuming CICA chairmanship. We are confident that Azerbaijan's chairmanship will inject further momentum in CICA's work in promoting peace, security, stability in the region and beyond.

I also commend the Republic of Kazakhstan for its exemplary chairmanship, under which CICA has undergone significant transformation and reform, evolving into a more reputable and effective forum in Asia and beyond.

Considering the plethora of challenges that we confront today in the world, the necessity of enhanced multilateral cooperation has never been greater. And yet our ability to deal with these challenges collectively has never faced as many constraints or suffered as much stress as we experience today.

A bottom-top approach where we work to resolve challenges at the regional and sub-regional level through dialogue and cooperation, therefore, remains our best hope for creating the requisite trust and confidence in multilateralism essential for effectively addressing global challenges.

Excellencies,

ECO and CICA share numerous commonalities and complementarities, as all ECO member states are also associated with CICA. Both organizations operate in almost overlapping areas of cooperation. The ECO-CICA partnership was formalized in 2008 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. Translating that understanding into action through a concrete plan of action is long overdue. We at the ECO are ready to consider plans and projects that could help us achieve our shared goals and objectives. In this regard and we are confident

that our joint efforts will contribute to lasting peace, security, and sustainable development in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

As one of the oldest regional development organizations, ECO brings a considerable wealth of knowledge and experience in framing and pursuing the developmental priorities for the region. We are ready to share our experiences and learn from the best practices of other organizations. We are focused on pursuing trade integration, connectivity both physical and digital, energy cooperation and green transition, and food security as part of our sustainable agenda duly outlined in the ECO Vision 2025.

At our 28th Meeting of the Council of Ministers in Mashhad on December 3, we adopted the Mashhad Communiqué which reinforces our commitment to enhancing intra-regional linkages and connectivity networks and to fostering global partnerships to amplify our impact and visibility in the international arena.

To foster people-to-people connections and capitalize on our overlapping geography, history, culture, and traditions, ECO has undertaken a number of initiatives including the practice of announcing ECO Tourism Capital annually. This year it is Shahr-e-Sabz in Uzbekistan, next year it would be Erzurum Türkiye and Shusha Azerbaijan for 2026.

We are also set to launch our new guiding document for the post-2025 era: the ECO Strategic Objectives 2035. This framework is expected to inject greater momentum into our work and reinvigorate the spirit of regional cooperation and progress.

In conclusion, I reiterate that ECO attaches great importance to deepening its ties with CICA. On behalf of the ECO Secretariat, I assure you of our fullest support and commitment to strengthening this partnership to advance our shared goals and objectives.

I thank you for your kind attention.