

Speech by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev

- Distinguished heads of delegations!

It is a great pleasure to meet with you in the ancient land of Karabakh, in the beautiful city of Khankendi, which embodies a unique historical and cultural heritage. As true brothers, we are delighted to witness this region becoming a place of peace and development. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to His Excellency, Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for the high-level organization of the Economic Cooperation Organization's Summit on this land and warm hospitality.

Since our historic meeting in Tashkent, significant progress has been made in strengthening the Organization's institutional capacity and establishing cooperation in new areas. I would like to take this opportunity to underline the effective chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan in our Organization.

We are also pleased by the fact that after a long break the delegation of the Interim Government of Afghanistan is taking part in our Summit. Indeed, we consider neighboring Afghanistan as an integral part of our Organization's space, important member of broad economic cooperation and regional transport connectivity processes, and we widely support this.

Dear participants of the meeting!

Our Summit is taking place amid difficult circumstances, when the world community is going through a critical stage. This is particularly evident given that most conflicts and disputes are occurring within the very space of our Organization. The events that have occurred in South Asia and the Middle East in recent months have caused deep concern for all of us. The erosion of international law and global security institutions is further weakening the room for dialogue and cooperation, paving the way for the use of force and violence. In particular, the military actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, a member of our Organization, created the danger of dragging the entire region into war and triggering a large-scale environmental catastrophe. We therefore support the ceasefire agreement reached between Iran and Israel. We consider this decision as an important step towards reducing the tension in the region and restoring the stability. We believe that this agreement will provide a solid foundation for resolving all issues through diplomatic and constructive negotiations. Given that the non-proliferation and non-use of weapons of mass destruction are becoming one of the most pressing international security issues, we once again call on the global community to expand the geography of the nuclear-weapon-free zones. It must be noted that enduring peace and stability in the Middle East cannot be achieved without a fair and just resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. We call for the end of military actions in the Gaza Strip, the removal of all obstacles to providing humanitarian assistance to those suffering from hunger and inhumane

conditions, and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine in accordance with the UN resolutions.

Distinguished participants of the Summit!

The foundation of any peace and development is based, first and foremost, on economic cooperation. Therefore, our partnership within the Organization is not only natural, but also of great strategic importance. In accordance with the agenda of the meeting, I would like to draw your attention to a number of issues. First of all, we need to clearly define the medium and long-term development priorities of our Organization. To this end, it is necessary to adopt the concept of “Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035”. Along with the traditional areas, such as trade, investment, transport, energy, industry, agriculture, ecology, tourism and education, we should also pay a special attention to strengthening cooperation in innovation, artificial intelligence and digital technologies. Simplifying trade in goods and services, gradually eliminating technical and non-tariff barriers, and developing e-commerce are particularly relevant. I would also like to highlight that the current volume of our mutual trade remains low. In 2024, this figure stood at \$95 billion, accounting for 10% of our countries’ total trade turnover. We propose holding a meeting of our trade ministers in Tashkent this year to discuss the strategic issues in this area and conclude Agreement on Trade Facilitation. Besides, it is very important to create a system of “Green Corridors” for the rapid data sharing on agricultural trade and unrestricted supply of goods. We put forward an initiative to adopt a long-term “Eco-Invest” Program to take our investment cooperation to a new level, and make the investment climate more transparent and attractive. The main goal of this program is to captivate private investors, banks, and international financial institutions to promising projects in our region. There is another priority area. The recent geopolitical events have once again demonstrated the risks of disruption of the supply chains, highlighting the strategic importance of establishing alternative transport corridors. The launch of the China – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan railway project last year was a significant event. In the future, this railway will be connected with the Trans-Afghan corridor, effectively integrating transit networks across our vast region. We believe that it is time to implement the initiative to create a Digital Transport and Customs Office in order to systematically organize the digitalization of the transport and logistics sector, and we support intensifying negotiations at the expert level.

Our important tasks also include launching new air routes in the region, implementing innovative cooperation between airlines, and developing integrated marketing strategies between the tourism and aviation sectors. We propose organizing the National Airlines Forum in Samarkand to discuss these issues. We have enough potential to double tourist arrivals. Developing a Roadmap for the Expansion of Tourism Services within the Organization will help to achieve this goal.

I would also like to draw your attention to another important issue. It is essential that our countries coordinate and combine their efforts on the global climate

agenda. We firmly support the full implementation of commitments and agreements reached at the successfully held COP29 Global Climate Summit in Baku. We propose developing a Transboundary “Green Initiative” within the Organization aimed at planting forests in desert areas and establishing recreational zones.

Distinguished heads of delegations!

We appreciate the High-Level Committee’s efforts to enhance the activity of our Organization. I believe you will support the idea of assigning the Committee to develop by the next Summit proposals and recommendations to reform and boost the Organization’s functions. These reforms will undoubtedly elevate our collaboration to a new level, strengthen the Organization’s international prestige and influence, and improve its work to meet modern requirements.

I am convinced that today’s Summit will give a new impetus to achieve our commitments and plans in elevating multifaceted and practical cooperation to a new level.

Thank you for your attention!