

**Remarks by H.E. Olzhas Bektenov
Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan
President of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
At the 17th ECO Summit
Khankendi, Republic of Azerbaijan | July 3–4, 2025**

Your Excellency,
Honorable Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for hosting this important summit at such a high level in the historic and beautiful city of Khankendi. I also extend my deep appreciation for the generous hospitality extended to all delegations.

At the outset, allow me to convey the warm greetings and best wishes of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

We believe that convening this summit in Khankendi reflects Azerbaijan's strong commitment to peace, sustainable development, and regional unity.

This 17th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization, held under the esteemed chairmanship of Azerbaijan, marks a pivotal opportunity to advance our shared goals and reinvigorate regional cooperation.

On behalf of Kazakhstan, I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the governments of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan for their vital assistance in the safe evacuation of Kazakh citizens during the recent tensions in the Middle East. This was a true act of brotherhood—one that exemplifies the spirit of solidarity that defines our organization.

Distinguished colleagues,

Today's summit is guided by a new ECO vision focused on building a sustainable and climate-resilient future. This is fully aligned with Kazakhstan's priorities during our chairmanship in 2025, which centers on enhancing regional transport connectivity and promoting sustainable development.

The synergy between these two agendas reflects the growing strength of our shared priorities and the deepening coherence of our collaboration.

Kazakhstan remains firmly committed to advancing multilateral partnerships and cultivating an open and inclusive economic environment. I am pleased to report that trade between Kazakhstan and ECO member states continues to show strong growth. In the first four months of this year, trade volume increased by 6.9%, reaching \$4.7 billion. In 2024, the total trade turnover amounted to \$14.1 billion.

We encourage collective efforts to diversify trade flows and enhance the production of high-value-added goods across our region.

Since assuming the ECO chairmanship in January 2025, Kazakhstan has focused on producing tangible outcomes and promoting inclusive regional connectivity. In this context, I would like to highlight four priority areas of cooperation:

First, Kazakhstan is a reliable logistical hub linking East and West, North and South. We are actively developing multimodal corridors, including the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, the North-South Corridor, and the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway.

Furthermore, we are expanding the capabilities of our Caspian Sea ports. A container hub has been launched at the Aktau Port, and construction is underway on the Sarzha Multifunctional Terminal at Kuryk Port.

To further strengthen regional transport connectivity, Kazakhstan will host the 14th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport in 2026. We believe this gathering will play a vital role in resolving infrastructure challenges across our region.

Second, in response to mounting climate challenges, Kazakhstan is actively implementing its National Adaptation Plan under the Paris Agreement and finalizing its Third Nationally Determined Contribution.

We commend the successful hosting of COP29 in Baku in 2024, which laid the foundation for enhanced environmental cooperation in our region. Building on this momentum, Kazakhstan will host a Regional Climate Summit next year, and we warmly invite all ECO member states to participate actively in this initiative.

Today, Kazakhstan is proud to sign the Charter of the ECO Clean Energy Center and formally join this important body. We view this as a key milestone in our journey toward sustainable development.

Third, digital transformation is no longer optional—it is essential for long-term competitiveness and security.

Kazakhstan has laid a strong foundation in this area. Over 1,200 public services are now accessible via our e-Gov portal, mobile applications, and GovTech platforms. This year, we will inaugurate the **Alim AI International Artificial Intelligence Center** in Astana and have launched the **CryptoCity pilot zone**, focused on fintech, blockchain, and artificial intelligence technologies.

We encourage all ECO members to enhance technological cooperation, and we stand ready to share Kazakhstan's experience in digitalization.

Fourth, tourism is a powerful engine for sustainable growth. To support regional tourism development, we propose designating the city of **Aktau** as the **ECO Tourism Capital for 2030**.

Located on the Caspian Sea, Aktau offers modern infrastructure and rich historical and cultural heritage, making it an ideal venue for international events. This September, we will host the **ECO International Tourism Forum** in Aktau, and I extend a warm invitation to all member states and guests to attend.

Your Excellencies,

Kazakhstan places great importance on deepening cooperation within the ECO framework. In this context, the adoption of the long-term document titled “**Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2035**” is timely and essential.

We look forward to endorsing this document at the upcoming ECO Council of Foreign Ministers, which Kazakhstan will host this November.

I am confident that by working together on joint projects and initiatives, we will continue to strengthen our partnerships and unlock the full potential of our region.

In conclusion, let me once again express my deep appreciation to His Excellency President Ilham Aliyev for his leadership, hospitality, and tireless efforts in organizing this summit.

Thank you.