

STATEMENT by Mr. Rovnag Abdullayev, Deputy Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 5th Meeting of Ministers of Trade and Foreign Commerce of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

26 November 2025, Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye

Dear Chairman,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome Remarks

It is a great honor for me to represent Azerbaijan at this high-level meeting. This event serves as an important platform for advancing cooperation among ECO Member States in the fields of trade, investment, and related areas. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Republic of Türkiye for hosting this meeting.

Azerbaijan's Contributions and Initiatives

Azerbaijan hosted the 17th ECO Summit in Khankendi on 3–4 July 2025. The Summit reaffirmed our shared vision of enhancing regional cooperation, expanding trade volumes, and strengthening economic resilience. It also provided a valuable opportunity for Member States to discuss innovative solutions and deepen collaboration within a changing global trade landscape.

At the initiative of Azerbaijan, ECO Week was held for the first time this year. Within its framework, the ECO Business Forum was organized in Shusha, the Youth Forum in Aghdam, and the Women's Forum in Lachin. Work is also underway to ensure the launch of the ECO Clean Energy Center, which will be located in Azerbaijan. We also express our gratitude for the support extended in designating Shusha as the “ECO Tourism Capital” for 2026.

Transport and Digital Connectivity

The East–West, North–South, and Zangezur corridors passing through Azerbaijan significantly expand regional transit potential. The Middle Corridor and its digital component, the Trans-Caspian Fiber-Optic Communication Line, strengthen the region's digital connectivity and form an essential part of the “Digital Silk Road.” The declaration initialed in Washington this August laid the foundation for the “TRIPP” route between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan. This route will ensure seamless cargo transportation between Asia and Europe, enhance the efficiency of the Middle Corridor, and contribute to regional economic integration and global supply chains.

Trade and Cooperation

During January–October 2025, trade turnover between Azerbaijan and ECO Member States amounted to 6.7 billion USD, including 3.6 billion USD in imports and 3.1 billion USD in exports. These figures demonstrate the significant role of ECO countries in Azerbaijan's foreign trade — accounting for 18.69% of imports and 14.43% of exports.

Azerbaijan continues to facilitate regional trade through free and preferential trade agreements, modern electronic customs systems, risk-based analysis, and e-commerce initiatives. Moreover, Azerbaijan and ECO Member States are actively working on joint trade promotion activities, investment funds, and partnership projects.

Trade Facilitation

Azerbaijan is implementing comprehensive reforms aimed at trade facilitation and accelerating digital transformation, strengthening international cooperation, and enhancing transparency in trade operations. Our strategic objective is to reduce trade barriers and promote sustainable and diversified economic ties. Azerbaijan has concluded Free Trade Agreements with 10 countries, including 5 ECO members, and has Preferential Trade Agreements in force with Türkiye and Pakistan. Investment cooperation is also progressing: a bilateral investment agreement with Afghanistan has been ratified, while negotiations on a similar agreement with Pakistan are ongoing.

Business and Investment Environment

The business and investment climate in Azerbaijan is improving: legislative and administrative procedures are being simplified, business registration, tax and customs systems are being improved, and the scope of e-government services is expanding. International rating agencies Moody's and Fitch have upgraded the country's credit rating, confirming economic stability, strong fiscal discipline, and a favorable environment for investors.

ECO Research Center

I would also like to highlight the establishment of the ECO Research Center under the Economic and Scientific Research Institute of the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan, located in Baku. The Charter has been signed by Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan, and has already been ratified by Azerbaijan and Pakistan. In accordance with Article 8 of the Charter, it will enter into

force upon signature and ratification by a third ECO Member State, after which the instrument of ratification will be submitted to the Government of Azerbaijan.

I take this opportunity to invite other ECO Member States to sign and ratify the Charter and jointly support the establishment of this Center, which will serve as a strong research-based foundation for enhancing regional cooperation.

Conclusion

Distinguished colleagues,

Azerbaijan remains committed to strengthening cooperation within ECO, exploring new opportunities together, and taking concrete steps to deepen economic integration across the region. Finally, we express our appreciation to Kazakhstan for its successful ECO Chairmanship in 2025 and reaffirm our openness to future collaboration.

Thank you for your attention.