

**Statement by Ms. Zhanna Joldasbekova of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Chairman of the Senior Officials Meeting**

14 October 2026- Astana

**Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Representatives of the ECO Secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,**

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Transport, I extend a warm welcome to you in Astana. It is a great honor for us to host the 14th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and to open its preparatory phase today — the Meeting of Senior Officials.

I would like to thank the ECO Secretariat and the Directorate for Transport and Communications for their extensive work in preparing for this meeting. I also extend my gratitude to all the delegations that have traveled to Astana; your participation confirms that the transport agenda remains one of the most practical and highly sought-after areas of our organization's work.

Distinguished Colleagues!

It is symbolic that the ECO transport ministers are gathering in Kazakhstan once again. It was here, in Almaty, in October 1993, that their first meeting took place—a meeting that adopted the Almaty Framework Plan for the development of the region's transport sector. That was when the foundations were laid. Today, more than thirty years later, we are setting the course for the next decade.

Our work rests on a solid foundation. In Tashkent, in November 2023, we took stock of our progress and outlined ways to strengthen regional and international connectivity. In Tehran, in June 2025, the ministers unanimously adopted the Tehran Declaration. It placed a strong emphasis

on the digitalization and sustainable development of transport, and mandated the preparation of a new long-term strategy.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to our Iranian colleagues for their chairmanship, and to all member states for their contributions toward implementing the agreements reached in Tehran. Today, we will review the results of this work. Why this meeting is important

The ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) region serves as a natural bridge between China and Europe, between North and South, and between the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. Most of our nations are landlocked; for us, transport is not merely an industry, but a vital prerequisite for accessing global markets.

Global supply chains are currently undergoing a restructuring. Shippers are seeking reliable, predictable, and diversified routes. This presents a historic opportunity for the ECO region—one that we can only seize by working together. After all, any corridor is only as effective as its weakest segment or its slowest border crossing.

Kazakhstan's experience

Today, Kazakhstan has emerged as a transport and logistics hub for the region, with approximately 85% of all overland transit between China and Europe passing through our corridors.

In recent years, we have invested around 35 billion US dollars in transport infrastructure, with an additional 15 billion dollars earmarked for investment through 2030. Construction is nearing completion on the new Kyzylzhar–Moyynty and Darbaza–Maktaaral rail lines, while upgrades are underway on the Altynkol–Zhetigen, Beineu–Mangystau, and Beineu–Shalkar sections, among others. A second track spanning 836 kilometers has been commissioned between Dostyk and Moyynty. Our goal is to fully eliminate bottlenecks within the Kazakhstani segments and increase the

transit capacity of these corridors to 100 million tons per year – a two-and-a-half-fold increase over the current 39 million tons.

The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route has already established itself as a fully-fledged corridor. Delivery times have been reduced to 13–17 days; shipping rates from China to Georgian ports have remained unchanged since 2023; and the route has the capacity to handle 10 million tons of cargo annually. The "Caspian Bridge" project, which utilizes "Super Ferry" class vessels, will halve cargo processing times, increase transport capacity by a factor of 2.5, and shorten the transit time from the Chinese border to Georgian ports to just 8–10 days. We intend to conclude an intergovernmental agreement on the development of this route before the end of the year. In short, the Middle Corridor is already a commercially viable route, as well as a strategic investment in the future.

However, an international corridor – by definition – traverses the territories of multiple nations. Development must therefore be synchronized across all segments, involving all neighbors and partners. The entire route requires a unified set of "rules of the game," including seamless transport operations, a single transport document, and a coordinated tariff policy. We are open to collaboration on the Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran, Almaty–Tehran–Istanbul, North–South, and Trans-Caspian corridors, and we believe that the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) Strategy should formalize this principle