

## ECO Chairmanship passes to Uzbekistan



On November 28, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev took part in the Fifteenth Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), in Ashgabat.

The meeting, chaired by the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, was attended by the Presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi, the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Zhaparov, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Arif Alvi, the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as well as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin and ECO Secretary General Khusrav Noziri.

Issues of further enhancing the multilateral partnership aimed at strengthening the ECO as a dynamic organization, deepening cooperation between its member states in trade, transport-communication connectivity, industrial cooperation, green energy and tourism were the main topics of the meeting's agenda.

The President of Uzbekistan congratulated Turkmenistan on the successful chairmanship of the organization and noted the importance of the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution on Cooperation between the UN and ECO in September this year.

"Our fraternal peoples, who share a common history and religion, similar customs and traditions, have been closely linked by trade and cultural ties since ancient times. Since its creation, the Economic Cooperation Organization has turned into a large regional structure with huge economic potential", Shavkat Mirziyoyev said.

As Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, Uzbekistan stands for the further development of comprehensive relations within the organization.

The President of Uzbekistan, drawing attention to the international and regional situation, economic

difficulties in the context of the ongoing pandemic, made several specific proposals on priority areas of cooperation.

“It is necessary to make more full use of the significant potential of our countries, which have a huge market with a population of 500 million people. Based on the adopted conceptual program “ECO Prospects 2025”, it is advisable to further enhance trade-economic and investment ties between our countries and, most importantly, achieve more significant practical results due to this”, the President of Uzbekistan stressed.

In this regard, the urgency of adopting an updated and comprehensive Trade Agreement within the organization was emphasized. The document should include the removal of trade barriers, digitalization of customs procedures, as well as the introduction of electronic commerce, which is currently becoming increasingly important.

The adoption of a Joint Action Plan to increase the flow of mutual investments and strengthen their reliable protection, deepening industrial cooperation between our countries is a requirement of the time.

The necessity of developing projects of regional importance and increasing the competitiveness of our economies in the world market was noted.

As a real mechanism, Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed to create a Center for Trade, Investment and Innovation within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and to locate the headquarters of this Center in Tashkent.

Another important area is the effective use of existing and creation of new transport corridors in the region.

The Head of the state noted the importance of creating interregional transit hubs, developing modern transport and road infrastructure, optimizing transport and transit tariffs and providing additional discounts, simplifying conditions for international freight and passenger transportation, introducing digitalization in the transport industry.

To implement these plans, it is advisable to develop a regional strategy aimed at developing transport-communication links and expanding the transit potential of the countries.

Taking into account the actualization of the global climate agenda, the summit considered the issues of further transition to a green economy. The leaders noted the need for active cooperation in this area, including the widespread introduction of environmentally friendly and resource-saving technologies in industries to achieve carbon neutrality.

To this end, Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed to create a permanent high-level Council, including with the participation of international scientists and experts in the field of environment.

Noting the importance of restoring tourist exchange, the President of Uzbekistan took the initiative to adopt a Regional Program for the development of safe tourism in the post-pandemic period at the next meeting of tourism ministers in Bukhara in 2022. The Program will focus on the development of pilgrimage tourism and other joint tourism products, the expansion of the geography of air transportation, and the improvement of tourism infrastructure.

The President of Uzbekistan touched upon the situation in neighboring Afghanistan.

“This country is approaching a serious humanitarian crisis day by day”, Shavkat Mirziyoyev said. – Alone, without the help of the international community, including its closest neighbors, the Afghan people will not be able to withstand these difficult trials.

Therefore, we must join efforts to develop common approaches and provide the necessary assistance to

the Afghan people.

We also support the consistent continuation of the implementation of major trade, transport and energy projects of regional significance jointly with Afghanistan.

Issues of increasing the authority of the Economic Cooperation Organization, the development of its institutional mechanisms and interaction with leading international structures were also discussed at the event.

In this regard, the President of Uzbekistan took the initiative to create a high-level Expert Group to prepare specific proposals and recommendations for further improvement of ECO activities.

An initiative was put forward to establish the tradition of declaring each year as the year of development of any sphere within the organization. The President of Uzbekistan proposed to declare 2022 the Year of Strengthening Connectivity in the ECO.

Ashgabat Consensus for Action was adopted following the summit. The document includes the key priorities of the member countries for further development and strengthening regional economic cooperation.

The Heads of State and Government, as well as the Secretary General of the organization, congratulated Uzbekistan on assuming the chairmanship of the ECO in 2022.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev thanked for the sincere wishes and invited the meeting participants to the next summit to be held in Uzbekistan.









Source