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## **Unequivocal benefits of, and necessity for, stronger Turkic Union**

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In recent years, the cooperation and unity of the Turkic countries gain increasing momentum which are being demonstrated by its viability leading to the emergence of a united Turkic World as a new geopolitical reality in the Euroasian region. The cooperation deeply embedded in historical brotherhood ties, common language root, cultural and traditional commonalities has revealed significant political and economic results in the continent.

History shows that multidimensional cooperation between Turkic nations dates back to ancient times that were interrupted for many decades until the end of the Cold War, after which Turkish countries restored their independence laying down the foundation of redefining a new system of relations and cooperation among themselves. Turkic integration efforts are not only to be deemed and limited to economic terms, however promoting joint cultural richness, values, principles, and interests remain at the core of Turkic partnership learning to grow and be bound together through partnerships. Moreover, this integration, in particular in light of ongoing geopolitical realities, establishes Turkic geography as a center of attraction and enlightenment contributing to peace and stability along the region with its exceptional role in solving global issues.

The cooperation process of the modern Turkic World officially kicked off in 1992 when the leaders gathered for the first time in history in Ankara organizing an important event in a way towards self-determination. It was an inspiring event for all Turkic nations that craved for self-determination. In this context, in 1993, the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) was established, with headquarters in Ankara, to bring Turkic nations closer to each other through culture and art. The increased collaboration in various spheres required establishing a separate umbrella organization to coordinate the overall Turkic cooperation process that resulted in establishing the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), officially launched in 2009, by signing the Nakhchivan Agreement between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye. The cooperation's most important breakthrough was achieved with the historic Summit of Heads of State held in Istanbul in 2021 giving its new name – the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) – and by joining Turkmenistan coupled with adoption of the Turkic World Vision – 2040, which aim Turkic countries' integration efforts and defines out their cooperation's long-term goals.



Today, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Turkey are crucial states of the region with a substantial weight in providing for global and regional security being of particular importance for the future. The moral and political support of Turkey and indeed the Turkic Council during Azerbaijan's war for liberation in Karabakh has been a clear confirmation of the cooperation.

Azerbaijani-Turkish brotherhood is a bright example for the future of Turkic world backup by numerous mutual agreements and treaties. Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey is of exceptional importance in this vein that which envisaged multifaceted spheres for collaboration and military union. Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Media Cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey is another opportunity of strengthening cooperation which opens doors to be implemented with other countries turning it to more regional structure.

As stated by the President Ilham Aliyev- the strengthening of relations with Member States of the Organization of Turkic States in all fields is one of the top priorities of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Azerbaijan has been continuously making efforts to expand bilateral relations with Turkish states on an individual basis elevating the strong stance of Azerbaijan in global as well as in regional premises. Clear examples of that is the "Declaration on the Deepening of Strategic Partnership and Expanding Comprehensive Cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Uzbekistan", and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of Turkmenistan on joint exploration and development of hydrocarbon resources of the "Dostlug field" in the Caspian Sea, which takes into consideration the joint development of energy sector on a mutual basis creating favorable conditions.

**In economic terms**, analyzing the Turkish states on an individual basis reveal that, like the other part of the world, these countries experienced economic contraction and repercussions following the global pandemic outbreak coupled with recent geopolitical development. Major commonalities of the referred group are classified by resource abundance and transit-logistics potential due to favorable intercontinental location. However, economic trends exhibit the unevenness and quantitative/qualitative inequalities in development inside countries indicating improper translation of the potential.

*Azerbaijan* after leaving behind the golden age of effervescently lucrative resource windfalls went through structural reforms adopting the roadmap in a way towards the diversification of main economic sectors that can lead to the variety revenue streams. Oil dependency still remains and The country needs reforms to boost private sector investment, reduce the state footprint, tackle issues of competitiveness, and develop human capital. Economic rebound after pandemic has been sustained

largely to the revival of non-oil sector, revival of domestic demand and energy price boom, however risks of Russia-Ukraine war are prevalent.

*Kazakhstan*, demonstrated exemplary economic growth with mineral resources and strong FDI raising the living standards and economic figures, whereas growing inequality and weak institutions implies the resource-curse model and state-led growth that put negative impact on growth.

*Türkiye* with approximately US\$720 billion is the 19th-largest economy in the world. Although ambitious reforms in the past decades played significant role in lifting up the economic situation, high private sector debt, persistent current account deficits, high inflation, and high unemployment were exacerbated by macro-financial instability with high inflation rate.

*Turkmenistan*' gas reserves are estimated to be fourth largest in the world in addition to rich chemical inputs. Russia has been the main client of Turkmenistani gas, however the country is building Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline minimizing the risks of overreliance on a single importer. Public sector and state-owned monopolies continue to control the economy. Privatization of state-owned enterprises while improving regulatory environment and investing in human capital are of vital importance in boosting private sector development.

*Uzbekistan* implemented the set of trade and price liberalization reforms in recent years, however high trade and transit costs, state-owned enterprises, the weak regulatory environment, and further strengthening market incentives are necessary. Uzbekistan's GDP grew by 5.4 percent in the first half (H1) of 2022 mainly sustained by strong remittances, exports, and investments. Whereas, risks to the outlook are described as Russia-Ukraine war, sanctions on Russia and tighter global financial conditions.

*Kyrgyz republic* is a land-locked, lower-middle-income country endowed with rich resources of which economy shows overreliance on remittances, gold production and foreign aid. Real GDP recorded growth after the revival from pandemic supported by industry, agriculture, construction and services and driven by demand, which in turn was supported by remittance inflows from Russia. GDP growth is expected at 4 percent in 2022.

Shedding light on Azerbaijan, *Second Karabakh war* was a critical moment for Turkic unity. Baku's historical and glorious victory fortified the Turkic spirit and unity in a sense of enhanced purpose. In light of Turkey's moral and political support for Azerbaijan during the regionally and national important war, the exemplary relations between the two countries were considered as a possible model for comprehensive Turkic world. Azerbaijan's victory in the 44-day war and restoration of its territorial integrity, the united stance towards the security issues in the Central Asian region and situation in Afghanistan, joint response to the July-August'21 wildfires in Türkiye and the spirit of assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that the Turkic factor is powerful enough to unify states during the worst of crises.

Azerbaijan's Shusha city has recently been declared as the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World for 2023 in the ministerial meeting of TURKSOY indicating that Shusha with its culture and history can play a significant role in contributing to the development of cultural heritage of the Turkic World.

Following the liberation of the occupied territories, Azerbaijan's international and regional prestige experienced remarkable increase as an emerging middle power drawing the interests of international powers. Moreover, in light of ongoing geopolitical and global tensions such as Russia-Ukraine war, Covid-19 respectively, it stipulates the need for further collaboration and close ties in which Azerbaijan can act as an intercontinental partner due to strategically important inter-wined location with transport and energy potential. Central Asian countries express strong interests in transport, and logistics projects in Azerbaijan's liberated lands through the Caspian Sea with more financially viable trade routes and logistics capacity, especially after sanctions were imposed on Russia.

Zangazur corridor has the potential to play a significant role in boosting the trade among the member states. Azerbaijan's great contribution to enhancing trade and economic relations of the member countries can be a great tool of acceleration of trade relations. Azerbaijan constructs new highways, builds energy infrastructure and creates favorable conditions for foreign investments in Karabakh region which can open new avenues of cooperation among the member states in accordance with modern standards.

The Turkic Council has made a long journey since the adoption of the Nakhchivan agreement with practical purposes at current times. The importance of developments and current processes in Euroasia region are considered to be the background for the necessity to evolve into an ever-closer union.

On the other hand, overview of the economic outlook of the whole union shows that economic underperformances, which have been dented by the global pandemic and war recently, are rooted and waned by resource-curse scenario, lack of privatization and efficient regulatory environment that stipulates the need for more reforms and human capital development as endowment with natural resources opens potential doors for further development.

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