
PRESIDENT ALIYEV INVITES ECO MEMBERS TO JOIN NEW TRANSPORT CORRIDOR IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

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05.03.2021

AzerNews (5 March 2021)

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has invited ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) member states to benefit from the new transport corridor to be launched in the region as part of the Karabakh peace deal, Azertag has reported.

He made the remarks at the 14th ECO summit, which was held virtually on March 4.

The trilateral peace deal signed by Baku, Moscow and Yerevan to end the 44-day war in 2020, stipulates the unblocking of transport corridors in the region.

"With the aim of providing peace and stability in the region, we have started discussing transportation projects connecting a number of states. Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran share the same vision for the implementation of the regional transportation projects. Armenia can also benefit from the process if behaves in the normal way. In this context, the new connectivity corridor which will pass through the historic Azerbaijani land of Zangazur and link mainland Azerbaijan with its inseparable part the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Turkey will create new opportunities in the transportation sector in the region. We invite ECO member states to benefit from the Zangazur corridor, Aliyev said.

Regional transport projects

The head of state noted that Azerbaijan participates actively in regional connectivity projects, such as the East-West, North-South, North-West transportation corridors, becoming one of Eurasia's main and reliable transportation and logistics hubs.

"Together with our partners we connected Azerbaijan's transport infrastructure with the Lapis Lazuli transport corridor and created broad opportunities for multilateral cooperation in the area of transportation," he said.

Aliyev noted that Azerbaijan is an important partner in providing energy security in Eurasia.

"The Southern Gas Corridor was commissioned on 31 December 2020. The 3500-km-long Southern Gas Corridor connecting seven countries is one of the biggest energy infrastructure projects in the world," he added.

Aliyev thanked ECO member states for supporting late national leader Heydar Aliyev's initiative to open in Azerbaijan the ECO research centre.

"Azerbaijan pays great importance to its relations with the ECO member states. Today, we will sign the charter of the ECO research centre. We are grateful to the member states for supporting late Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev's initiative and we will do our utmost for the efficient functioning of the centre based in Azerbaijan," he said.

Armenia's destruction of Azerbaijani monuments

Speaking about Armenia's deliberate destruction of all cultural and religious sites on Azerbaijani territories during and before the 44-day war, Aliyev described this as "animosity against the whole Islamic world".

"International media has documented the facts of deliberate destruction and desecration of the cultural and religious heritage of Azerbaijani people. Attempts of Armenia, which insulted the feelings of all Muslims, to strengthen its relations with Islamic countries are therefore nothing but hypocrisy," he said.

The president said that Azerbaijan has made a valuable contribution to solidarity among Islamic countries, calling on Muslim states for unity at numerous international forums.

"Azerbaijan strongly condemns all attempts to associate Islam with violence and terror. We must combat Islamophobia and promote the true values of Islam - peace, tolerance, justice. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to designate 15 March as an International Day to Combat Islamophobia upon the initiative of brotherly Pakistan," he said.

The head of state thanked Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and all other states supporting Azerbaijan during the war with Armenia. He underlined his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan's special role.

"I would like to inform all our colleagues that President Erdogans constant support for Azerbaijan not only during the war but throughout the time he is President and leader of Turkey played a very important role in the liberation of Azerbaijani territories... Turkey is our great ally. The people of Azerbaijan are happy to have such an ally... I want to say once again that the stronger Turkey is, the stronger is Azerbaijan and all its partners," he said.

Fight against COVID-19

Aliyev said that Azerbaijan was among the first countries to mobilize global efforts against the COVID-19 pandemic and detailed the initiatives by the country demonstrating its commitment to international solidarity and cooperation. He called on ECO member states to support Azerbaijan's further steps to prevent the unfair distribution of vaccines.

"We condemn unequal and unfair distribution of vaccines among developing and developed countries. Some countries purchase several times more vaccines vis-à-vis their actual needs. It is clear that in such circumstances, some countries will face a vaccine shortage. Azerbaijan is planning to initiate a draft resolution on behalf of the NAM at the UN Human Rights Council on this matter and I invite ECO member states to support this initiative," he said.

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