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**Address by H.E. Halil Akıncı,
Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States,
to the OSCE Permanent Council, 20 December 2012, Vienna**

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here at the OSCE Permanent Council, on behalf of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, known in short as the Turkic Council. I would like to thank His Excellency Ambassador O'Leary of Ireland as Chairperson for giving me this opportunity.

This is the second occasion by which I have the privilege to address the Permanent Council in my current capacity. The first was my presentation here at Hofburg last December, where I introduced the Turkic Council as an emerging regional partner of the OSCE.

Today, I intend to give a brief overview about our organization including developments during the past year and revisit some areas of intersection with the OSCE. In view of the lively discussion we had last year, I also hope to leave ample time for questions and exchange of views.

As you might recall, the Turkic Council was established by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey by the Nakhchivan Agreement of 2009. It is a fully-fledged intergovernmental organization with its Secretariat in Istanbul.

Although the current structure materialized three years ago, Turkic Council has actually existed as a high-level consultation mechanism among Heads of State since 1992. Throughout ten Summits held until 2010, when the Secretariat was operationalized, state leaders discussed issues of international and regional interest and sought closer policy coordination. On the basis of linguistic, historical and cultural bonds, they reached consensus on expanding cooperation in a large number of areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkic Council defines itself first and foremost as a regional platform for cooperation. Its member states embrace the principles and commitments that are also those of the OSCE and strive for their realization in their respective regions.

To speak in OSCE terms, our broad set of tasks already encompasses the three dimensions of OSCE: Political, Economic and Human. As a matter of fact, no regional integration movement can afford to be confined to a single field. Although by mandate we stop short of the military sphere, there is a strong understanding that our efforts can only lead to fruition in the framework of a sustainable security environment.

Therefore, in the political dimension, there has been constant emphasis on confidence-building and good neighbourly relations as the underlying principles for all activities of the organization. The longstanding Summit process of the last 20 years can be considered a confidence-building exercise in itself.

The sincere political dialogue and flexible approach to cooperation continues to guide our work: At the Bishkek Summit held in August this year, the leaders reiterated their commitment to democratic values, respect for human rights and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. They resolved to enhance political coordination in the face of transnational challenges such as terrorism, separatism, extremism, organized crime, human trafficking, illegal migration, trade in narcotics and weapons.

Another notable decision of the Bishkek Summit was to include the issue of water resources as an item in the Foreign Ministerial agenda. The Secretariat will lead the preparation of a joint study to address existing water-related socioeconomic problems in Central Asia in 2013. While maintaining a perspective of conflict-prevention, this analysis will be a cross-dimensional one, touching upon side issues of environmental degradation, climate change and rational utilization of resources.

On the other hand, upon invitation of the member state governments, the Secretariat has started to take part in various elections as observer. At the Kyrgyz Presidential elections of October 2011 and early Parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan in January 2012, Turkic Council teams observed democratic practices at polling stations in regions of their own choice.

Although on a much smaller scale than those of the OSCE, our missions have covered many locations that fall outside the range of international organizations, in the remote and ethnically diverse regions of Osh and South Kazakhstan Oblast. Upon our observations on the ground, we became convinced that the common identity shared by Turkic peoples in conflict-ridden regions, puts us in a better situation to assess some of the peculiarities of elections that are difficult to gauge by non-insiders.

Mr. Chairman,

As I mentioned in my presentation last year, “Economic Cooperation” is the first field where we had launched intergovernmental collaboration. Corresponding to the second dimension of the OSCE, broader economic cooperation is to become the backbone of regional integration under Turkic Council.

With the aim of overcoming present difficulties in our economic relations and to deepen ties through new projects, we had established Working Groups under Ministers in charge of Economy. These have been functioning under the main chapters of Investment, Diversification, and Entrepreneurship.

In the course of 2012, Ministers in charge of Economy met for a second time in Baku. They reviewed the progress achieved and urged the Working Groups to intensify their work for tangible results. One major item singled out for further consideration was the establishment of a Development Fund to assist the economically backward regions of Turkic States.

Subsequently at the Bishkek Summit, economic cooperation has been extended into the related fields of Transport and Customs by decision of Heads of State. Here, we intend to focus on the revival of the historical Silk Road as a modern line of transport and trade, and will seek the active participation of all interested countries, relevant regional actors and international organizations.

Let me take a moment to underline the importance we attach to these two fields.

There are already substantial undertakings by Turkic Council member states which reflect the common purpose of establishing a Modern Silk Road. The Baku-Tblisi-Kars Railroad, “Silk Wind”

project of Kazakhstan, “Caravansarai Project” of Turkey, new port facilities in Baku and Aktau on the Caspian Sea as well as the “Marmaray” tunnel crossing the Bosphorus all attest to this fact. However, this potential can only be utilized to its full extent if transport and customs operations are streamlined. So Turkic Council, with its member countries linking four major regions of Eurasia, aims to become a linchpin for harmonization of efforts towards this goal shared by many countries and institutions in Eurasia.

In this vein, I must add that cooperation in transport and customs is likely to be chosen as the topic of the 3rd Turkic Council Summit to be held in Baku next year. In preparation, we expect first Ministerial meetings to be held in each field in Spring 2013.

Excellencies,

At Turkic Council, the particular affinity stemming from a common history, language, culture and tradition is central to our work. It brings peoples closer to each other, serves tolerance and mutual understanding and acts as the “cement” facilitating cooperation in all areas related to the human dimension as well. Needless to say, we consider this a precious asset.

In this regard, the Second Summit also marked a new phase of cooperation, focusing on “Education, Science and Culture”. To underlie a comprehensive cooperation programme, new institutions of “Turkic Academy” and “Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation” have been created.

Turkic Academy, currently located in Astana, will be transformed into an international academy of science focusing on Turcology and related disciplines. It will be designed as a center of excellence for research in Turkic history, language and culture, providing at the same time the scientific basis for common educational material to be used in member states. The approach of the Academy to the study of Turkic history will be shaped by our conviction that consciousness of history should not be politically exploited to the detriment of peaceful and good-neighbourly relations.

Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, on the other hand, will be located in Baku and work specifically towards the preservation of Turkic heritage in member countries as well as conducting projects in collaboration with partners in third countries.

Alongside these long-term initiatives, there are numerous projects on our cultural agenda such as the Joint Terminology Committee, textbooks of History and Literature, Artists Associations and University Union that have received endorsement from the Heads of State at the Second Summit.

On the institutional side, intergovernmental efforts in culture, education and science have been rearranged under the portfolios of competent Ministries at meetings held in August 2012.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have given this update of information to highlight how this particular community of countries, Turkic states, have chosen to transform their historical commonalities into subregional cooperation within the OSCE area.

Eurasia has always been a dynamic political, economic, cultural center in history and a meeting point of cultures. From the perspective of the Turkic Council, it is a geographical space offering vast opportunities as well as immense challenges. This was true when the Cold War ended and new actors -including Turkic states- emerged on the international stage. It continues to be an equally valid statement today.

The search for peace, security, stability and prosperity to build a sustainable basis for good governance and functional democracy remains as the main orientation of regional countries to counter transnational threats. This evolution will only contribute to the spread of universal values and increasing ownership of fundamental freedoms, as enshrined in all its founding documents. However, protracted conflicts still stand as an impediment to the efforts for achieving this goal.

Thus, in their endeavour to develop the capacity to make joint contributions to peace and stability in the region, Turkic states continue to seek further synergy among all international organizations active in the Eurasian region. This is why the Heads of State during the latest Summit in Bishkek have called upon Turkic Council to engage closely with the UN, OSCE, CICA, OIC and ECO.

Such interaction among international organisations active in Eurasia, we believe, is the surest way to address the numerous challenges we are faced with throughout the Eurasian continent.

It is also a precondition for multiplying our efforts to contribute to the overarching goal set by Heads of States and Governments of the OSCE, namely establishing an indivisible security community. In this regard, the complementarity of institutional efforts is necessary, as it is mutually beneficial.

As I stated last year, our intention is to engage in collaboration with the OSCE, as it is a major platform where all member states of our organization contribute as Participating States. For mutually enforcing structures of cooperation in the Eurasian part of the OSCE, every institution must bring in its relative strengths for long-term success. Therefore, on the basis of established principles of equality, inclusiveness and transparency, Turkic Council maintains a flexible approach towards establishing durable relations with other international organisations, including the OSCE.

In this connection, I should like to point out Transport Dialogue as a case in point for targeted cooperation between organizations. Turkic Council advocates the view that further development of Euro-Asian transport corridors is the cornerstone of regional cooperation and is ready to engage in interaction with others including the OSCE in this field. We would be ready to make use of OSCE expertise and experience in our projects geared towards the facilitation of border crossings along the Silk Road.

Apart from these obvious fields, I can state that as a flexible and action-oriented Organization, Turkic Council shall remain open to exchanges and project-based work with the OSCE across the three dimensions.

Mr. Chairman,

It is known that we have received some criticism for being an organization based on ties of brotherhood. This should not be used as an excuse for our exclusion from high-level OSCE meetings.

In fact, Turks have propagated and maintained the co-existence of different nationalities, religions and languages in the political structures that they established throughout history in diverse regions extending from India, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Middle East, North Africa and the Balkans. Turkic states remain on the forefront advocating peace, tolerance and alliance of civilizations on the international arena today.

The character of our organization and its open approach to cooperation should be clear enough by now. Linguistic and cultural bonds are an excellent point of departure for regional cooperation and have been taken advantage of in all parts of the world.

To understand the deep commitment of Turkic states to international cooperation, it is sufficient to remember that the last landmark summits of the OSCE were both hosted by current member states of the Turkic Council, Turkey and Kazakhstan.

The realistic approach of the Turkic Council, its adherence to universal norms, values and principles, especially those mentioned in the OSCE Platform for Cooperative Security, makes it suitable for interacting with other international organisations that equally shares those norms. The four countries of the Turkic Council do not have any bilateral political outstanding issues. They all agree on a vision of peace, stability and cooperation.

As the Kazakh proverb says; “There is no bounty to be found in a place of quarrel (Ұрыс бар жерде ырыс тұрмайды)”.

This is why, just like its member states, Turkic Council has a clear stake in the success and continued relevance for the OSCE in the years to come.

The challenge is to achieve this together.

Thank you.