

Address by H.E. Halil Akıncı,
Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States,
to the OSCE Permanent Council, 15 December 2011, Vienna

ENGLISH only

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Mr. Chairman,

[Secretary General of the OSCE,]

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address the OSCE Permanent Council as a Special Guest today. Also, it is a pleasure to be with an OSCE audience again, bringing back the very special memories of my service as the first Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia between December 1992-May 1993, when CSCE was undergoing transformation to become OSCE. I would like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Norkus of Lithuania for giving me this opportunity as Chairperson. I intend to inform you briefly about the organization that I represent, the Turkic Council, after which I hope to have some time for questions and exchange of views.

Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, known in short as the Turkic Council, was established in 2009 as a regional intergovernmental organization. Its statutory document, the Nakhchivan Agreement, was signed on 3 October 2009 by the presidents of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. Its permanent Secretariat, which is located in Istanbul, became operational shortly before the ratification of the Agreement in November 2010.

The origins of the Turkic Council can be traced back to 1992, when regular consultations amongst Turkic Speaking States were launched. The newly independent republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, joined by Turkey, held the first Turkic Summit in Ankara. Ten such Summits were held until 2010, at which the Heads of State took a host of decisions in the form of joint declarations.

During this process, establishment of a secretariat to serve as the regular organizer of summits was proposed as early as 1996. However, in time the idea of a Cooperation Council supported by a Secretariat came into maturity. Thus, the Nakhchivan Agreement was signed. The highest decision-making organ in the organization is the Council of Heads of State, which normally meets once a year. Other principal organs include Council of Foreign Ministers, Council of Elders and the Chairman-in-Office.

Turkic Council also serves as the umbrella organization for existing structures of cooperation amongst Turkic countries.

The overarching objective of the Turkic Council is to further deepen the comprehensive cooperation amongst Turkic states, thus developing the capacity to make joint contributions to peace and stability in the region and in the world as a whole. In this endeavour, member states remain firmly committed to the aims and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other universally recognized principles and norms of international law, as stated in the preamble of the Nakhchivan Agreement. Likewise, member states have consistently stressed their adherence to the documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in particular the Helsinki Final Act, in all 11 Summit declarations issued to date.

Cooperation under CCTS is based on the particular solidarity stemming from the unity of common history, culture, identity and language of Turkic speaking peoples. The commonalities such as developing economies, dynamic population structures and being active players in their respective regions provide strong incentives for enhanced cooperation amongst Turkic states.

The main purposes and tasks of CCTS can be briefly stated as follows:

- Strengthening mutual confidence amongst the Parties;
- Maintaining peace in the region and beyond;
- Search for common positions on foreign policy issues;
- Coordination of actions to combat international terrorism, separatism, extremism and trans-border crimes;
- Promotion of effective regional and bilateral cooperation in all areas of common interest;
- Creation of favourable conditions for trade and investment;
- Aiming for comprehensive and balanced economic growth, social and cultural development;
- Discussing questions of ensuring rule of law, good governance and protection of human rights;
- Expansion of interaction in the fields of science, technology, education and culture;
- Encouragement of interaction of the mass media and wider communication;
- Promoting exchange of legal information and enhancing legal cooperation.

Under such a broad mandate, the Organization functions essentially as a permanent mechanism where member states consult on issues of joint concern and realize projects in all spheres of common benefit. The clear cultural affinity amongst Turkic states facilitates a sincere and effective dialogue. There is a flexible and result-oriented approach to practical cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Being a very young organization, the Turkic Council has devoted much time to institutional issues during its first year in operation. These included conclusion of secondary statutory documents and recruitment of core personnel. At the same time, it mapped out its priorities from among a broad base of cooperation tasks and chose to focus on economic cooperation as the topic of first summit to be convened under its own organizational framework.

The First Summit of the Turkic Council, which is the continuation of previous Turkic Summits in a new format, was held on 21 October 2011 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. It was also the first summit convened with a specific theme : “Economic Cooperation”. The state leaders endorsed a joint programme of economic cooperation presented by the Ministers of Economy and instructed relevant authorities for its effective implementation. Working Groups are being established towards “Improving the Investment Climate”, devising “Measures for Diversification of the Economy”, “Development of Transportation” and developing “Entrepreneurship as the basis of Economic Relations”. To strengthen these efforts through the Public-Private Partnership model, a joint “Turkic Business Council” was also established at the Almaty Summit.

In the near future, the Organization will maintain its focus on deepening economic cooperation, with the guidance of Kazakhstan, which has assumed the post of Chairperson-in-Office until the next Summit in 2012. The Chairperson’s priorities include deepening investment cooperation particularly in the areas of transport infrastructure, the agro-industrial sector, high technology, engineering and other non-resource sectors. Turkic Council will also launch new projects and institutional structures gradually in other spheres. The topic of next year’s Summit to be held in Kyrgyzstan is announced as “Cooperation in Education, Science and Culture”. Among major earmarked projects are the establishment of a Turkic Academy, a Turkic Interuniversity Union and a Turkic Heritage Fund.

Distinguished participants,

As I attempted to portray so far, Turkic Council is an organization dedicated to strengthening peace and stability, promoting wide-ranging cooperation and disclosing the potential for common development amongst its member states. Although it brings together a particular group of countries, the organization does not take an exclusive approach. On the contrary, by promoting deeper relations and solidarity amongst Turkic speaking countries, it aims to serve as a new regional instrument for advancing international cooperation in Central Asia, Caucasia and the Middle East. This is exemplified by our excellent dialogue with other regional organizations such as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Our intention is to engage in mutually beneficial collaboration with all organizations having a similar scope in a transparent manner.

Although Turkic Council intensifies its activities in the economic and cultural spheres at the initial stage, it is at no difficulty in defining itself as a subregional organization aiming to contribute to the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area. Member states of the Organization are located in the epicenter of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community defined by the OSCE. By definition, they also stand to be acutely affected by the security challenges and threats facing the OSCE community. The proximity of member states to various regional conflicts gives them natural responsibility in the resolution of these conflicts. It is no coincidence that the last two summits of the OSCE were both hosted by current member states of the Turkic Council, Turkey and Kazakhstan.

In this light, the strong commitment of Turkic Council member states to the wider definition of security with all its political, economic, social and humanitarian components was reflected in the founding principles of the Turkic Council. There is much reason to expect that the work of the OSCE could be enriched by a thriving community of cooperation amongst Turkic states, forging new links between the three important regions of Central Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East.

Excellencies,

One of the most commendable aspects of the OSCE has been its constant emphasis on inclusiveness and the value attached to the input of subregional groupings. It is heartening to see that this approach remains relevant as the OSCE rises to the challenges of the 21st century. This was evident in the decisions adopted at the recent Ministerial Council held in Vilnius, where cooperation and coordination with other international and regional organizations was duly emphasized. We particularly welcomed the mention of the essential role of Central Asian Participating States in helping to promote long-term security and stability in Afghanistan, which could also be a substantial area of future cooperation between OSCE and Turkic Council.

In this connection, I should also like to mention that the Ministerial Council Decision “Strengthening Transport Dialogue in the OSCE” is another case in point for targeted cooperation between the two organizations. Turkic Council advocates the view that further development of Euro-Asian transport links and corridors is the cornerstone of regional cooperation and already hosts an initiative in the form of public-private partnership to this end.

Regarding the security dimension, the Platform for Cooperative Security continues to provide an appropriate forum for institutional cooperation between OSCE and other organizations. Being the most inclusive and comprehensive regional security arrangement in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, the OSCE experience and best practices directed at conflict prevention and crisis management are indispensable for all regional institutions concerned. Unlike the Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian part of the OSCE is far from being saturated in the institutional sense. There is more ground to be covered by mutually enforcing structures that are complementary to the efforts of the OSCE.

With the rise of transboundary threats in adjacent regions, new initiatives emanating from Eurasian Participating States deserve particular attention. Turkic Council, which should be seen as a product of regional ownership of the common objectives pursued by the OSCE, is ready to make its unique contribution to their achievement. On the basis of established principles of equality, inclusiveness and transparency, our organization will support a flexible approach towards establishing durable relations with the OSCE and will appreciate an increased exchange of information to explore possibilities in the near future.

I hope this meeting will be the first step in this direction.

Thank you for your kind attention.