

THE TENTH SUMMIT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF TURKIC STATES (OTS) - 08.12.2023

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The Organization of Turkic States, initiated back in early 1990s, is an intergovernmental institution that aims to create cooperation in politics, economics, culture and education among member countries. The OTS, which has member states of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and observer members Hungary, Turkmenistan and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, has core objectives of UN values and international law. Indeed, the Organization is strictly bound to universal values such as sovereign equality, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of states**[1]**. The OTS has gained impetus and increased cooperation among the Turkic countries that started back in the 1990s. Along with solid activities and the unity of its member states, the Organization has been holding annual summits.

In this regard, the tenth Summit of the Organization of the Turkic States (OTS) took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, on November 3, 2023. The motto of the tenth summit was the ¨Turk Time¨. The attendees from Türkiye were Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Türkiye, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Alparslan Bayraktar, Trade Minister Ömer Bolat, National Intelligence Director İbrahim Kalın, Head of the Council of Elders of the OTS Binali Yıldırım from Türkiye**[2]**. In addition, the leaders of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were among the participants.

The summit began with the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, where the leaders

of the OTS expressed concern over the situation in Gaza and stated the emergence of humanitarian corridors**[3]**. As Murat Nurtleu, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, suggested, ¨Our country is very concerned about the escalation of violence in the Middle East. We are joining the cooperation with the international community and calling for an immediate ceasefire. The opening of humanitarian corridors for the people of Gaza is a priority task of Kazakhstans diplomacy**[4]**.¨

At the tenth Summit, President Erdoğan also stated his concern over the war in Gaza. He mentioned that the international community must take decisive steps to end the violations of human rights in Gaza**[5]**. Expressing the importance of the global communitys reaction to Israels human rights abuses, he stressed that the OTS could play a role in promoting ceasefire and promoting peace in Gaza**[6]**.

At the end of the summit, a joint Declaration was published. The Astana Declaration covers several areas: cooperation in political, foreign policy and security issues, economic and sectoral cooperation, people-to-people cooperation, institutional cooperation in the Turkic World, cooperation with the external parties, and organizational issues.

First of all, the member states wow their fight against all forms of terrorism, violent extremism, drug trafficking, separatism, money laundering, discrimination, xenophobia, hatred against Islam and hate speech. All parties promised to expand cooperation in the fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking**[7]**. In addition to those, the member countries of the OTS appreciated the successful Organization of the Astana International Forum with the motto of ¨Tackling Challenges Through Dialogue: Towards Cooperation, Development and Progress¨, Qazqutkaru- 2023 Search and Rescue Competition and the ninth meeting of the Official Foreign Policy Research Centers of the Member States of the OTS**[8]**. The member states congratulated the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye. They also proclaimed February 6 as the Day of Remembrance of Disaster Victims and Solidarity**[9]**. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the member countries welcomed the signing of the Treaty between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on friendship, good neighborliness and cooperation for the development of the region**[10]** in the cooperation in political, foreign policy and security issues.

The member states welcomed several conferences, initiatives and resolutions on trade, investment, connectivity, agriculture and tourism in economic and sectoral cooperation. In this context, the member countries appreciated the establishment of the Geographic Council of Turkic States in Tashkent, the signing of the ¨Cooperation Protocol among the Relevant Institutions of the OTS member states in Metrology, foundation of the ¨Research Center for Trade Cooperation in the Turkic Countries, the launch of first freight block train between Türkiye and Uzbekistan, the results of the International Forum titled ¨Railway Connectivity of the Turkic States: Fergana Valley-Anadolu¨, the successful Organization of the tourism training program of the OTS, the Organization of Second Turkic Agro Business Forum, the Organization of ¨Information Exchange Program on Research and Development and Innovation Support for the SMEs**[11]**¨. Additionally, it was decided to encourage the member countries to reduce transport costs, raise the number of transit permits and prevent other non-physical barriers towards trade, the Organization of the

International Conference titled ¨International Transport-Logistics Corridors: Development Impulses from Zangilan¨, the joint efforts of the member countries to ease customs procedures and initiate digital tools in customs operations, the proposal of Uzbekistan to build formal relations between the OTS and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the results of the VII Summit of the Ministers in Charge of Tourism of the OTS and the International Tourism Forum ¨Turkestan- the tourism capital of the Turkic World¨, the creation of the website on Turkic Silk Road and the Organization of the International Scientific Conference titled ¨Common Cultural Heritage of the Turkic World: Tourism Route of Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Cultures¨**[12]**. Again, it was instructed to prepare for the seventh meeting of Ministers of Transport of the OTS and continue efforts to provide transport operations across the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor. In order to further trade among the member countries of the Organization, the parties decided to adopt the TURAN Special Economic Zone (TURANSEZ) as well as the Action Plan on the OTS Transport Connectivity Program.**[13]**.

In the next part, People to People cooperation, the member states commended the work of several organizations and initiated further cooperation in education and politics among the member countries, realized by OTS and its umbrella institutions. Those organizations were the ¨International Baku/ Shusha Forum of Heads of State Institutions responsible for Diaspora Issues¨, the ¨First Forum of Diaspora Youth of Turkic States: Heydar Aliyev and the Turkic World¨, the international conference on ¨Educational Activities of the Jadids ideas, goals, objectives and their contribution to the development of Turkestan¨, the Organization of the VII World Epics Festival on May 17-21, 2023, in Osh, the event of the international Turkish Alumni Reunion in Azerbaijan, on 29-30 September 2023, the event of the International Language Forum of Turkic Republics and the Organization of the First Turkic World Cultural Forum, took place on October 13-14, 2023, in Shusha.**[14]**. Also, it was decided that the member countries of the OTS decided to back the initiative of Uzbekistan on the foundation of the Turkic Creative Youth Encouragement Center**[15]**. Moreover, it was stressed in the Astana Declaration that the parties welcome the Organization of the Fifth Meeting of the Ministers/ Heads of Institutions in charge of Diaspora of the OTS, the Fourth Meeting of the Heads of Muslim Religious Boards of the OTS and the meeting of the alliance of Turkic News Agencies (ATNA)**[16]**. Furthermore, İstanbul was declared as the Youth Capital of the Turkic World 2023 by the member countries**[17]**. One of the most significant outcomes of the Astana Declaration was the resolution to the Turkic World Common Alphabet Commission, as it is a crucial step to providing unity in language among the member countries.

Moreover, the member countries made several decisions to further institutional cooperation in the Astana Declaration. The institutionalization efforts of the OTS, such as increasing the staff and budget of the Secretariat and supporting further cooperation among the umbrella institutions of the OTS, were on the Agenda.**[18]**. In addition, encouraging the initiative of the Union of National Academies of Sciences of the Turkic World to further institutional cooperation, was included in the Astana Declaration. Finally, the member states appreciated the observer status of the TRNC and the successful event of the 30th anniversary of the TURKSOY**[19]**.

In Cooperation with External parties, the member states expressed satisfaction regarding the Observer Status of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) at the OTS and the observer status for the OTS at the UN General Assembly and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**[20]**. Thus, the member states appreciated the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Organization and UN-Habitat, the work of the OTS Secretariat forming a collaboration between the OTS and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**[21]**. Another decision of the OTS regarding relations with external parties was to support the Secretariat in improving cooperation with all relevant international regional organizations. Thereby, it was instructed to establish the OTS-Gulf Cooperation Council, OTS-African Union and OTS-EU Platforms**[22]**.

In conclusion, it can be said that the member countries of the OTS have taken a number of crucial steps to further cooperation among the Turkic countries. The decision to establish the TURANSEZ Economic Corridor and form a standard alphabet are among the most important, as those decisions could provide more economic integration and unity in language among member states.

**Photograph*:https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/10th-summit-of-organization-of-turkic-states-starts-in-kazakhstan/3042051

[1] ¨Organization of Turkic States¨, *Organization of Turkic States*, https://www.turkicstates.org/en/turk-konseyi-hakkinda

[2] ¨¨Turk Time: Turkic States Convene For Major Summit in Kazakhstan¨, *Daily Sabah*, November 2, 2023, https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turk-time-turkic-states-convene-for-major-summit-in-kazakhstan

[3] Elena Teslova,¨ Tenth Summit of Organization of Turkic States starts in Kazakhstan¨, *Anadolu Agency*, November 3, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/10th-summit-of-organization-of-turkic-states-starts-in-kazakhstan/3042051

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Burç Eruygur, ¨Turkish President Erdoğan Meets OTS Leaders in Kazakhstan¨, *Anadolu Agency*, November 2, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkish-president-erdogan-meets-ots-leaders-in-kazakhstans-capital/3041478

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] ¨Declaration of the Tenth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States¨, *Organization of Turkic States*, https://www.turkicstates.org/assets/pdf/temel_belgeler/tenth-summit-declaration-2023-21-en.pdf

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid*.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid*.

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