

**Kubanychbek Omuraliev: We are together stronger!**

By B. Nyamsuren

H.E. Ambassador Kubanychbek Omuraliev, Secretary General of the Organization of Turkic States, which aims to promote cooperation among Turkic peoples, is visiting our country at the invitation of Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. B. Battsetseg. He discussed with the Minister the ways of how to expand cooperation between Turkic States and Mongolia, who share a common history and culture. Mr. Omuraliev first visited Mongolia 30 years ago and has served as Ambassador to several countries.

**What are the main goals and priorities of the Organization of Turkic States? As we understand, the affiliated structures of the OTS - Turkic Academy and the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation are highly active in cultural activities, correct?**

The Organization of Turkic States was established 15 years ago, according to the Nakhichevan Agreement, which was signed during the Summit of the Heads of States of the Turkic States on October 3, 2009, in Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan. This marked the official founding of the Organization. However, it is important to note that the member states of our organization share common values and have a long history that spans many centuries.

Currently, our organization includes five full-fledged member states: Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Hungary and Turkmenistan hold observer status.

In recent years, the Organization of Turkic States has made many important moves to strengthen cooperation among our countries and increase our presence on the world stage.

We have expanded our multilateral cooperation up to 35 different areas, ranging from foreign policy and trade to energy, green economy, tourism, digitalization, and even space research.

As you mentioned, there are several other international organizations that support global and regional cooperation, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ECO, CIS, ASEAN, the European Union, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and others. What distinguishes us is our shared history, culture, and language.

We are unique in that we are united by these commonalities. We have been together throughout history, we must stand together now, and we will continue to do so in the future. Therefore, our common motto is: "We are strong together."

Our primary goal is to preserve our heritage and history for future generations. To be "stronger together," we must focus not only on our shared history and culture but also on strengthening cooperation in all areas.

Answering to your question regarding the cultural activities within our Organization, I would like to highlight the activities of our affiliated and related Organizations. For example, the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) focuses on cultural matters, while the Turkic Academy is dedicated to history, archeology and scientific research. The Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation is engaged in heritage-related activities in popularization, preservation and reconstruction of the common Turkic cultural heritage.

Moreover, over the past few years, we have expanded into specialized institutions with distinct functions, such as, the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States focuses on legislative and parliamentary cooperation. We have also established a Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Turkic Investment Fund to support business and economic cooperation among our countries.

**- You have mentioned the importance of economic cooperation. How can we pursue economic cooperation, particularly in the fields of the digital economy and technology, in today's world?**

The economic cooperation among the Member States of the Organization of Turkic States is an essential and dynamic aspect of the overall integration and collaboration within the Turkic world.

One of the main mechanisms we have established to enhance cooperation is the **Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI)**, which acts as a key platform for strengthening business relations across our member states.

Additionally, **the Turkic Investment Fund (TIF)** is another milestone. Initially launched with a capital of \$500 million, the fund has now grown to \$600 million with joining of Hungary, supporting mutual investments, fostering innovation, and nurturing entrepreneurship, particularly within SMEs. The Fund is planned to be activated this year and start investing in concrete projects in our region.

Another major development is the **Trade Facilitation Committee (TFC)**, which works to streamline trade processes, remove barriers, and improve the overall business environment in the region.

At the recent summit in Bishkek, we signed **the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement**, which marks a major leap toward digital trade and transformation within our region.

While the potential for expanding trade in our region is enormous—given its strategic position at the crossroads of East and West, North and South—there are still hurdles to

overcome. According to the final results of 2024, **OTS member states rank 12th globally in total GDP, with a combined external trade volume of \$1.1 trillion.** However, intra-trade between the OTS Member States currently accounts for only around 7% of that (total trade turnover of OTS Member States in 2024 was 850 billion USD), or about \$58.17 billion. A few years ago, this was only 3%, so we're seeing encouraging growth. Our goal now is to increase this share to 10% as quickly as possible.

Historically, we were connected by the Silk Road. Today, we are linked through the Middle Corridor, which connects North to South, as well as the Middle Corridor that connects West to East. It is clear that transport and logistics will play a key role in the trade and economic cooperation of our countries. We have developed several projects to be implemented in the near future, and with their execution, various transportation challenges will be reduced. This will enable faster and more efficient cargo distribution between countries.

To achieve this, we are addressing barriers in transportation and logistics, with long-term projects like the **Middle Corridor**, a key strategic initiative connecting Asia to Europe. Passing through our member states, it offers unparalleled advantages. It is 2,000 kilometers shorter than the Northern Corridor and can deliver goods from China to Europe three times faster than sea routes—within just 15 days.

Infrastructure enhancements along the Middle Corridor are expected to triple the volume of cargo transported by 2030, reaching 11 million tons. A vital component of this corridor is the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project, which will significantly reduce transit distances and has the potential to transport up to 15 million tons of cargo annually. In recent years, we've witnessed substantial growth in cargo transportation along this route. In the first 11 months of 2024, the volume of cargo transported along the Middle Corridor surged by 63%, reaching 4.1 million tons.

We have also made significant strides in transport and customs cooperation. Agreements such as the **Simplified Customs Corridor, International Combined Freight Transport, and digitalization initiatives like E-Permit, E-CMR, and E-TIR** are helping to streamline logistics and enhance trade efficiency. All these efforts are contributing to our broader goal of deepening regional economic integration and improving trade flows among our member states.

Given the strategic location of OTS member countries, the Middle Corridor serves as a vital transit route for EU nations seeking alternative and efficient pathways to Asia. The EU can leverage the OTS region's potential by engaging in collaborative projects that enhance infrastructure, harmonize regulations, and promote seamless trade. We stand ready to serve as a bridge for transit, facilitating not only the movement of goods but also fostering economic cooperation and mutual prosperity between the East and the West.

**- Mongolia is not an official member of the Organization of Turkic States. However, what kind of cooperation does your organization have with our country?**

First of all, Mongolia has bilateral cooperation with the member states of our organization at the high-level including strategic partnership relations. Most of the member states of our organization have officially opened embassies in Mongolia, and those that have not are likely to do so in the near future. The Turkic Academy is working very closely with the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. In particular, since 2019, the Turkic Academy, in collaboration with the Institute of Archeology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, has been conducting archaeological excavations in the Nomgon Valley, located in the Arkhangai region of Mongolia.

As I mentioned earlier, we share many similarities in history and heritage, and it can be said that our ancestors had the same ethnic origin. Mongolia is a country that preserves a rich Turkic cultural heritage. The largest number of monuments from the Turkic period are found in Mongolia, making it the cradle of Turkic culture.

Especially, memorial complexes of outstanding historical Turkic personalities like Bilge Kagan, Kül Tigin, Tonyukuk and others located in the territory of Mongolia clearly showcase a strong interconnectedness and deep roots of Mongolia with the Turkic World.

**- As you are visiting Mongolia at the invitation of Minister of Foreign Minister B. Battsetseg. On the first day of your visit, the Minister met you and held discussions. Could you share the outcomes of this meeting and the purpose of your visit to Mongolia?**

Yes. I am here upon the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia. The main purpose of my visit is present our Organization to the Mongolian side including current ongoing activities of the OTS and exchange views on possible ways of enhancing cooperation with Mongolia in relevant areas. We believe that this visit will be fruitful and productive to both sides with a shared goal and the opportunity to foster cooperation.

**- How does the Organization of Turkic States collaborate with other international organizations?**

Our organization is closely cooperating with other international organizations. For example, we are working actively with all sectoral organizations of the UN within the to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and provisions of the Turkic World Vision - 20240.

We developed and signed targeted work plans and MoUs with key international bodies, including UN institutions such as UN-Habitat, WHO, and UNIDO. Notably, we signed an MoU with UN-Habitat to promote urban development and sustainability, and a Joint Declaration with UNIDO focusing on clean energy and sustainability. Additionally, the

2024-2025 Action Plan with WHO will guide our collaboration on improving emergency preparedness, strengthening health systems, and promoting well-being across our region.

Our cooperation with other international organizations such as OSCE, GCC, OIC, ECO, ASEAN, OECD, and the African Union has not only strengthened our political potential and visibility but has also enhanced our diplomatic influence, economic resilience, and connectivity globally. This comprehensive approach is vital in addressing shared challenges and advancing mutual interests.

**- I must ask you about the current situation in international relations and geopolitics. How do you view the current geopolitical division and redistribution? How do you think the Turkic countries of Central Asia, which share a common history and culture, should cooperate in this context?**

Today, it is clear to everyone that the geopolitical situation is evolving. The key to stopping wars and resolving conflicts lies in negotiations through dialogue. Regarding regional ambitions, our member states have proposed initiatives that can help bridge gaps between opposing sides. You may recall that Turkey took the lead in initiating this process. In short, we must end all forms of conflict and establish peace, with peace negotiations being the primary means to achieve this. As Turkic countries, we share common goals and characteristics, so our focus is on unity. Therefore, it can be said that our main responsibility is to implement the goal of "Stronger Together," to foster closer cooperation, and to support one another.