

**There was a historic event for the Turkic World in Istanbul. Could you elaborate on the Concept of the Turkic World until 2040?**

Undoubtedly, the VIII Summit of Leaders of the Organization of Turkic States can be called an historical event, which attracted the attention not only of Turkic countries, but also of all countries interacting with the Turkic world in one way or another. We continue to receive feedback not only from the states of our region, but also from such countries as the USA, China, India, and the Arab countries, which demonstrates the international significance of this event.

The historic nature of the summit is also demonstrated by the significance of the decisions adopted. The most important document is the 'Vision for the Turkic World - 2040', which outlines the main parameters of cooperation and interaction within the framework of our Organization for the 20-year period. This can be seen as a message of the current generation of Turkic leaders to the future generation.

The renaming of the name of our Organisation is important. Although it has been in existence for 12 years with all the attributes and powers and as a full-fledged international organisation, the renaming has given the Organisation a new, special status, increased its authority and role in the international arena.

Another important event was Turkmenistan's accession to the OTG. This brotherly country has always been an integral part of the Turkic world and earlier participated actively in the activities of our Organization. Thus, all sovereign and independent Turkic states in the world - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Hungary, which also considers itself part of the Turkic world, are united under the common flag of the Organisation of Turkic States.

The next important decision is to adopt provisions for Observers and Partners. Today, many countries have expressed their wish to obtain such statuses in our Organization, which testifies to the high international standing of our Organization in the world community.

I would also like to stress the importance of the final Istanbul Declaration adopted at the summit, which consists of 130 points and reflects the entire agenda of the Turkic States today. The document encompassed all issues of cooperation, from politics to the cultural and humanitarian spheres, from major events to small but important events.

The declaration was unanimously approved and this means that the Turkic world has become more united and cohesive.

I consider another significant decision to be the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund, the first financial institution within the Turkic world. This Fund will start operating in the coming months and I am confident it will play a major role in strengthening our cooperation, increasing the trade turnover and mutual investment, and most importantly, in supporting small and medium-sized businesses.

During the summit President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was awarded the "Highest Order of Turkic World". This award, unique in the world, was instituted 2 years ago by our heads of states, and is awarded by the decision and signature of 6 heads of states. You should agree that there is no such order in the world.

The first Order was awarded to the Honorary Chairman of the Organization of Turkic States, the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev during the Summit in Baku in 2019. This year the Order was awarded to I. Aliyev for his outstanding contribution to strengthening the Turkic world and his role in the liberation of occupied Karabakh. It is symbolic that all Turkic countries thus expressed their solidarity with the brotherly people of Azerbaijan by sharing this victory with them.

### **How would you describe the reaction of the international community to the creation of the Organisation of Turkic States?**

- The international community followed the forum closely and the reaction was lively but not hostile. There have been many questions, but no overtly hostile reactions. Many political analysts saw the renaming of the OTG as a "new geopolitical reality" in the Eurasian space.

In this regard, I would like to clarify the following points.

First, our member states are fraternal nations. They are united not only by a common ethnic identity, language, culture, spiritual values and traditions, but also by history, geography, economy, information space. Therefore, the creation of a universal platform expressing the common interests of the Turkic states is a very logical step.

The international community understands and accepts that states can create organisations on an ethnic basis. The Arabs created the Arabian League several decades ago, the Francophone world has the Francophone Organisation, the Nordic countries created the Nordic Council, the Anglo-Saxon world is also united and expresses a common position on all issues, and in South-East Asia there is ASEAN.

Secondly, uniting Turkic countries before modern challenges like global climate warming, pandemics, terrorism and extremism as maintenance of peace and stability - is the tenor of today.

Thirdly, our Organization was established 12 years ago. During this period there have been no problems with the outside world and no complaints about our activities. On the contrary, there is a great interest in our Organization - 15 states have expressed their intention to become observers.

All this shows that we are on the right track, we have earned a good international reputation and we have been able to build constructive relations with the outside world. No one will want to join a bad company. We are very happy about this, although we cannot accept everyone. The Organization of Turkic States is a very positive inter-governmental association.

### **Who can join the Organisation of Turkic States and under what conditions?**

- According to Article 22 of the Nakhchivan Agreement, signed 12 years ago, only Turkic states can join the OTG. As a rule these are the states where the majority of the population belongs to the Turkic peoples and one of the Turkic languages is the state language.

On this basis Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan, being Turkic countries, are member states of the Organisation. Turkmenistan has also joined our alliance since 12 November 2021. The same rule also applies to Hungary. In this respect, it can be considered that the Organisation of Turkic States has finally completed its composition as there are no other Turkic states in the world.

Another issue is the status of Observers and Partners. I have already mentioned that quite a number of countries from Europe to Asia and all the way to Latin America want to get observer status in our Organization. Naturally, we are happy to do so, but we will not be able to accept them all. Obviously, there should not be more observers than there are member states. They can be those countries which have constitutionally and nationally one of the Turkic languages

as a state language or an official language on its entire territory. Then we will be able to accept them. There are countries which are ready to grant this status to some Turkic languages or they are close to it.

There is also Partner status, for which there are more flexible conditions of acceptance. Any country or organisation can become a Partner if there are common interests and cooperation projects in various fields, including economy, transport, culture, etc. We will formalise Partners by signing a special agreement. The Organisation of Turkic States is ready to establish partnership relations with all countries of the world in the presence of common interests and is open to constructive dialogue and mutually beneficial relations with all those who are ready to cooperate with us.

### **Can Russia, for example, where many Turkic peoples live, join the OTS?**

- There are many states in the world where Turkic peoples live: Russia, China, Iran, Afghanistan, Europe and the USA. Naturally, we are not indifferent to the fate of our fellows. However, as an inter-governmental organization, we can only deal with states and central governments and cannot work directly with Turkic-speaking communities to avoid accusations of interference in internal affairs.

For contacts and relations with Turkic minorities we have organisations such as TURKSOY and the Turkic Academy which carry out activities to promote and popularise the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples, science, education and history.

As far as Russia is concerned, the current Regulation on Observers applies to it as well. At the same time, we are open for partnership with Russia, as well as with other friendly countries.

When a question of this nature is asked, I always remind them that the Member States of our Organization are the friendliest and closest countries to Russia. Hardly any other countries in the world are as close and friendly to Russia as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and even Turkey. Moreover, all the needs of our relations with Russia are overlapped by the huge number of bilateral agreements already in place.

**The creation of a common Turkic information space is one of the key conditions for its development. Are there any concrete plans in the implementation of this direction?**

- The creation of a common information space is already a given. Any information instantly appears on the Internet, including events in the Turkic world. Nevertheless, the formation of the information space of the Turkic world is one of the important tasks of our Organization. The development of digital technologies in today's world has led to an unprecedented increase in the influence of the media, especially social media, in shaping public opinion and consciousness. During the 3rd Media Ministerial Meeting in Baku in April this year, the parties approved the Action Plan 2021-2022 and agreed on the establishment of a Media Coordination Committee.

The establishment of a single "International Turkic News Channel" and strengthening of cooperation between news agencies and national TV channels are also under active consideration. Perhaps we will accelerate the creation of a single news channel, which would not only have media representatives from one country, but "combined" from other member states of the Organization to inform the whole world 24 hours about important political, economic and social processes of our brotherly countries.

**How do you assess the prospects for military-political cooperation among the Turkic states?**

- As I underlined earlier, the activities of our Organization do not include military aspects of cooperation, not only because of Turkey's participation in NATO and Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's participation in the CSTO. Our member states have no intention to turn the Organization of Turkic States into a military structure and see no objective need for this.

At the Istanbul summit our member states adopted a conceptual document "Vision of the Turkic World - 2040", which also does not include military cooperation within the Organisation of Turkic States.

However, this does not mean that in a bilateral format such cooperation is ruled out. It is the sovereign right of the states themselves. At the bilateral level exercises and training of military personnel, exchange of experience in training and retraining and the latest technology are carried out with different countries, including between a number of Turkic states. Some Turkic states, as far as I know, also have some form of cooperation with NATO.

**How do you think the concept of Turkic integration can be seen not only as a foreign policy project, but also as a basis for the internal consolidation of the societies of our states? How can the Turkic factor influence domestic political processes?**

- If we talk about the impact of the Turkic factor on domestic politics of our countries, we should consider it in two dimensions.

First, if we are talking about the impact of the Turkic factor for inner-political consolidation of the society, I am sure that the Turkic factor can indeed unite the society and strengthen the states, on condition that the interests of other segments of the society are not infringed as well.

First of all, we are Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz and then we are Turks. It is unlikely that we can change our centuries-old identity. For the majority of our population the Turkic identity is considered as one of the main elements of our national identity. In this respect, the role and influence of Turkic identity in consolidation of society and consolidation of statehood is really important. This unites us, makes us stronger.

It would be unwise to ignore this factor for any politician who wishes to gain the support of the part of society which considers itself Turkic, and this can hardly be construed as populism. Rather, it is taking into account the interests of the majority, which is a fundamental norm of democracy. But at the same time, it is important to take into account the interests of national minorities as well.

**Another question, does the Turkic world or common Turkic associations influence on internal political processes in Turkic world?**

No. The international Turkic factor does not have a significant impact on the internal political processes and public opinion in our countries, because our countries do not seek to influence the internal political processes of other brotherly countries. I have never heard that Uzbeks, Kazakhs or Turks interfered in internal affairs of other Turkic states. There are no attempts to spread their influence, to impose their values, to pursue their vested interests under any pretext.

In the Organisation of Turkic States there is absolutely no hegemony of one or another country, no claims to each other and no intention to interfere in the internal affairs of each

other. On the contrary, the sovereignty of each state is undeniable and sacred for all countries of the Organization.

Believe me, the Organization of Turkic States is in fact a unselfish, friendly and fraternal association of countries. I believe that this is one of the most important advantages of our Turkic community.