



## 30TH YEAR OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND TURKIC REPUBLICS

Türkiye was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the Turkic Republics and to open an embassy in 1991. Culture, language, religion and social affinity and ties from the past between Türkiye and the Turkic Republics have been important factors in the shaping and development of relations between these states.

Türkiye was the first country to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1991. Similarly, when Kazakhstan declared its independence on December 16<sup>th</sup> 1991, Türkiye was the first country to recognize it. It can be said that Türkiye's attitude and policy in these examples is similar to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

The relations between the Turkic Republics have developed within the institutional framework over the years. In this context, especially the cooperation agreements signed between countries and the organizations established are of great importance. Through these agreements and the international organizations of which it is a member, the opportunities for cooperation between states are further developing. For instance, the "Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement between Turkey and Azerbaijan" signed on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 and the establishment of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council on September 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 can be cited as important developments. Similarly, a "Strategic Partnership Agreement" was signed between Türkiye and Kazakhstan in October 2009, and the first meeting of the "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" was held in October 2012. Türkiye and Uzbekistan signed a "Strategic Partnership Agreement" on 25-27 October 2017, and a High Level Strategic Cooperation Council was established between the countries in April 2018. "Eternal Friendship and Cooperation Agreement" was signed between Kyrgyzstan and Turkey on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1997, and the statement "Turkey and Kyrgyzstan: Together into the 21st Century" was signed in July 1999. Following the establishment of the Strategic

Cooperation High Council in 2011, the first meeting of the "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" was held in October 2012. In addition to bilateral relations, the Turkic Republics are taking steps to strengthen their cooperation within the joint organizations established together. Currently, international organizations such as the Organization of Turkic States, the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSOY), the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TÜRKPA), the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Turkic World Heritage Foundation make significant contributions to the convergence and cooperation of the Turkic States.

On the other hand, Turkic Republics, which have a common historical heritage, cooperate closely under UNESCO in order to promote the cultural heritage of their common history to the world and transfer them to future generations as friendly and brotherly countries in order to keep these heritages in the international arena and protect the relations between societies alive. Thanks to this cooperation, the common cultural heritage of the Turkic people such as, "Traditional Turkic Archery", "Traditional Intelligence and Strategy Game: Togyzqumalaq, Toguz Korgool, Mangala/Immigration", "Dede Korkut-Korkut Ancestor Heritage", "Thin Bread Making and Sharing Traditions" and "Nowruz" have been registered to the UNESCO list. Various activities are carried out in the field of education among the Turkic Republics in order to transfer and maintain friendly relations to younger generations. One of the most important and popular of these at the global level is the higher education scholarships (YTB) provided by the Republic of Turkey Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities. Considering the total amount of scholarships including YTB scholarships, 21,000 people from Azerbaijan, 5,350 people from Kazakhstan, 4,500 people from Kyrgyzstan, 2,400 people from Uzbekistan and 5,000 people from Turkmenistan have received higher education scholarships in Turkey in

the last 30 years. Currently, 5,600, 2,500, 1,800 and 1,600 students respectively from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are studying in Turkey.

In the context of economic relations, the increasing trade and investment rates over the years show us that the cooperation between the Turkic states has an ever-increasing trend. In the last 20 years, exports and imports between Türkiye and the Turkic Republics have been growing steadily. For instance, while the total trade volume between Türkiye and Azerbaijan was 325,3 million dollars in 2000, this number increased 7,5 times to 2,49 billion in 2020. Likewise, the total trade with Kazakhstan increased from 462 million dollars in 2000 to 2,08 billion dollars in 2020. The trade volume with Kyrgyzstan increased from 22 million dollars in 2000 to 508 million dollars in 2020. Türkiye's trade volume with Turkmenistan increased from 1 billion dollars in 2000 to 1,1 billion dollars in 2020. Finally, the trade volume with Uzbekistan increased 12 times from 167 million dollars in 2000 to 2,96 billion dollars in 2020. While these numbers show us the general framework of the developing trade relations between Türkiye and the Turkic Republics, they also point out that the most balanced trade volume of Turkey is with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

To briefly summarize the course of relations between the Turkic Republics, Türkiye's determination to strengthen its ties with the Turkic Republics that gained independence from the very first moment and its development at an institutional level after the beginning of the 2010s has increased the potential for interstate cooperation. As a result, Türkiye's relations with the Turkic Republics from the very first day have made significant contributions to both regional stability and global peace. In this process, organizations such as the Organization of Turkic States, TÜRKSOY, TÜRKPA and the Turkic World Heritage Foundation, which are the joint cooperation institutions of the Turkic states, also contribute for developing relations.

## Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- The negotiations on a peaceful settlement of the situation between representatives of Russia and Ukraine were held in Istanbul. Moscow insisted on “demilitarization” of Ukraine, recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea and the independence of the Lugansk and Donetsk republics. Kyiv demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops and the provision of security guarantees. The most significant result of the negotiations was the announcement of Moscow to partially withdraw its troops from Kyiv and Chernihiv and focus on the “liberation” of Donbas (Avesta.tj, 29.03.2022).
- Prior to laying the groundwork for the construction of a thermal power plant in the Syrdarya region of Uzbekistan, President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid a visit to a new thermal power plant that can generate up to 240 megawatts of electricity in the Kibray district. Both of these projects are implemented by a Turkish company. Uzbekistan plans to modernize the energy sector until 2026, launching 20 projects worth \$12 billion on a public-private partnership basis (UzReport, 30.03.2022).
- The President of India Ram Nath Kovind visited Ashgabat, where he had a meeting with his Turkmen counterpart Serdar Berdimuhamedov. The Presidents signed a package of documents aimed at strengthening contacts on economic, scientific and cultural issues. Commenting on the signed documents, President Ram Nath Kovind expressed support for Turkmenistan's readiness to send a delegation consisting of youth representatives to India through cultural interaction in the above-mentioned format (Turkmenportal, 02.04.2022).
- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Ruslan Kazakbaev visited Berlin, where he had talks with Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Annalena Berbock. Kazakbaev noted that Germany is one of the priority partners of Kyrgyzstan in the European Union, and asked to consider the restoration of bilateral implementation of financial and technical projects in Kyrgyzstan. The parties discussed the situation in Ukraine, including in the context of the issues of strengthening energy and food security (Kabar, 01.04.2022).
- The Foreign Minister of Georgia David Zalkaliani had a telephone conversation with his Kazakh counterpart Mukhtar Tleuberdi. The sides talked about the bilateral relations between Georgia and Kazakhstan and the ways to strengthen bonds, especially in transportation and communication fields. Discussing the cooperation prospects, the parties agreed on “full coordination” in terms of the trade-economic ties between the countries. The sides also exchanged views on the current regional situation amid the ongoing Russian military invasion in Ukraine (Agenda.ge, 31.03.2022).
- The Uzbek and Indian military conducted the exercise “Dustlik-2022”. The venue for the conscientious exercises was the Yangiaryk training ground of the Northwestern Military District of Uzbekistan. The exercises were aimed mainly at the exchange of experience in military training, modern combat skills and military operations, including the fight against the terrorist threat (SNG Today, 31.03.2022).

## Economy, Finance, and Energy

- Bilateral trade between Kazakhstan and the European Union (EU) surged during the first two months of 2022. In particular, the figure amounted to \$6 billion and increased by more than 71% compared to the same period last year. For the reported period, exports from Kazakhstan to the EU countries increased by almost 85% exceeding \$5 billion. Growth in supplies was caused by an increase in the export of such goods as oil, ferroalloys, aluminum, wheat and natural gas (Qazaq TV, 31.03.2022).
- Economic sanctions on Russia, which caused the collapse of the ruble, changed migration patterns. Migrant workers have been looking for better destinations than Russia to find new jobs. The impossibility of money transfers via Mastercard and Visa affected the decisions of the migrants. Since 2020, citizens of Russia have occupied about 20% of the vacancies that previously employed foreign workers (UzReport, 30.03.2022).
- Kyrgyzstan plans to develop its energy sector using investments from China. Recently, the Ministry of Energy of Kyrgyzstan signed an investment agreement with a Chinese state company to build a 500-megawatt hydro-power plant, which will be located in Issyk-Kul Oblast. The Ministry reported that tariffs have already been negotiated with the company. The land issues are being solved now. The Ministry of Energy actively supports investors in the energy sector (Kabar, 31.03.2022).
- Turkmenistan strengthens cooperation with international institutions. Recently, the country signed a \$45 million loan agreement with the OPEC Fund for International Development to support the construction of three sea-going vessels to carry railroad cars, passengers and dry cargo. The facility aims to develop trade and strengthen the country's ship-building potential. Upon completion of the project, the annual freight capacity is expected to increase by one million tons, and the number of passengers will increase by 20 thousand people per year (Orient, 30.03.2022).
- Trans Caspian International Transport Route is intended to increase freight traffic from China to Türkiye, as well as to the EU countries and vice versa. Recently, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye and Kazakhstan have signed a quadripartite declaration, which emphasizes the importance of increasing transit potential, as well as integrating the route into the international transportation system. The declaration also emphasizes the critical need for infrastructure investments in order to improve the quality of transportation operations along this route (AzerNews, 01.04.2022).
- According to the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, tens of millions of tons of agricultural products intended for export are currently stored in the country. Due to transportation problems, Ukraine is short of \$1.5 billion a month, while other countries suffer a food crisis. Ukraine is looking for alternative logistics routes to send agricultural goods through European seaports, and discusses the possibility of rail transport. Ukraine provides food to more than 400 million people around the world (Ukrinform, 30.03.2022).

## Society and Culture

- The Turkish city of Bursa, which was declared the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2022 by the International Organization of Turkic Culture, hosted the opening event. It was attended by more than 700 artists from 13 countries and regions of the Turkic World. The event featured special performances about Bursa and introduced the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2022 with different thematic performances (Turksoy.org, 31.03.2022).
- Tajikistan is planning to open a passport service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. The opening of a branch of the Passport and Visa Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Tajikistan will allow organizing about 80% of the work on preparing a package of documents necessary for labor migration. Having a work permit issued in Tajikistan, labor migrants will be able to start working legally immediately after entering the territory of the Russian Federation (ASIA-Plus, 29.03.2022).
- The National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan and the Turkic Academy intend to establish cooperation. The President of the International Turkic Academy, Darkhan Kydyrali, met with the President of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Farhod Rakhimi. During the meeting, the sides exchanged views on the development of bilateral scientific cooperation. Following the meeting, the parties agreed to create joint projects of the Turkic Academy with Tajik scientists, as well as to organize expeditions and conferences (Avesta.tj, 30.03.2022).
- The International Creative Association of Film Studios of the CIS countries and Georgia plan to create a single golden collection of their films. This was discussed during the 4th Board of Directors of film studios of the CIS countries and Georgia on cooperation in the field of cinematography. The participants noted the need to restore the ties that used to be between the studios of the former Soviet republics, cooperate, and find common themes for film production (Avesta.tj, 02.04.2022).
- A television version of the reality show of the international tourist competition “Turkestan - the spiritual capital of the Turkic world” was recorded in Turkestan. The participants of the reality show visited the most important tourist attractions of the Turkestan region: the mausoleums of Arystan-Bab and Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the medieval settlements of Sauran and Otrar. The reality show is aimed at developing tourism and strengthening cultural ties between Turkic-speaking countries (Avesta-news.kz, 30.03.2022).
- According to the Kazakh Association of Tour Operators, Türkiye remains the most popular travel destination among people in Kazakhstan, followed by Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. Tourism is beginning to recover after the pandemic and the number of tourists who traveled abroad at the beginning of 2022 is almost equal to the number of tourists before the pandemic began. Approximately 200,000 people from Kazakhstan have traveled abroad in 2021, which is substantially more than in 2020 (The Astana Times, 31.03.2022).