ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)

6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism
April 26, 2025

ERZURUM DECLARATION

We, the Ministers of Tourism and Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States, comprising the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Türkiye, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, gathering at the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism on 26 April 2025, in Erzurum, hosted by the Republic of Türkiye, and:

Keeping in view the Article II of the Treaty of İzmir and other vital frameworks for tourism cooperation under ECO umbrella;

Emphasizing the objectives outlined in ECO Vision 2025, particularly the establishment of sustainable tourism destinations that offer a diverse range of products and high-quality services in the ECO region;

Reaffirming the importance of the decisions taken by the previous ECO Ministerial Meetings on Tourism and the notable outcomes of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism held on October 5, 2023 in Ardabil under the Chairmanship of the Islamic Republic of Iran and efforts of all ECO Member States to grow the sector in their respective countries;

Highlighting the necessity of enhanced cooperation and coordinated initiatives to capitalize the region's tourism potential for economic development while ensuring the preservation of our rich natural and cultural heritage;

Recognizing tourism's role in promoting peace, understanding, and mutual trust and respect among the communities of our region, as well as its capacity to foster people to people contact and celebrate our shared values and traditions;

Witnessing the splendid launch of festivities dedicated to Erzurum as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025 and **appreciating** the gracious support and encouragement of His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Honourable President of the Republic of Türkiye;

Have decided to:

1. **Underline** the importance of selecting the ECO Tourism Capital each year as a well-recognized tradition and the most significant process towards marketing, promotion and branding of ECO tourism destinations;

2. **Appreciate** the city of Shahrisabz in the Republic of Uzbekistan for successfully hosting tourism festivities dedicated to ECO Tourism Capital title for 2024;

3. **Invite** to work for further recognition of Erzurum in the Republic of Türkiye as the ECO Tourism Capital and European Capital of Winter Sports for 2025 and wish success for holding planned events throughout the year;

4. **Congratulate** warmly the city of Shusha in the Republic of Azerbaijan as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2026; and **welcome** their initiatives within the framework of ECO Tourism Capital celebrations;

5. **Announce** the city of **Lahore** in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, **Mary** in Turkmenistan for 2028 and **Karakol** in Kyrgyz Republic for 2029;

6. **Encourage** the ECO Member States to strengthen their collective endeavours in promoting the cultural and natural treasures of the ECO region particularly through use of digital tools, and to support the enrichment of the ECO Tourism Website and its affiliated YouTube channel recently launched by the Secretariat by sharing documentaries and relevant materials;

7. **Welcome** the establishment of the ECO Advisory Committee on Tourism (ECO-ACT) initiated by the Republic of Uzbekistan, which will serve as overall guiding platform in monitoring the regional tourism trends and policies, and appreciate the proposal of the Republic of Uzbekistan to host the 1st ECO-ACT Meeting in 2025;

8. **Express** sincere gratitude to the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting the First ECO Tour Operators Forum and **call upon** the Member States to take active part in the activities of the ECO Tour Operators' Network for creation and implementation of the joint ECO tour packages, which will further enhance private sector cooperation and promote tourism within the region;

9. **Urge** the relevant stakeholders in the Member States to participate actively in tourism exhibitions and fairs taking place in the territory of the ECO Member States and consider the possibility of holding the First ECO Tourism Fair;

10. **Encourage** th**e** Member States to allocate resources and investment in tourism infrastructure, including transportation networks, accommodation facilities, and tourist attractions, to enhance the overall visitor experience and attract a diverse range of tourists;

11. **Launch** the 1st Edition of the ECO Tourism Investment Guide, which will be distributed to the relevant potential tourism investors on various occasions and published on the ECO Tourism Website and other channels;

12. **Appreciate** the work being carried out by the ECO Working Group on Tourism Standardization (WGTS), emphasizing the need to take concrete steps in the implementation of harmonized service quality and environmental standards and tasked WGTS to accelerate the finalization of the ECO Sustainable Tourism-Common Criteria for Tourism Accommodation Facilities to be implemented in the ECO region;

13. **Reaffirm** the human resource development in the tourism sector is essential to ensure a skilled and knowledgeable workforce that can meet the industry's evolving demands and **call upon** the Member States to operationalize the ECO Tourism Education Network;

14. **Continue** supporting and contributing in diversifying tourism products and services, including gastronomy tourism, health tourism, religious tourism, business tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, sports tourism and others;

15. **Encourage** the Member States to take part actively in the 3rd Confobition on Health Tourism planned to be hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran in Hamedan city in 2025 to share their experiences and good practices for the development of health and wellness tourism;

16. **Encourage** the Member States to take part actively in the 2nd ECO Tour Operators Forum planned to be jointly hosted by the Republic of Türkiye and Turkish Cypriot State in 2025;

17. **Call upon** the Member States for a cooperative approach to improve the regional connectivity and to streamline visa procedures, facilitate seamless travel by mutual recognition of visas, introduce digital visa procedures to simplify the visa application process, and consider granting visa exemptions;

18. **Commit** to fostering the growth of regional tourism through collaborative efforts under ECO framework, particularly by incorporating the local and global tourism priorities into the new ECO Vision and supporting initiatives to build partnerships between ECO and relevant international and regional organizations;

19. **Express** the deep appreciation to the Presidency and the Government of the Republic of Türkiye, in particular the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for hosting the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting and for the organization of numerous sports and cultural events as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025 and also **thank** the ECO Secretariat for its contribution to successfully organize the event.