



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)

7th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism

April 29, 2026

SHUSHA 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, meeting at the occasion of the 7th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism on 29 April 2026, in Shusha, hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan, and:

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

Reaffirming the importance of the decisions taken by the previous ECO Ministerial Meetings on Tourism and the notable outcomes of the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism held on April 26, 2025 in Erzurum under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Türkiye and efforts of all ECO Member States to develop 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;

Emphasizing the role of tourism as a contributor to sustainable economic growth, employment generation, cultural exchange, promotion of peace and mutual understanding among peoples;

Taking note of the evolving global economic and geopolitical environment and its potential implications for tourism development;

Witnessing the splendid launch of festivities including a Gastronomy Festival dedicated to Shusha as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2026 and **appreciating** the gracious support and encouragement of His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, Honourable President of the Republic of Azerbaijan;

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 Erzurum in the Republic of Türkiye for successfully hosting tourism festivities dedicated to ECO Tourism Capital title for 2025;
3. **Invite** to work for further recognition of Shusha in the Republic of Azerbaijan as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2026 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 Aktau in the Republic of Kazakhstan as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2030;
6. **Endorse** the tourism-related objectives of the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2035 (SGEC-2035), including efforts aimed at increasing tourist arrivals welcomed by all Member States to 155 million in total and enhancing the contribution of tourism to national economies;
7. **Encourage** Member States to strengthen cooperation in preserving historic and cultural assets and facilitate collaboration among “ECO historic cities”, and in this connection promote joint cultural tourism initiatives, exchange of best practices in heritage conservation and sustainable tourism management across the region. Such collaborative efforts shall contribute to the broader objectives of sustainable development, regional integration, and mutual appreciation of the rich civilizations of the ECO area.
8. **Welcome** the progress made towards the finalization of the 2026-2030 Roadmap for Expansion of Tourism Services (RETS-2030), and encourages Member States to actively contribute to and align national policies, as appropriate;
9. **Appreciate** the initiative to develop the ECO Compendium of Best Practices in Ecotourism and launch its publication in ECO tourism promotion platforms encouraging its effective utilization;
10. **Take note** of the outcomes of relevant ECO tourism-related meetings and initiatives held in 2025, including the 1st Meeting of the ECO Advisory Committee on Tourism (ECO-ACT), the 3rd ECO Confobition on Health Tourism and the Hamadan Declaration; 1st the ECO Silk Road Task Force Meeting and Sheki Declaration and the ECO Tourism Investment and Business Forum in Aktau and the 2nd ECO Tour Operators Forum held in 2025;

11. **Underline** the importance of “health tourism”, and call for fostering partnerships among relevant stakeholders in the member states;
12. **Endorse** the Policy Brief on Diversifying Regional Tourism with its official launch urging all Member States to follow its implementation to create niche tourism segment products in the region aligned with their national tourism initiatives;
13. **Call upon** the Member States to support the pilot phase implementation of Common Sustainability Criteria for Tourism Accommodation Facilities and further develop, if necessary, towards extension of sustainable tourism oriented regional standardization efforts;
14. **Welcome** the establishment of the ECO Tourism Educational Network (ECO-TEN) and encourage Member States to provide further nominations to make ECO-TEN more diverse and inclusive with a view of supporting joint tourism education and training programs through ECO-TEN to ensure a skilled tourism workforce;
15. **Continue** to work in a more collaborative approach to improve the regional connectivity and facilitate border crossings introducing innovative and seamless digital travel tools using the state-of-the-art technologies;
16. **Encourage** the Member States to facilitate visa procedures for the tourists to enable seamless travel among ECO Member States and enhance people-to-people exchanges;
17. **Commit** to fostering the growth of regional tourism through collaborative efforts under ECO framework, particularly by partnering with the other regional and global stakeholders to achieve the tourism related strategic objectives within the SGEC-2035;
18. **Encourage** Member States to initiate joint efforts towards the development of a regional digital cultural heritage platform, including integrated museum and information systems, drawing on best practices such as Türkiye’s National Museum Information System (MUES), to support sustainable tourism, digital promotion, and coordinated cultural heritage management.
19. The ECO Member States took note of the information provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the damage inflicted on World Cultural Heritage sites, museums, and tourism facilities, during the recent development and reaffirm collective duty to protect cultural and historical treasures as vital elements of our shared human legacy, and express sympathy over the damage inflicted upon architectural and internationally recognized heritage sites.
20. **Express** the deep appreciation to the Presidency and the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in particular the State Tourism Agency for hosting the 7th

ECO Ministerial Meeting and the Official Opening Ceremony for Shusha as the ECO Tourism Capital 2026, and also thank the ECO Secretariat for its contribution to successfully organize the event.