

Statement by H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan
at the Seventh CICA Ministerial Council Meeting
17 December 2024

**Excellences,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honor to welcome you all at the seventh CICA Ministerial Council, which feature the assumption by Azerbaijan the Chairmanship of the Conference for the 2024-2026 period.

We thank all CICA Member States for the confidence and trust placed on Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan will build its CICA Chairmanship on its experience as a bridge-builder in global diplomacy, our leadership in multilateral platforms, and our firm commitment to peace, stability, and sustainable development.

Azerbaijan's CICA Chairmanship comes at a pivotal moment not only in CICA's history but also in the evolving geopolitical and economic landscape of Asia and the world.

Asia's role as a driving force of global growth, technological innovation, and political influence is more significant than ever. As multi-polarity rises and multilateralism faces new challenges, Asia must respond with unity, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

CICA, as the region's most inclusive platform for dialogue, is uniquely positioned to foster this cooperation and address the challenges we face.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Chairmanship is grounded in the theme of “**Stronger CICA, Connectivity, Digitalization, and Sustainable Growth in Asia**” and will prioritize three overarching issues, namely 1) CICA's transformation and institutional development, 2) sectoral cooperation through implementation of confidence-building measures, and 3) promoting synergy between CICA and other international and regional organizations.

We will continue the ongoing transformation of CICA into a full-fledged international organization on the basis of the achievements over the past 30 years.

This process, initiated under Kazakhstan's Chairmanship and reaffirmed by the Sixth CICA Summit in 2022, will continue to be a member-driven, consensus-

based, and aim to equip CICA to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing world.

The elaboration of a legally binding document of CICA (Charter), along with efforts to strengthen its institutional capacity and financial autonomy, will remain key priorities under the Azerbaijani Chairmanship.

Our Chairmanship will also focus on strengthening CICA's Secretariat's operational capacities. To this end, Azerbaijan will support Secretariat, both through financial contribution and seconding professional staff. We encourage all Member States to actively contribute to the Secretariat's work, through both financial and in-kind support.

Additionally, we will continue to promote the ratification of the Statute of the Secretariat and the Convention on Privileges and Immunities for CICA's personnel and Member States' representatives.

Azerbaijan also supports the establishment of CICA Finance Summit, and will work towards achieving consensus in this respect on the basis of significant work that has already been done at the experts' level.

Excellences,

Confidence-building lies at the heart of CICA process.

Building on the positive legacy, Azerbaijan's Chairmanship will prioritize the enhancement of the effectiveness and impact of existing confidence-building measures (CBMs), while also exploring new, innovative ways to deepen cooperation.

We will focus on the following overarching themes: **connectivity, digitalization, and sustainability**. Over 20 Chairmanship events are planned for 2025 across all five dimensions.

The Chairmanship will seek to improve **synergy between efforts of the Member States, coordinators and co-coordinators of CBMs, and relevant CICA bodies, such as the Business and Youth Councils, the Think Tank Forum and the Partnership Network of Leading Universities**. This approach aims to amplify the effectiveness of CBMs and promote greater intra-CICA coherence.

In the economic dimension, the Chairmanship will prioritize transport connectivity, the promotion of SMEs, women entrepreneurship and green economy.

We will work to enhance transport corridors and promote more secure, sustainable, and efficient infrastructure across Asia. SME's access to investments and markets and their participation in international trade through innovative methods like E-Commerce, as well as innovative approaches in agriculture will be among areas of the Chairmanship's focus, including through CICA Business Council.

In the dimension of new challenges and threats, the focus will be on promoting capacity building and the exchange of best practices in cyber-security and personal data protection. We will work to harmonize data protection laws and promote culture of cybersecurity and data privacy.

The environmental dimension will be centered around promoting green transition and sustainable development through concrete projects in various areas, a cross-cutting agenda that will be explored to foster synergy between different priority areas.

The promotion of people-to-people contacts and tourism, as an essential element of human dimension will also be central to our Chairmanship's agenda. We will continue to work with the CICA Youth Council to engage the youth in meaningful discussions on how they can contribute to peace, cooperation, and sustainable development in Asia.

We will also prioritize the protection of cultural heritage. In a region as diverse and rich in history as ours, cultural exchange and the preservation of heritage are vital for fostering mutual understanding and respect.

Several CICA Member States face immense challenges due to contamination with land-mines and explosive remnants of war, claiming the lives of thousands of civilians, limiting access to sites that can be utilized for economic purposes, depriving the sustainable exploitation of environmental riches of those areas. Given this, the Chairmanship will explore the promotion of humanitarian demining as an area of interaction within CICA.

The fields of education and science also remain underexploited, and we will work to enhance collaboration through the Partnership Network of Leading Universities, the establishment of which is expected to be finalized at this Ministerial Council. Once the Network is fully operational, the Chairmanship will work to instrumentalize this platform to galvanize collaboration in these highly demanding and promising sectors.

Beyond these immediate priorities, we remain open to exploring new areas of interaction and confidence-building to address the evolving needs of our region.

The Chairmanship will closely work with coordinators and co-coordinators to this end.

Dear Colleagues,

CICA holds significant comparative advantage due to inclusiveness, holistic approach to regional security, development, and cooperation. However, in today's interdependent world, no organization can thrive in isolation.

Azerbaijan's Chairmanship will focus on increasing CICA's international visibility and expanding its network of partnerships with other international and regional organizations.

We will work to create synergies with bodies such as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Asia-Pacific Economic

Cooperation (APEC), as well as other regional platforms, to address shared challenges more effectively.

Our engagement with international organizations will not only enhance CICA's visibility but also increase its ability to act as a driving force for positive change across Asia, as well as enhance its international standing as an inclusive regional platform determined for more secure and prosperous Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Azerbaijan's Chairmanship marks a moment of opportunity and responsibility. Azerbaijani Chairmanship is oriented to making impact on security, development and well-being of our states and population through stronger CICA.

By working together, embracing innovation, and strengthening our collective commitment to sustainable development, we can shape a brighter future for our region and the world.

Azerbaijan is ready to lead this transformative journey, and we look forward to our continued collaboration with all Member States to achieve our shared vision of a peaceful, prosperous, and interconnected Asia.

I once again thank all Member States for their confidence, and look forward to fruitful interaction throughout our Chairmanship.

I thank you.