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Connectivity in the Turkic way - a new cooperation format in the Multipolar world?

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Bishkek hosts the 11th Summit of the Heads of State of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), a transformative gathering that highlights the organization's evolution from regional cooperation into a cornerstone of Eurasian connectivity. Initially rooted in shared linguistic and cultural heritage, the OTS has grown into a robust platform for mutual progress, with member states setting aside diverse political orientations to promote shared goals and mutual respect. Hungary, holding observer status, could play a pivotal role in the OTS's future. Hungary's pragmatic, multi-directional foreign policy positions it as both a bridge and hub, fostering cooperation between East and West, and paving new pathways for diplomatic engagement.

The OTS traces its origins to the early 1990s, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1992, the historic Ankara Summit brought together the leaders of six Turkic states—Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—to establish regular dialogue. By 2009, these collaborations had formalized into the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), initiated by Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to expand joint policies across many domains. Uzbekistan became a full member in 2019, and Hungary, along with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, was granted observer status in 2018.

A landmark summit in Istanbul in 2021 marked a turning point, as the Turkic Council was restructured into the Organization of Turkic States. In 2023, Turkmenistan joined as a full member. The OTS also introduced the Turkic World 2040 concept—a forward-looking vision for fostering deeper integration among Turkic peoples and positioning the region as a critical bridge in the North-

South and East-West corridors. The OTS's impact extends far beyond cultural ties, driving collaboration across key sectors including the economy, education, energy, transportation, tourism, media, healthcare, and sports. With a combined area of over 4.2 million km² and nearly 160 million people, the OTS stands as a dynamic entity on the global stage.

Looking ahead, the OTS holds the potential to become a formidable geopolitical alliance. Strategically situated along the East-West trade route, with member states connecting Russia, Iran, and China, and offering alternative routes to the EU and the US, the OTS is uniquely positioned as a gateway to Eurasia. Despite varied political affiliations—ranging from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan's involvement in the CSTO and the Eurasian Economic Union to Türkiye's NATO membership and Hungary's EU and NATO membership—the OTS showcases a remarkable geopolitical diversity, making it a uniquely positioned force for regional and global cooperation.

The Organization of Turkic States is not just an alliance; it's a vision for a future where shared heritage and strategic interests combine to create meaningful progress on the Eurasian landscape.

Empowering the Turkic World – this year's summit in Bishkek

The summit, themed "Empowering the Turkic World: Economic Integration, Sustainable Development, Digital Future, and Security for All," serves as a high-level platform for advancing the Organization's strategic vision. Leaders from across the OTS are gathering to finalize agreements and endorse initiatives across key areas—economy, trade, digital innovation, transport, and security—while also reviewing regional developments to enhance cooperation among member and observer states.

Among the top priorities is the Digital Economic Partnership Agreement, aimed at boosting digital trade and establishing a framework for green finance and environmental stewardship through the Turkic Green Vision. This initiative underscores the OTS's dedication to environmental responsibility alongside economic progress.

Given that OTS nations occupy critical positions along the Middle Corridor, a focal point of discussion will be infrastructure projects and strengthened transport links between Asia and Europe. Leaders will examine strategies for trade liberalization, environmental monitoring through satellite technology, and new agreements in digital economy to enhance connectivity. Greater economic

integration is essential for smooth international trade and transport, especially as the Middle Corridor—though sustainable and highly promoted—still faces challenges from customs and border control processes that can slow logistics and add complexity. Discussions on free trade agreements and digital economic partnerships will aim to streamline cross-border cooperation, reducing administrative burdens and fostering smoother trade flows among members.

An exciting development on the summit's agenda is the further establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund (TIF), set to play a transformative role in the region's economic landscape. Launched in Ankara in 2023, TIF is OTS's first financial institution, dedicated to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and driving regional entrepreneurship, job creation, research, and innovation. With a focus on agriculture, logistics, energy, IT, infrastructure, and more, TIF will prioritize projects that fuel economic growth and human development. By 2025, with an authorized capital of $1 billion, the fund will begin financing major joint projects across member states, marking a milestone in collaborative investment within the Turkic world.

The summit will also see the foundation of the Council of Central Banks of the OTS, a vital step toward financial alignment and stability across the member states. Together, these initiatives underscore the OTS's ambition to not only unify the Turkic world but to establish it as a key player in global trade, digital innovation, and sustainable development, setting the stage for a resilient and interconnected future.

Hungary's involvement in the OTS

Hungary's pragmatic, multi-vector foreign policy focuses on building mutually beneficial relationships grounded in economic pragmatism. As OTS member states grow in global economic and geopolitical influence, Hungary's deepening ties with these nations hold significant promise. The countries of the OTS play an increasingly vital role in East-West cargo transit, and Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan are rich in hydrocarbon resources. Recognizing the importance of the Green agenda, OTS states are investing in renewable energy—an effort in which Hungary is actively involved. Key initiatives like the STRING project and the Black Sea Power Cable are poised to bolster Hungary's, and indeed Europe's, energy security by diversifying energy sources.

With strategic investments in sustainable energy, Hungary has the potential to become a critical hub and transit route for "green" energy from OTS member states, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. Projects like high-voltage undersea cables across the Black Sea and Caspian Sea will link Hungary to this emerging network, offering a resilient pathway for clean energy. Hungary has also committed substantial support to the Turkic Investment Fund (TIF), pledging $100 million of the initial $500 million fund. Through TIF, Hungary aims to prioritize sectors like food production, agriculture, and infrastructure development, while also championing energy and transportation collaboration within the Turkic world.

Hungary's involvement extends beyond energy projects. The Hungarian energy company MOL Group holds a 9.57% stake in Azerbaijan's Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli oil field and an 8.9% share in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, both crucial to the region's energy infrastructure. Additionally, Hungary's state-owned MVM Group holds a 5% share in the Shah Deniz gas field and a 4% stake in the Azerbaijan Gas Supply Company Limited. These investments underscore Hungary's commitment to energy partnerships with OTS member states and its role as a bridge between the East and West, reinforcing a vision of economic stability and sustainable progress for the region.

Instead of a conclusion – OTS's place in today's world politics

In a world marked by shifting power dynamics and the rise of a new global order, regional and minilateral alliances are gaining unprecedented significance. While major powers coalesce into distinct blocs and the specter of a New Cold War looms, middle powers like Türkiye, along with agile regional alliances, have a unique opportunity to secure pivotal economic and political footholds on the world stage.

The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) stands at the heart of this transformation, harnessing the strategic and economic potential of the Middle Corridor, which links East and West through the Turkic states, and the vast energy reserves of the Caspian region. These assets present immense opportunities for the OTS, fueling its momentum as a bridge of connectivity and cooperation. Members are united in their commitment to strengthening political and economic ties, as

demonstrated through initiatives like the OTS Transport Connectivity Program and the OTS Energy Cooperation Program.

With shared vision and determination, the OTS is positioning itself as a major force in the emerging multipolar world—a rising pole that is set to play a critical role in regional stability, economic development, and the creation of alternative global pathways. This cohesion not only bolsters the influence of the OTS but also underscores its potential to thrive independently within an evolving, multipolar global landscape.