

TPS-OIC Trade Negotiating Committee Meeting

1-2 October 2025, Ankara

Opening Speech by H.E. Mahmut GÜRCAN, Deputy Minister of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye

Honorable Chief Negotiators,

Distinguished Delegates,

Esteemed Brothers and Sisters,

- Welcome to Ankara, the capital of Türkiye. May Allah's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.
- I thank each and every one of you for attending our meeting. I pray to Almighty Allah for the success of this meeting, where we will make important decisions to develop trade cooperation among our countries.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

- Today, as the chief negotiators of your countries, you will discuss the future of the Trade Preferential System among the Member States of the OIC (TPS-OIC), COMCEC's most important project in trade. However, with your permission, I would like to begin by addressing Israel's unlawful attacks.
- As you know, Israel has been committing genocide in Gaza before the eyes of the entire world for two years. We have witnessed atrocities that make one wonder how someone could do this. So much so that even those who unconditionally support Israel have been forced to react. However, we need more concrete steps.

- In this context, as Türkiye, we have suspended all trade with Israel for the past 1.5 years. In doing so, we have foregone an annual trade volume of 9.5 billion US dollars.
- At this point, we welcome every effort made to stop the bloodshed in Gaza and achieve a ceasefire. Türkiye is ready to make every contribution to establishing a just and lasting peace that the parties will accept.

Distinguished Chief Negotiators,

- The recent escalation of geopolitical tensions and the rise of protectionist policies in international trade create numerous risks and uncertainties on a global scale.
- When we look at the forecasts, we see that these uncertainties particularly impact trade, while global growth forecasts remain relatively stable. The IMF revised its 2025 growth forecast up 0.2 percentage points to 3 percent, and the OECD revised its 2025 growth forecast up 0.3 percentage points to 3.2 percent.
- While the WTO predicted a 2.7 percent growth in goods trade in 2025 in October 2024, five months later, it revised this figure down to a 0.2 percent contraction. Four months later, it predicted a growth of 0.9 percent. Frankly, we are unfortunately going through a period where world trade is changing based on daily announcements.

Dear brothers and sisters,

- The primary way to cope with not only commercial and economic problems, but also all kinds of uncertainties affecting the Ummah, is, of course, to hold firmly to the rope of Allah. In other words, it is to stand united, to be one, and to enhance our cooperation.
- As you will appreciate, preferential trade agreements are the tools that will most significantly enhance our cooperation in the commercial sphere.
- As you know, TPS-OIC was implemented as of July 1, 2022. This was, of course, a very important step. However, if we want to increase intra-OIC trade beyond 25%—and this should be our goal—we cannot do so with an agreement that has only 13 countries as parties and a limited number of products.
- The simplest solution is to increase the number of parties. However, we must also face the facts. For 20 years, member states have been invited to become parties to the TPS-OIC at COMCEC meetings and the outcome is well known. Therefore, the TPS-OIC in its current form is not attractive enough for member states.
- It is precisely for this reason that last year, at the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of the Trade Negotiating Committee, chaired by our Minister, we proposed expanding the product scope of the TPS-OIC and transforming it into a next-generation trade agreement by adding new disciplines.

- Our proposal was well received and at the 40th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC, the Trade Negotiating Committee was requested to continue its technical work on this matter.
- We are gathered here today to execute this decision. I believe that you, our esteemed chief negotiators participating in this important meeting, will make concrete decisions to initiate negotiations to expand the scope of the TPS-OIC. I am confident that you will find the best solution with your vast experience.
- Your decisions will be presented to our esteemed Ministers at the 41st Ministerial Session of the COMCEC, which will be chaired by our President, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Dear Colleagues

- I wish you all success in your work today and tomorrow. I will follow-up your decisions. I must leave at this point to attend another program. The remainder of the meeting will be chaired by Türkiye's chief negotiator, our Director General, Mr. Hüsnü Dilemre.
- May Allah protect you and His peace, blessings and mercy be upon you.