

# Turkmenistan's Neutral Foreign Policy: Peace, Security and Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

*The resolution on the “Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan” adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 12, 1995 brought about Turkmenistan’s official recognition as a neutral state by the world community, and gave the country’s foreign policy and diplomatic work additional impetus. Turkmenistan’s policy of permanent neutrality has a peacekeeping dimension; it places great importance on preventive diplomacy, i.e., diplomatic actions aimed at preventing disagreements between parties from arising and preventing existing differences from escalating into conflict, and limiting the spread of an already existing conflict. The experience of the development of neutral Turkmenistan during its years of independence has convincingly shown that the Turkmen model of neutrality supports Turkmenistan’s long-term national interests, and has become an effective tool for mutual understanding and cooperation among peoples. The Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in February 2017, proclaiming December 12 as the “International Day of Neutrality” was another significant contribution of Turkmenistan’s neutral foreign policy and diplomacy to the global strengthening of peace, security and sustainable development. Lastly, the accession of Turkmenistan to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an observer at the 8th Summit of Organization of Turkic States in November 2021 is another important step for the foreign policy framework of this Turkic-speaking country, which aims to contribute to sustainable development in its region.*

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## Introduction

The great Turkmen poet and thinker Magtymguly Pyragy dreamed of building a secular, legal and democratic state for the Turkmen. When Turkmenistan gained its independence in 1991 as a result of the collapse of the totalitarian Soviet state, the Turkmen people chose the path of neutrality, with its roots in the centuries-old traditions and way of life of the Turkmen people, as the basis of their country's domestic and foreign policies. Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality is characterized by such principles as good neighborliness, desire for mutual understanding, natural peacefulness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, non-participation in military alliances and blocs, and the resolution of international issues through political and diplomatic means.

The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s went down in history as a period of great events that profoundly changed the political face of the world. The "Cold War" between the West and the East, primarily between the USSR and the USA, which lasted for decades, came to an end. The East European peoples abandoned socialism, and each chose its own path of development, embarking on the path of democracy. With the collapse of the USSR, a number of states in Europe and Asia, including Turkmenistan, gained their independence in the autumn of 1991 and seized the opportunity to create their own national state.

After Turkmenistan gained its independence, the Turkmen people chose a policy of permanent, "positive neutrality" as the basis of their country's domestic and foreign policies.<sup>1</sup> This policy became the basis of Turkmenistan's national development, and the experience of its progress over the years of in-

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dependence has convincingly shown the full alignment of the Turkmen model of neutrality with Turkmenistan's long-term national interests. This policy stemmed from the centuries-old traditions and way of life of the Turkmen people, characterized by openness, hospitality and good neighborliness; humanity; the desire for mutual understanding; religious tolerance; natural peaceful-

ness; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; respect for their independence, territorial integrity and culture, non-participation in military

unions and blocs; and the solution of international issues by political and diplomatic means.

This article will first examine the main objectives of Turkmenistan's "positive neutrality" foreign policy. It will then focus on the peculiarities of the Turkmen model of neutrality. After taking up Turkmenistan's relations with the UN and its contribution to preventive diplomacy, it will discuss the economic and cultural aspects of its foreign policy. Lastly, the article will touch upon Turkmenistan's accession to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an observer country in 2021, and the effects of its participation in the OTS for sustainable development at the regional level.

## Main Objectives of Turkmenistan's "Positive Neutrality"

The main objectives of Turkmenistan's foreign policy of "positive neutrality" were determined after it gained independence. These are the preservation and strengthening of Turkmenistan's state sovereignty; the growth of its role and importance in the system of international relations; the maintenance of the most favorable foreign policy conditions for the internal development of the state; the proper identification, protection and provision of Turkmenistan's national interests; ensuring the country's security by political and diplomatic means; and the development of constructive, mutually beneficial cooperation with all foreign partners on the basis of equality and mutual respect.<sup>2</sup> These principles fully correspond to the universally recognized norms of international law and the UN Charter.

Having proclaimed its principles of neutrality and open doors in international relations, the Turkmen state began to put them into practice. Receiving recognition of its neutral status from the entire international community was the second step Turkmenistan took in this area. To achieve this goal at the state level, a large number of foreign policy and diplomatic activities were carried out over a considerable time. For example, on July 10, 1992, the capital of Finland, Helsinki, hosted a meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the countries participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). During the meeting, Turkmenistan officially announced its neutral policy for the first time. The CSCE member states supported Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality based on the fact that the Turkmen people have the right to choose and have indeed already chosen the policy of neutrality.

On March 15, 1995, Turkmenistan participated in the third meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. At the summit, Turkmenistan informed the participants of the meeting about its assumption of all obligations arising from the legal status of a permanent neutral state at the constitutional level. In the Islamabad Declaration, adopted at

the meeting, the ECO member states again supported Turkmenistan's neutral policy.

On October 20, 1995, Turkmenistan participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> conference of the Heads of State and Government of the countries participating in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in Cartagena, Colombia, and became the 114<sup>th</sup> member of this political association. Since its establishment in 1961, NAM has advocated the creation of a more just world order; it eschews the use of force or the threat of force in international affairs. Turkmenistan fully supports the noble goals and humane principles of NAM. The participating states of the conference supported Turkmenistan's neutral policy.<sup>3</sup>

Active diplomatic work aimed at obtaining recognition from the international community regarding the legal neutral status of Turkmenistan was also carried out at the level of diplomatic missions abroad, including the Embassy of Turkmenistan in the People's Republic of China (PRC), led by myself as Turkmenistan's first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the PRC. During my official meetings with the leaders of China and the Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Beijing, I familiarized them in detail with the essence of the Turkmen model of neutrality. These efforts were supported through publications distributed by the embassy, together with the publishing houses of the host country of books about Turkmenistan's policy, my speeches at institutions, on the radio, on television and in the pages of newspapers and magazines in the host country. All this undoubtedly was of great importance in promoting our neutral policy, and gaining the recognition and support of the Chinese public and representatives of the world community. Over time, the support of many states of the world community, including the top leadership of China, for the policy of permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, allowed our state to bring the issue to the level of the UN.

On December 12, 1995, upon Turkmenistan's initiative, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on the "Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan".<sup>4</sup> The General Assembly first recognized and supported the status of permanent neutrality proclaimed by Turkmenistan; second, it called on the

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member states of the UN to respect and support this status, and to respect Turkmenistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The adoption of this historic resolution by the UN General Assembly meant the recognition of Turkmenistan as a neutral state by the world community. It also set new tasks for

the diplomatic service of our country related to filling this policy with new content, strengthening the neutral status of the country as a whole and developing steps toward its implementation.

Because of my official role, I was witness to numerous outpourings of support in response to the decision in official, business and humanitarian circles in China. The Chinese public expressed its full support for the UN General Assembly resolution, in the belief that the resolution would help improve the political situation not only in Asia, but in the world as a whole. Sun Yiming, Chairman of the Academic Council of the Institute of International Relations of the PRC, stated,

“The neutral status of Turkmenistan, officially recognized by the UN, will contribute to strengthening peace, security and stability in Asia. Positive neutrality in politics and openness in the economy as the main principles of Turkmenistan’s foreign policy are in tune with the positions of the PRC; they are approved by official Beijing, which advocates that in the international space all states have equal rights regarding their own views and choice of development paths.”<sup>5</sup>

“The countries of the Asian continent, including China, which have embarked on the path of modernization, need a peaceful and stable life,” said Chen Gen-tao, Editor-in-chief of *China Features Bulletin*. “Thus, the first peacekeeping efforts of Ashgabat serve as confirmation of the full justification of its desire to assume the role of a regional peacekeeping center.”<sup>6</sup> The UN recognition of Turkmenistan’s neutrality was all the more timely as, on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the task of restoring the Silk Road as a bridge between the basins of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans had arisen. Therefore, as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Chinese Association of Entrepreneurs Zhang Pein emphasized, “The neutral status of Turkmenistan, recognized by the UN, corresponds not only to the political, but also to the economic interests of China and therefore deserves its support.”<sup>7</sup> Chinese writer Gao Mana stated,

“The Parthian kingdom, stretching from the Amu Darya to the Tigris and Euphrates, was not only the historical crossroads of Europe and Asia, it also imbued the best traditions of the ancient civilization of the East and the West. The Particularly revered historical values of Parthia are an inspiring example of the restoration of the Silk Road—the guarantor of the future prosperity of our peoples. The neutral status of Turkmenistan, being an important step along this path and a factor of regional stability, will also make it possible to intensify our cultural interaction.”<sup>8</sup>

## Peculiarities of the Turkmen Model of Neutrality

The Turkmen model of neutrality has some peculiarities that should be noted here. According to international law, Turkmenistan’s neutrality is *recognized* by origin, as confirmed by the resolution of the UN General Assembly on the “Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan”; *permanent* in form, i.e., not limited in time and acting both in wartime and in peacetime; *positive* in content,

which implies the active policy of the state in matters of maintaining peace and stability, and developing relations of friendship and cooperation between states.<sup>9</sup>

The UN General Assembly resolution on Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality gave the country's diplomatic service an additional impetus to intensify the implementation of its foreign policy. As of 2022, Turkmenistan has established and maintained diplomatic relations with almost 150 states, became a member of about 50 international organizations and participated in more than 150 international conventions, treaties and multilateral documents. Turkmenistan's foreign policy is implemented based on the State Foreign Policy Concept or "Concept" for short, which is an analytical and prognostic document developed from a scientific point of view, designed for a certain period and taking into account the global situation. When forming the Concept, our state proceeds from the objective fact that Turkmenistan develops civilized relations with all states, and does not have hostile relations with any foreign state. The implementation of Turkmenistan's foreign policy tasks can in no way infringe on the interests of any other state.

Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality also has a peacekeeping dimension. Turkmenistan provides its territory for international dialogue on issues of peace, security, cooperation and development, and the capital of Turkmenistan, the city of Ashgabat, is now a peacekeeping center for solving regional and global problems, identifying and eliminating potential sources of tension, responding to internal and transnational challenges and threats to peace and security, and supporting the sustainable development of the region. Even in the 1990s, Ashgabat was already becoming more and more famous as a peacekeeping center. This is evidenced by the good offices rendered to the Tajik people in resolving the difficult socio-political situation in Tajikistan in 1995–1996, as well as the active participation of Turkmenistan in the late 1990s in UN efforts to peacefully resolve the civil confrontation in Afghanistan. In recent years, the peacekeeping work of our country has significantly intensified.

At present, Turkmenistan's diplomatic service is implementing the State Foreign Policy Concept for 2017–2023.<sup>10</sup> In accordance with the Concept, Turkmenistan pays great attention to the development of cooperation with the states of the Asia-Pacific region, the countries of the Near and Middle East, Europe and America, and with many international and regional organizations—in particular, the UN, the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

## Turkmenistan's Relations with the UN and its Contribution to Preventive Diplomacy

On March 2, 1992, after gaining its independence, Turkmenistan became a member of the UN; Turkmenistan's permanent mission, established under this organization, became its first diplomatic mission established abroad. I was appointed as the first permanent representative of Turkmenistan to the UN in the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. I was further instructed by the President of Turkmenistan to head the Turkmen delegation at the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, where Turkmenistan was admitted as a member of the UN. As a member state of the UN, Turkmenistan recognizes its priority in resolving any issues within its competence. The adoption by our country of the legal status of permanent neutrality does not affect the fulfilment of its obligations arising from the UN Charter or its contributions to achieving the goals of the UN. Today, cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UN is of a strategic nature. At the sessions of the UN General Assembly, our country constantly puts forward more and more large-scale foreign policy initiatives aimed at strengthening peace, security and sustainable development. In recent years, the UN General Assembly has adopted about ten resolutions authored by Turkmenistan, including those on the development of international trade and economic relations, ensuring environmental and energy security, creating international transport corridors, resolving the situation in Afghanistan, etc. These proposals and resolutions have found wide recognition in the world community and are making a significant contribution to the solution of the regional and global problems facing humanity.<sup>11</sup>

In the framework of its foreign policy, neutral Turkmenistan pays great attention to preventive diplomacy. We understand preventive diploma-

cy as diplomatic actions aimed at preventing the emergence of disagreements between parties, preventing the escalation of existing disagreements into conflict and limiting the spread of already existing conflicts. On issues of preventive diplomacy, Turkmenistan began to establish cooperation with the UN in the first years of its participation in the UN's activities. In the early 1990s, one of the priorities of the sessions of the UN General Assembly was the strengthening of peace. Thus, in June 1992, at the request of the UN Security Council, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali prepared for the 47<sup>th</sup> session a report titled "An Agenda for Peace", in which the concept of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping was formulated in an expanded form. This

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report attracted great attention from all UN member states. The resolution, adopted at the 47<sup>th</sup> session by consensus, contained a number of measures to strengthen the role of the UN in expanding and supporting preventive diplomacy.<sup>12</sup>

In order to intensify work in the field of preventive diplomacy under the UN Secretary-General, in early 1992, the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat was created, as were the positions of Ambassadors at Large. In March 1992, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Raymond Sommerins was appointed Head of the Political Affairs Department of the UN Secretariat, and began to perform the duties of Ambassador at Large. The personal duties of this high-ranking UN diplomat included monitoring the political situation in the Asia-Pacific Region, including the states of Central Asia, and preparing appropriate recommendations to the Secretary-General on resolving emerging conflict situations.

Secretary-General Ghali prioritized strengthening regional peace and stability in the young independent states that had recently become members of the UN. He highly appreciated Turkmenistan's policy, noting it as an important stabilizing factor in the region. At the same time, he was seriously concerned about the situation in some parts of Central Asia. In this regard, the UN Secretary-General considered with particular interest the experience of those few states of the region, including Turkmenistan, which were islands of stability. At the suggestion of the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat, working contacts were established between the Department and the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the UN, during which an exchange of views took place on the situation in the Central Asian region. During the first such meeting, as the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the UN, I informed Under-Secretary Sommerins and the staff of the department of the stable socio-political situation in Turkmenistan, and outlined the country's policy in relation to neighboring Afghanistan. In my speech, I particularly stated that in its policy towards Afghanistan, Turkmenistan follows the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighboring country, stands for the preservation of its integrity, against the escalation of bloodshed on an interethnic basis, and proceeds from the fact that the resolution of the Afghan crisis is in the hands of the Afghan people themselves. Stressing that Turkmenistan would like to see the achievement of national accord in Afghanistan and the resolution of all problems on this basis, I also noted that Turkmenistan gives priority to the UN in achieving peace in Afghanistan, and that Turkmenistan will continue to provide the UN with all possible support in its work in Afghanistan.

In the second half of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, relations and cooperation between Turkmenistan and the outside world intensified significantly, and an effectively functioning system of foreign policy and diplomacy was formed in the country. Turkmenistan has become capable of putting forward and im-

plementing a multifaceted, comprehensive foreign policy aimed at solving the regional and global problems facing humanity. At the same time, the opening of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) with headquarters in Ashgabat on December 10, 2007 was an important event, and its functioning has allowed Turkmenistan to significantly strengthen the preventive direction of its foreign policy and diplomacy.<sup>13</sup>

The UNRCCA mandate covers issues such as preventive diplomacy, situational analysis, coordination with regional organizations and ensuring an integrated UN approach in the region at large. Since its establishment, the UNRCCA has become a venue for negotiations that are relevant for establishing and developing close relations between the UN and the countries of Central Asia. Energy security; general disarmament; settlement of the situation in Afghanistan by peaceful means; the fight against international terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and other threats and challenges of our time; and seeking solutions to socio-economic and environmental problems have become the main areas of its activity. The significant results of the Center's activities and the unanimous adoption of the resolution "Role of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia" at the 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly on November 17, 2017, testify to the effectiveness of this political structure, which can help the countries of Central Asia resist emerging threats and challenges in the region, transfer disputes and contradictions into channels of negotiation and garner the comprehensive support of the world community for the practice of preventive diplomacy as an effective tool for peace-making.<sup>14</sup>

Over the years, Turkmenistan has maintained an effective partnership with the UNRCCA on such issues as exchanging experience, monitoring and evaluating regional development, developing and implementing preventive diplomacy, and maintaining peace and security. From the very beginning, Turkmenistan has assisted the UNRCCA in its activities aimed at developing regional cooperation and ensuring peace and security in the region. In terms of the cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UNRCCA, it should be noted that Turkmenistan's foreign policy initiatives and proposals are to a certain extent related to the powers of this Center; they highlight the tasks facing it and give impetus to the continued development of their effective cooperation. Adherence to the principle of neutrality is important in the work of the UNRCCA, as it is for Turkmenistan. The mutual combination of the principles of neutrality and preventive diplomacy in foreign policy work con-

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tributes to strengthening trust between peoples and states, and is a guarantee of success in foreign policy in the interests of peace, security and stability in general. Yet, as practice shows, it is under the auspices of the UN that the levers of preventive diplomacy can work most effectively and bring about real results. Therefore, Turkmenistan attaches particular importance to its well-established, high-level cooperation with the UN, and makes efforts to strengthen and expand its fruitful cooperation with this world organization in various fields.

In February 2017, at the initiative of Turkmenistan, the UN General Assembly at its 71<sup>st</sup> session adopted a resolution declaring December 12 the “International Day of Neutrality”.<sup>15</sup> This was an event of historical and global significance because it testifies to the important role of the institution of neutrality at the present stage of world development. The adoption of this important document also points to the high efficiency of the contribution of Turkmenistan’s neutral foreign policy and diplomacy to the strengthening of peace, security and sustainable development, as well as the ever-increasing importance of the international experience of the Turkmen model of neutrality for improving the modern system of international relations.

The resolution establishing the International Day of Neutrality drew intensive attention at the regional and international level as well. Many organizations, starting with the UN, have acknowledged this important day and its profound meaning. For instance, the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), previously called the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), issued a statement appreciating Turkmenistan’s important initiative and putting forward the will to increase cooperation with Turkmenistan on the terms the country prefers.<sup>16</sup>

To ensure the effectiveness of Turkmenistan’s policy of neutrality, it is very important that all employees of its diplomatic corps concentrate their efforts on consistent protection, ensuring the national interests of our country, and developing and strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with various states around the world. These priority tasks are of great importance for those who are directly involved in the training of diplomatic personnel. First of all, we are talking about the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. The truth is simple: today, without new knowledge and approaches, it is impossible to teach a future diplomat how to creatively comprehend the upcoming realities of this century. We, lecturers of the national school of diplomacy, see our main task in making our students well aware of the new geopolitical picture of the world and Turkmenistan’s place in it, and develop knowledge about the major issues of our time—and the necessary skills to address them—at an expert level. Future specialists should master the methods and techniques of specific diplomatic work, be able to see the economic side of any major issue, skillfully use modern information technologies and analyze all these issues from the point of view of the national interests of our country.

## Economic and Cultural Aspects of Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy

Turkmenistan attaches special importance to its relations with neighboring countries, with which it has historical, political, economic and cultural ties. Our country considers relations of friendship, goodwill and broad cooperation in all spheres as the most important guarantee of maintaining its sovereignty and neutral legal status, and successfully achieving its foreign policy goals.

Turkmenistan attributes great importance to the economic aspect of its foreign policy. Thus, one of the priority areas in the context of its bilateral relations with other countries is trade and economics. Turkmenistan considers the development of international economic cooperation based on equal partnership and mutual benefit as the most important tool for establishing interaction between states and regions, and maintaining peace and stability. To this end, Turkmenistan has developed cooperation with dozens of countries around the world. On July 22, 2020, Turkmenistan became an observer in the World Trade Organization (WTO). As former President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov stressed, “This will ensure the harmonious development of the national economy, strengthening our positions in foreign trade relations, developing multilateral cooperation and attracting more foreign investment.”<sup>17</sup>

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The energy sector is of utmost significance for Turkmenistan's economic cooperation with other countries. Over the past few decades, the role of interstate interaction in the energy sector has noticeably increased. At present, approximately 80% of the world's electricity is still generated from extracted energy sources (oil, gas, peat, coal). Today, global explored reserves of natural gas amount to approximately 140–145 trillion cubic meters; about 2.2 trillion cubic meters are produced annually. Turkmenistan's natural gas reserves amount to 50 trillion cubic meters and our country ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of its reserves. Given the continued relevance of non-renewable fuel sources, Turkmenistan is expanding ways of exporting its energy wealth to world markets. For example, on December 14, 2009, the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline, called the “Project of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, was put into operation. In November 2011, an agreement was reached between Turkmenistan and China to increase the annual volume of Turkmen natural gas exported to China to 65 billion cubic meters.<sup>18</sup>

It should also be noted that as of 2015, about 19.3% of the world's energy needs were met by renewable energy. In 2018, in Germany, renewable energy provided 38% of the electricity produced in the country. Turkmenistan began to develop in renewable energy in the 1960s, and engages in the use of renewable energy sources in industry and in everyday life. For example, in the first half of the 1970s, scientists from the Physical and Technical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan carried out scientific communications on the use of solar energy by scientists from a number of countries, including the U.S. According to the Decree of the President of Turkmenistan, since January 29, 2019, today the Institute of Solar Energy of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan operates in the system of the State Energy Institute of the country.<sup>19</sup>

The cultural aspect of Turkmenistan's foreign policy is also significant. Turkmenistan builds its relations with other states on the basis of respect for the culture, traditions and customs of their peoples. Turkmenistan considers cultural and humanitarian contacts as one of the most important means of bringing peoples closer together, deepening mutual understanding between them and developing relations of friendship and cooperation. Our country encourages the exchange of spiritual values between peoples, the processes of interpenetration and the mutual enrichment of cultures.

## Turkmenistan's Observer Status in the OTS and its Contribution to Sustainable Development

As part of its positive neutrality foreign policy, Turkmenistan became an observer to the OTS during the organization's 8<sup>th</sup> Summit held on November 12, 2021 in Istanbul. The theme of this summit, "green technologies and smart cities," was carefully determined as another important step for this organization's further contribution to sustainable development at the regional level. As a result of this high-level meeting, the decision on Turkmenistan's accession as an observer country was approved, and the statuses of partner and observer countries were specified. "Turkic World Vision-2040" and the Istanbul Declaration were also adopted at this annual summit, with numerous references to different aspects of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is an important element of Turkmenistan's positive neutrality foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Turkmenistan has regularly taken part in OTS dialogues as a guest of honor. The Istanbul Summit was historical in the sense that Turkmenistan became an official observer to the OTS, thereby assuming important responsibilities to enhance regional cooperation. "This is literally a historic event of paramount importance, marking the beginning of a qualitatively new stage in Turkmenistan's interaction with the Turkic Speaking States," said the previous leader of the nation.<sup>21</sup> Taking the floor at the Summit, then President of Turkmenistan noted the special importance

of this meeting. He underlined that “Turkmenistan considers the systematic and targeted strengthening of economic and trade relations within the OTS, particularly in the strategic areas as energy and transport.” He expressed the need to expand relations and cooperation of the member states within the framework of the UN, the ECO, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other international and regional structures. He proposed to intensify cooperation and begin the implementation of the Caspian Sea-Türkiye-Europe power grid system project and transport and logistics corridors to revive the Great Silk Road, and to develop a common strategy among the Turkic States in this direction. These important steps toward empowering sustainable development at the regional level are introduced in the “Turkic World Vision–2040” document.<sup>22</sup>

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## Conclusion

Turkmenistan's status of positive neutrality yields beneficial outcomes not only for the country itself but also for peace and development at the regional and global levels. The UN General Assembly resolution made during its 50<sup>th</sup> session on December 12, 1995, on the “Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan” is bringing about constructive and comprehensive results today in many ways. Thus, the decision to establish UNRCCA in Ashgabat, turning the city into a hub for preventive diplomacy, significantly contributes to regional peace and development. Moreover, the economic and cultural aspects of the Turkmenistan's foreign policy generate a spirit of building good relations with regional and international actors on the basis of mutual interests. Last but not least, Turkmenistan's achievement of observer status in the OTS in 2021 during the historical Istanbul Summit opens a qualitatively new stage in Turkmenistan's interaction with the Turkic-speaking states while providing ample room to enhance cooperation between the OTS in a variety of different fields, including sustainable development. The “Turkic World Vision–2040” document adopted at the Istanbul Summit is a strategic road map to this end.

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