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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

#### **D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL PARTICIPATES IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SHUSHA GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM AND OUTLINES VISION FOR THE D-8 MEDIA EXCELLENCE CENTER**

The Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> Shusha Global Media Forum, held in the historic city of Shusha, Republic of Azerbaijan, under the theme "The Mission of the Media in Promoting Peace: Restoring Truth and Rebuilding Trust." Convened under the patronage of H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Forum brought together approximately 160 media leaders, senior officials, academics, and practitioners from more than 50 countries to deliberate on the evolving role of media in promoting peace, countering disinformation, strengthening public trust, and navigating the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence and digital transformation.

The D-8 delegation was led by H.E. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, and included H.E. Ambassador Mustafa Özcan, Director of Administration, and Mr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Executive Assistant.

During the Forum, Secretary-General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood participated in a number of high-level engagements, including the opening session presided over by President Ilham Aliyev, thematic discussions on media cooperation and digital transformation, bilateral interactions with senior Azerbaijani officials and international media representatives, and a side event relating to the D-8 Media Excellence Center (D-8 MEC).

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Secretary-General had a brief interaction with President Ilham Aliyev, during which he conveyed gratitude for Azerbaijan's steadfast support for the D-8 and its valuable contributions to advancing practical cooperation.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Secretary-General met with H.E. Mr. Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Head of the Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration. They reviewed the growing D-8–Azerbaijan partnership, discussed the operationalization of the three D-8 Centres of Excellence on the Media, Energy and Climate, and Transportation and explored avenues for further strengthening institutional cooperation. The Secretary-General appreciated Azerbaijan's valuable contributions to the advancement of the D-8's core priorities.

A major highlight during the Shusha Media Forum was the dedicated session on the presentation of the Strategic Framework of the D-8 Media Excellence Center (D-8 MEC). In his address at the session, His



Excellency Hikmet Hajiyev, highlighted the importance Azerbaijan attaches to membership of D-8 and to the establishment of three Centres of Excellence as part of President Aliyev's vision.

In his keynote remarks on the occasion, the Secretary-General underscored that, in an era increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and rapidly evolving information ecosystems, trusted media has become an indispensable pillar of economic development, public confidence, sustainable progress, and international partnership. He stressed that the D-8 Media Excellence Center should evolve into a flagship platform for capacity-building, research, digital innovation, ethical journalism, media literacy, strategic communication, and the responsible application of emerging technologies, serving as the central hub for knowledge-sharing and institutional collaboration across D-8 Member States.

The Secretary-General further called for active engagement by all Member States through their media authorities, public broadcasters, news agencies, academic institutions, and think tanks, while advocating expanded cooperation in professional training, journalist exchanges, joint research, multimedia production, digital literacy, and coordinated initiatives to counter misinformation and strengthen credible information ecosystems.

The Secretary-General also underlined the importance of strengthening South-South cooperation through media diplomacy and strategic communication, stressing that the collective voice of the D-8's more than 1.28 billion people should be more effectively represented on regional and global platforms.

Overall, in his various interactions, the Secretary-General expressed confidence that the deliberations and outcomes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Shusha Global Media Forum would provide renewed impetus for strengthening media cooperation among D-8 Member States and advancing the operationalization of the D-8 Media Excellence Center. As the Organization continues to expand collaboration in diverse sectors, the Secretariat remains committed to fostering a resilient, innovative, and trusted media ecosystem that promotes dialogue, mutual understanding, sustainable development, and a stronger collective voice for the D-8 in an increasingly interconnected world.



Istanbul, 16 July 2026