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TURKMENISTAN, AT THE SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING
FOR THE 26th OSCE ECONOMIC AND
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**Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through
innovation, human capital development, and good public and
corporate governance**

**Session III: Building knowledge, skills and competences
in the digital era**

Approaches to education: from preschool education to lifelong learning

Distinguished Forum participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

May I welcome you to our Forum and wish you a productive meeting. I should like to talk to you about the current situation and prospects for the development of the education system in Turkmenistan.

Education in modern-day society makes an important contribution to the prosperity of any State in as much as the competitiveness of a country in the world market depends on the level of education of society and on its relationship to the nation's academic potential.

The education system in Turkmenistan covers all levels of education, from preschool to postgraduate education and comprises a network of infant schools, secondary schools, lower, intermediate and higher vocational training establishments, research, doctoral studies and a network of further education establishments.

In Turkmenistan today there are 1,861 secondary schools, 1,070 infant schools, 72 out-of-school facilities, 60 lower and 42 intermediate vocational schools, and 25 higher education establishments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The socio-economic reforms taking place in Turkmenistan are aimed at creating an innovative economy, and the education system plays a huge role in this development.

The distinguished President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, sees education as the basis for all-round development and progress in the country, and the reform of the education system is taking place under his leadership of the country into an era of strength and happiness.

The reform of the education system affects all aspects of life, the key features of which include effective and quality education, a safe and healthy environment, inclusion of all segments of the population in the education process, equality of all without any exception and, most importantly, access to quality educational amenities for every child.

Educational reform in Turkmenistan is based on the fundamental principles of human rights and freedoms.

The reform of the country's education system is taking place by way of legislative, material and technical, and organizational measures aimed at modernizing education in accordance with today's demands.

The existing legislative acts and standard teaching documents have been reviewed and changes and amendments made to them, and necessary new documents have been drafted (the Constitution of Turkmenistan, the Law on Education, the Regulations on Educational Establishments, Curricula and Syllabuses, and many more).

The State guarantees its citizens universal free access to general education in State educational facilities and also, on a competitive basis, universal free access to vocational education and training.

The decrees and ordinances adopted by the President to improve the education system have opened up considerable scope for fundamental reform in the field of education, training of a highly skilled workforce capable of participating in the development of economic, political and cultural fields and in creating a modern-thinking young generation with a broad world view, and for improving the efficiency of the activities of those working in the education system.

Thanks to the constant devotion on the part of our esteemed President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, modern kindergartens, secondary schools, intermediate and higher vocational training establishments, children's recreational centres and sports schools are being built.

Modern educational facilities are being equipped and fitted out with state-of-the-art technology, including teaching with modern computers, laboratories and innovative educational technologies and other teaching facilities, and the Internet is also being more widely used.

In accordance with a decree of the President of Turkmenistan, all first-year pupils since 2011 have been given a personal computer annually before the start of the school year.

The socially oriented nature of Turkmenistan's market economy model is clearly reflected in the education system, and a significant part of Turkmenistan's budget is earmarked for this area.

Distinguished participants,

Long-term national programmes and projects are being successfully implemented in Turkmenistan based on fundamental scientific concepts and approaches, and plans aimed at improving the education system in accordance with international standards are being effectively put into practice.

Systematic steps are being taken to create an innovative national education model, with innovation based on international standards, together with universal values and national upbringing and education traditions. To that end, the country has changed to a 12-year education system, above all so as to prepare young persons in a rapidly changing world for a full life in society and also to facilitate the transition to the new education content and the innovative technologies used in it.

Since the 2013/2014 academic year, children have been starting school at the age of six. General secondary education is also compulsory in Turkmenistan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Primary education has also seen changes. Pupils in preschool education leave kindergarten at the age of six. The preparation of children for school has been improved, and education syllabuses, curricula and aids have been modernized. In accordance with today's requirements, with account taken of research studies and international experience, greater attention is being paid in the country to child development from the earliest age and to preparation of preschool-age children for school education. The National Programme of Turkmenistan for Early Development and Preparation of Children for School for 2011 to 2015 was adopted to deal with these questions and successfully implemented. Since then, right up to the present day, early child development has remained topical and is a focus of attention. The question is being dealt with in partnership with various relevant government departments: education, health care, social security, and culture, and also with non-governmental organizations and international agencies – the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others.

Distinguished participants,

The vocational training of the young generation is one of the most important contributors to the present and future prosperity of the country.

The present system of vocational training in Turkmenistan consists of three types of educational establishment: lower, intermediate and higher vocational schools.

The area of lower vocational training is one of the most important focuses in Turkmenistan's national policy.

Lower vocational schools in Turkmenistan have specialist focuses, such as construction and public services, communications, oil and gas industry, chemical and oil-refining industry, textile industry, agriculture and water management, rail, river and maritime transport, energy and commerce. These vocational schools have the necessary

teaching materials and facilities and train skilled workers in accordance with their specializations.

Because vocational schools are connected to agencies or branches of industry, their recruitment policies are oriented to the demands of the labour market. Depending on human resources needs, new vocational schools are opened or new disciplines introduced into existing schools if necessary.

The maximum period spent in lower vocational schools is one year to eighteen months, depending on the complexity of the professions. Vocational schools train both young persons and adults with general secondary education to become entry-level skilled workers. In addition, they offer advanced specialist training and retraining for workers and the unemployed. They also train workers at the request of the relevant ministries, on the basis of government contracts or at the request of members of the population.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Intermediate vocational schools in Turkmenistan train middle-level specialists with general secondary education for corresponding branches of the economy of Turkmenistan. They meet the demands for the provision of vocational training and for further specialization. Among the subjects taught in these schools are engineering and technology (aeronautical engineering, consumer goods technology), medical sciences, social sciences (economics and planning, law and records management), and humanities (education, culture and the arts).

Distinguished participants,

The development of higher education in Turkmenistan is characterized on the one hand by the expansion and the increase in the number of higher education establishments, and on the other hand by intensified and specialized education as a manifestation of the diversification taking place in this area.

Particular attention in higher education establishments is paid to the computerization of education in keeping with global requirements that developments in science and technology have brought about. Educational material is published in the State language, also in electronic media. Information systems within the country and global computer networks are available to all students, giving them access to the world's leading scientific education institutions and manufacturing and service industry companies.

In keeping with the special features of the socio-economic development of our country, new universities and campuses have been opened, such as the International University of Humanities and Development and the Oguz Khan University of Engineering Technologies, where teaching is conducted in English. In addition, the Institute of Communal Services opened this academic year. There are intermediate vocational schools and higher education establishments in practically all regions of the country, and new courses are being introduced in the different disciplines in existing vocational education institutions as necessary.

As you know, one of the six basic principles of the Bologna Declaration is the introduction of two cycles of higher education. Starting from the 2014/2015 academic year, the two-cycle (bachelor and masters) education system was introduced in a number of

international universities, including the above-mentioned International University of Humanities and Development, as well as the Turkmen State Institute of Economics and Management, the International Oil and Gas University, and the Oguz Khan University of Engineering Technologies. The gradual introduction of this system is also planned in other universities in Turkmenistan, which will help the national education system to be further integrated in the global system.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A system exists in Turkmenistan for improving the qualifications of workers in all branches of the economy. The regular compulsory performance review of teaching staff carried out in the country helps to perfect teaching skills and improve qualifications. Moreover, every teacher is required to have and fulfil a self-improvement plan for each academic year. Seminars, training courses, conferences and other teacher training events are regularly organized, which also help to improve their specialist qualifications.

The modernization of the national education system at all levels and the training of a highly qualified workforce is one of the key factors in the successful and large-scale socio-economic transformation taking place today in Turkmenistan. Various comprehensive national plans and programmes on relevant topics are being elaborated and implemented in the country for that purpose. Documents such as the following may serve as confirmation of this:

- National transformation programme of the President of Turkmenistan for improvement of social and living conditions of the population of settlements, villages, city etrap and etrap centres until 2020;
- Programme of the President of Turkmenistan for socio-economic development of Turkmenistan for 2018 to 2024.

The Concept for Development of the Digital Education System in Turkmenistan was adopted to provide high-quality electronic teaching material at all levels of education, to enhance the teaching content and the quality of the imparted knowledge and to improve teaching methods with allowance for the use of digital technologies in line with the innovative development of our country.

Innovative technologies and interactive methods and forms of education are being widely introduced into the national education system. The use of multimedia technologies, state-of-the-art computers, language laboratories and the Internet and other modern education technology media has become a reality in the country's education system today.

E-learning is an effective communicative instrument that encourages young persons to learn independently and think creatively, and the acquisition of expertise in the use, study and storage of digital information makes it possible to acquire a larger body of information and allows the young generation to realize their full potential.

The practice of distance learning bringing together representatives of different universities in the country testifies to the willingness of higher education establishments to introduce e-learning formats foreseen in the Concept for Development of the Digital Education System. The joint intercollegiate videoconference organized by the Ministry of

Education of Turkmenistan and bringing together various higher education establishments demonstrated the possibilities of digital education. Teachers conduct classes with students remotely. Online lessons are provided with the aid of Internet technologies and special education software.

Incidentally, all universities in the country have well-stocked digital libraries, which represent an important educational resource and which are continuously updated in accordance with vocational training priorities.

In addition, the Concept for Improving the Teaching of Foreign Languages was adopted to create a cohesive educational environment at all levels of the education system, to systematically modernize the content of foreign-language teaching, to improve the language knowledge and oral skills of students and to develop and introduce innovative language-teaching technologies so as to stimulate effective academic and creative work. This will enable Turkmenistan to attain international standards in this sphere.

With a view to improving the education system and to aligning it with international standards, the Government of Turkmenistan actively encourages co-operation with authoritative international organizations, with which our country is linked through many years of joint co-operation and a number of specific projects. In that regard, the strengthening of productive links in the field of education is an important aspect of Turkmenistan's partnership with the European Union and United Nations specialist bodies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UNDP.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that our Forum can also make a useful contribution to the fundamental reforms of Turkmenistan's education system.

I should like to take this opportunity of wishing all participants in our meeting good health and great success in their work on behalf of our countries and of humanity as a whole.

Thank you for your attention.