



**ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)
SECRETARIAT**

**Report of the
21st Council of Ministers' Meeting
(Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, 26th November, 2013)**

Report of the **21st Meeting of Council of Ministers' (COM)**

The twenty-first (21st) Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, on 26th November 2013. The Meeting was attended by the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The delegations of the Observers including Turkish Cypriot State and Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking State as well as the representatives of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, International and Regional Organizations also attended the meeting. A delegation of the ECO Secretariat, led by the Secretary General, also participated in the meeting. The list of participants is attached as **Annex-I**.

2) The Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) was preceded by the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) on 24-25 November 2013, which was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Morteza Sarmadi, First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. Sarmadi extended a warm welcome to the delegations participating in this important ECO event in the historic city of Tehran. He noted that there is no single agreement within ECO to have all 10 members on board. He dilated that ECO needs stronger integrating instruments to become as inclusive as required for a full-fledged regional organization. He expressed his thanks to the ECO Secretary General and his staff for making necessary preparations and documentation for the meeting. He hoped that the Meeting would have fruitful discussions and a successful outcome.

3) The Secretary General of ECO His Excellency Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov also delivered a short statement in the opening session of SOM. He welcomed the Senior Officials and expressed the hope that they will make positive and constructive contributions to the deliberations. He said that ECO has completed 21 years of its establishment and was actively pursuing its goals and objectives. He also expressed his thanks to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this important ECO event in Tehran.

Agenda Item No.1 **Inauguration**

4) His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan called the meeting in order and invited the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, for his welcoming statement.

5) The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Hasan Rouhani, the Esteemed President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his inaugural speech, H.E. President Dr. Hasan Rouhani said that with the beginning of the third decade of cooperation ECO needs to undertake some reforms in order to boost its effectiveness. He observed that intra-regional trade in ECO is much below its potential. He further stated that in

view of the current situation of the international economy and emerging issues, cooperation within the framework of ECO, can protect the Member States from global economic upheavals. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-II**.

Agenda Item No.2

Election of the Chairman

6) In his remarks, His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, who was the outgoing Chairman of Council of Ministers (COM), highlighted the steps taken during Azerbaijan's Chairmanship to reform ECO in order to meet the new challenges. He hoped that these steps would further improve the effectiveness of the Organization. He expressed his satisfaction with efforts for regional integration, increase in trade and investment, stronger commercial ties and developing regional transport and communication infrastructure. He, however, said that these efforts can be further strengthened so that the ECO may become a more vibrant organization. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-III**.

7) His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was unanimously elected as the new Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Agenda Item No.3

Statement by the Chairman of the 21st COM

8) After assuming the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, made a statement in which he thanked the members of the Council for reposing confidence in him and outlined his vision for further enhancing economic cooperation in the region. He said that ECO provides an effective platform to Member States to discuss ways and means of accelerating economic development and promoting trade and investment opportunities. He stressed the need for utilizing the enormous potential for regional economic commercial cooperation that existed among the Member States. He observed that ECO must take steps for the current as well as emerging economic scenario and put up an effective and collective response to it. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-IV**.

Agenda Item No.4

Treaty Event

9) The Treaty Event provided a distinct opportunity for the Member States to reaffirm/demonstrate their continuing commitment to the objectives of the Organization by signing/depositing instruments of ratification of the ECO Agreements.

10) The Islamic Republic of Iran ratified the ECO Veterinary Commission (ECOVECO). The Islamic Republic of Pakistan signed the Articles of the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) among ECO Member States.

Agenda Item No.5

Adoption of the Agenda

11) The Council adopted the following agenda of its meeting, as proposed by the Senior Officials Meeting (Tehran, 24-25 November 2013).

1. Inauguration
2. Election of the Chairman
3. Inaugural Statement by the Chairman of the 21st COM
4. Treaty Event
5. Adoption of the Agenda
6. Secretary General's Statement to the 21st COM
7. Statements by the Ministers/Heads of Delegation
8. Statement by the Observer (s)
9. Statements by the Heads of Regional and International Organizations
10. Report on status of contributions by the Member States to the Secretariat's Budget
11. Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General
12. Status Report on Agreements between ECO Member States
13. ECO Institutions:
 - A. Statements and consideration of Annual Reports of the Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies:
 - i) The ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)
 - ii) ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)
 - iii) ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI)
 - iv) ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECOTDB)
 - v) ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECOCCI)
 - vi) ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECOCEC)
 - vii) ECO College of Insurance (ECOCol)
 - viii) ECO Supreme Audit Institution (ECOSAI)
 - ix) ECO Seed Association (ECOSA)
 - x) The ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECORCRM)
 - xi) ECO Regional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RCC)
 - xii) ECO Postal Staff College
 - xiii) Parliamentary Assembly of ECO (PAECO)
 - B. Status Report of the ECO Secretariat on Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies under process of establishment:
 - i) ECO Re-insurance Company (ECORC)
 - ii) ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM)
 - iii) ECO Veterinary Commission (ECOVECO)
 - iv) The ECO Centre for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture
 - v) The ECO Meteorological Calibration Center (ECOMCC);
 - vi) ECO Logistics Providers' Associations Federation (ECOLPAF)
 - C. Consideration of proposed Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies for establishment:
 - i) ECO Research Center
 - ii) ECO Police (ECOPOL)

iii) Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO)

14. Status of implementation of ECO Projects, Programmes and Proposals:

Projects

1. ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project
2. WTO Seminar
3. Database of ECO Importers & Exporters
4. Study on Trading Patterns in ECO Region
5. ECO Project on Expanding Intra-regional Trade
6. ECO/IDB Joint Project on preparation of a regional programme for implementation of the TTFA
7. Construction of Railway b/w Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran
8. ECO Container and Passenger Train Istanbul-Almaty
9. ECO Container Train Bandar Abbas–Almaty
10. ECO Container Train Islamabad–Tehran-Istanbul
11. Construction of standard gauge railway from China to Europe through the Kyrgyz Republic Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran
12. Railway Project on Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran) – Astara(Azerbaijan) Route
13. ECO Road Transport Corridors on KTAI & ITI
14. ECO/IRU project on monitoring of Regular Run of Trucks in the ECO region
15. Visa Sticker for Drivers and persons involved in the transit transport
16. ECO Online Money Transfer System
17. Feasibility Study on Development and Harmonization of Environmental Standards in ECO Region
18. Project Proposal: "ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Programme"
19. ECO-FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the ECO Region
20. EU-funded Project titled "Fight Against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan with the ECO Member States"
21. Afghanistan Reconstruction Projects
22. Presentation on the activities of the Institute of Environmental Sciences and Information Technology

Programmes and Proposals

1. Regional Program for Implementation of the Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming for ECO Member States (2011-2015), jointly with ECO Institute for Environmental Science and Technology
 2. Establishment of ECO Blood Safety Network
 3. ECO/FAO Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS)
 4. FAO Technical Cooperation Project: (TCP) "Support for the Implementation and Development of the CountryStat Framework ECO Countries (Pilot Country Afghanistan)
 5. ECO Joint Economic Research Programme
15. Review of ECO's External Relations:
- i) Status Report on Agreements and MoUs signed between ECO and other Regional/International Organizations
 - ii) Status of Cooperation with International/Regional Organizations, States and Institutions
16. Review and approval of ECO activities:

- i) The Meetings of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), (182nd – 189th CPRs)
 - ii) Report of the 23rd RPC Meetings, including:
 - Annual Calendar of Events for 2013-2014
 - Work Programmes for 2013-2014
 - iii) Reports of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings held following the 20th COM Meeting:
 - a. 1st Meeting of the Ministers of ICT
 - b. 5th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture
 - c. 3rd ECO Energy/Petroleum Ministers' Meeting
 - iv) Status of implementation on the decisions of the 20th COM Meeting
17. Financial and Budgetary Issues:
- The ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2013
 - The ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2014
 - The ECO Secretariat's Audit Report for 2012
 - The ECI's Budget for 2013
 - The ECI's Audit Report for 2012
 - The ECO Science Foundation Budget for 2013
 - The ECO Educational Institute Budget for 2013
 - ECO Reconstruction Fund for Afghanistan
 - ECOTA Implementation Fund
 - TTFA Fund
 - ECO Tourism Promotion Fund
 - ECO SF-Science and Technology Fund
 - Proposed amendments in Audit Procedures
 - Draft Financial Regulations of ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF)
18. Administrative Matters:
- a. Extension of tenure of Deputy Secretary General
 - b. Appointment of new Deputy Secretary General of ECO
19. Discussion on Follow-Up of EPG Recommendations and other proposed reforms
20. Any other business
21. Date and venue of the next meeting
22. Adoption of Tehran Communiqué
23. Consideration and adoption of 21st COM Report, prepared by SOM
24. Retreat Session for Foreign Ministers to discuss Regional and International issues
25. Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

Agenda Item No.6

Secretary General's Statement to the 21st COM

12) His Excellency Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov, the Secretary General of ECO, also delivered a statement in which he expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the warm hospitality and elaborate arrangements made for the meeting. He felicitated H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on assuming the chairmanship of the 21st COM and expressed the hope that under his Chairmanship, ECO would pursue even more actively for its cherished aims and objectives. He also expressed sincere thanks to the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov,

the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for his support and guidance as Chairman of the 20th COM.

13) Outlining the main achievements of the Organization, the Secretary General made a review of ECO's activities and ongoing projects. He noted that the current ECO initiatives in trade, investment, energy, environment, science & technology, education, agriculture and industrial cooperation will go a long way in increasing effectiveness of the organization. He requested the Member States to expedite the signing, ratification and implementation of the agreements within ECO's framework, including ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), ECO Trade & Development Bank, ECO Culture Institute, ECO Science Foundation, ECO Education Institute and ECO Reinsurance Company. He dilated on the outcome of high-level meetings and ECO's relations with other regional and international organizations. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-V**.

Agenda Item No. 7

Statements by the Ministers/Heads of Delegation

14) The Ministers/Heads of delegation delivered their statements, outlining their countries' policies and views on the programmes and activities of the Organization. Copies of the statements made available to the Secretariat are placed at **Annex-VI**.

Agenda Item No. 8

Statement by the Observer(s)

15) The Foreign Minister of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic Speaking Countries delivered their statements as Observers. Copies of their statements are placed at **Annex-VII**.

Agenda Item No.9

Statements by the Heads of Regional and International Organizations

16) The delegations of the Regional and International Organizations namely Islamic Development Bank, CICA, OTIF, IRU, UNDP and D-8 Secretariat were invited in the COM meeting and also delivered their statements. Copies of the statements made available to the Secretariat are placed at **Annex-VIII**.

Agenda Item No.10

Report on status of contributions by the Member States to the Secretariat's Budget

17) While appreciating the Member States who had paid their contributions, the Council expressed its concern on the issue of arrears of budgetary contributions by some Member States, which is hampering the smooth functioning of the Organization. The Council instructed the Secretary General to discuss the matter with the concerned authorities of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan to settle this outstanding issue.

Agenda Item No.11

Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General

18) The Council appreciated the Report of the Secretary General on the activities of ECO since the last COM meeting (Baku, 15th October, 2012). The Secretary General's Report gave an economic overview of the region; outlined major achievements of the Organization; and reviewed ongoing ECO projects, programmes and external relations.

Agenda Item No.12

Status Report on Agreements between ECO Member States

19) The Council considered the Status Report on implementation of the Agreements concluded by the Member States and invited those Member States who have not yet done so to sign/ratify these Agreements. The Council also urged the Member States to ensure smooth implementation of those agreements which have already come into force.

Agenda Item No.13

ECO institutions:

A. Statements and Consideration of Annual Reports of the Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies:

20) The Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies attended the meeting and made brief statements presenting an overview of the activities conducted during the period since the last COM meeting. These include the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI), ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECOTDB), ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECOCCI), ECO College of Insurance (ECO CI), ECO Supreme Audit Institution (ECOSAI), ECO Seed Association (ECOSA), ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECORCRM) and ECO Regional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security (ECORCC). Copies of their statements are placed at **Annex-IX**.

21) The Council reviewed the annual reports submitted by the ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions and appreciated the efforts made by these bodies in supporting the process of socio-economic development in the region. It expressed the hope that these Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies will play a more effective role in achieving the goal of regional economic cooperation.

22) The Council stressed the need for the Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies of ECO to intensify their efforts for supporting the cause of regional cooperation and in this regard took the following decisions:

i. **ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)**

23) The Council took note with appreciation the activities of the Institute to promote cultural cooperation in the region. The Council also invited those Member States which have not yet signed/ratified the Charter of the Institute to join it.

ii. **ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)**

24) The Council took note of the activities of the ECO Science Foundation in promoting cooperation in the fields of science and technology. It also invited the Member States which have not already done so, to sign/ratify the Charter of ECO Science Foundation and support its activities.

iii. **ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI)**

25) The Council took note of the activities of the ECO Educational Institute and underscored its role in strengthening cooperation among educational and training institutions in the region. It also invited the Member States which have not already done so to sign/ratify the Charter of the Institute and support its activities.

iv. **ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECOTDB)**

26) The Council welcomed the signing, ratification and depositing the instrument of ratification of Articles of Agreement of ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECOTDB) by the Republic of Azerbaijan, signing of the Agreement by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and initiation of the membership process by the Kyrgyz Republic. The Council while noting with appreciation the contribution of the Bank to the development of the region urged the Bank to establish the Technical Cooperation Fund to support/assist implementation of ECO events/projects. The Council called on the remaining four Member States to join the Bank to give momentum to the efforts for growth and sustainable development in the region.

v. **ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECOCCI)**

27) Acknowledging the important role of the private sector in enhancing intra-regional trade and investment inflows, the Council called upon the ECOCCI to re-double its efforts for enhanced collaboration among the private sectors of the Member States.

vi. **ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECOCEC)**

28) The Council called upon the Member States to benefit from the expertise and services offered by ECOCEC in the engineering sector, and emphasized the need for the Member States and the ECOCEC to take steps in the light of the study jointly prepared by the Secretariat and ECOCEC in 2010 on impediments faced by the ECOCEC.

vii. ECO College of Insurance (ECOCI)

29) The Council expressed its satisfaction over the activities of the ECO College of Insurance and asked the College to enhance its activities for the promotion of insurance education in the region.

viii. ECO Supreme Audit Institution

30) The Council took note of the role played by the Institution in promoting the state auditing profession among the Member States. It asked the Institution to enhance its future activities.

ix. ECO Seed Association (ECOSA)

31) The Council appreciated the holding of ECO Seed Associations (ECOSA) International Trade Conference, International Seed Fair/Exhibition and requested the Member States to support its activities in future.

x. ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECORCRM)

32) The Council appreciated the activities undertaken by the Centre and asked the Member States to support its programmes and activities for promoting cooperation on management of natural disasters.

xi. ECO Regional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security (ECORCC)

33) The Council appreciated the activities conducted by the Coordination Centre in promoting cooperation for ensuring regional food security. It also asked the Member States to extend support to the Centre in strengthening cooperation in this area.

xii. ECO Postal Staff College (ECOPSC)

34) The Council, while appreciating the ECO Postal Staff College for offering training courses for postal staff of the ECO Member States, approved allocation of US\$ 20,000 from the Feasibility Study and General Purpose Fund (FSGPF) to enable the Secretariat to cover costs of airfare, living allowance, study tours, outfit allowance, tuition fees and other relevant costs for the participants attending training courses in ECO Postal College. The Council also requested the interested Member States to organize training courses in ECOPSC, Islamabad.

35) The Council also asked the Member States, the interested international organizations and the ECO secretariat to extend assistance to ECO Postal College in organizing training course for the postal officers of the Member States.

xiii. Parliamentary Assembly of ECO (PAECO)

36) The Council welcomed the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) as an affiliated body and took note of

the First Conference of PAECO, which was held in Islamabad, Pakistan on 11-12 February 2013. The Council also invited the interested Member States to join the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

B. Status Report of the ECO Secretariat on Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies under process of establishment

37) The Council took note of the status report of the Secretariat on ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies which had already been approved by the COM but not operationalized yet and observed as follows:

i. The ECO Re-insurance Company (ECORC)

38) Noting that the establishment of the ECO Re-insurance Company will boost commercial and economic activities in the region, the Council requested the Republic of Turkey to expedite the ratification process of the Articles of Agreement of the Company at its earliest convenience so that the Company may become operational. The Republic of Turkey informed the Council that the ratification of the Articles of Agreement of ECORC is being considered by the Turkish Parliament. The Council also called upon the non-signatory Member States to sign the Articles of Agreement of the Company.

ii. The ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM)

39) The Council reiterated the importance of the establishment of RISCAM and supported the activities to operationalize the Institute. The Council requested the Interim Coordination Unit (ICU) of RISCAM to accelerate its activities to perform the functions envisaged in the relevant Road Map.

iii. ECO Veterinary Commission (ECOVECO)

40) The Council, while welcoming the ratification of the Statute of ECOVECO by the Islamic Republic of Iran, requested other Member States to sign/ratify it. The Council urged Iran to establish Technical Steering Committee for early operationalization of the said organization.

iv. ECO Centre for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture (ECOCEUW)

41) The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to convene the 2nd Working Group Meeting for establishment of ECOCEUW. The Council also requested the Member States to consider approving Plan of Action and draft Statute for establishment of ECO-CEUW.

v. The ECO Meteorological Calibration Center (ECOMCC)

42) The Council requested the Member States to ensure early establishment of the ECOMCC by finalizing the Draft Statute and Plan of Action to strengthen cooperation in the concerned field.

vi. ECO Logistics Providers' Associations Federation (ECOLPAF)

43) The Council welcomed the efforts of the Republic of Turkey for the finalization of the registration of the ECO Logistics Providers Associations Federation (ECOLPAF) and requested other Member States to provide relevant documents to join the Association. The Council also requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to organize first General Assembly of ECOLPAF at the earliest.

C. Consideration of proposed new Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, Units and Affiliated Bodies for establishment:

44) The Council deliberated this agenda item in detail and agreed as follows:

i. ECO Research Center

45) The Council approved the establishment of ECO Research Center in Baku and its Charter.

ii. ECO Police (ECOPOL)

46) The Council called upon the interested Member States to expedite appropriate measures for early establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization Police (ECOPOL) together with the decision of its headquarters. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the Council that the matter is under consideration of the relevant authorities.

iii. Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO)

47) The Council encouraged the Member States (except Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan) to expedite completing their respective national procedures so that the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO) could start functioning at the earliest.

Agenda Item No.14

Status of Implementation of ECO Projects, Programmes and Proposals:

48) The Council considered the following ECO Projects, Programmes and Proposals and adopted the recommendations as follows:

Projects

1. ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project

49) The Council appreciating the efforts of the Secretariat to start implementation of the 3rd Phase of the ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project in the area of Standardization and Conformity assessment and noted that the completion of the Project would be instrumental in removing non-tariff barriers in the region and

increase intra-regional trade. The Council urged the Member States to make financial contributions to the Project.

2. WTO Seminar

50) The Council thanked the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Turkey, Islamic Development Bank and ECO Trade and Development Bank for co-sponsoring the second Seminar on “Doha Negotiations and Accession Process to WTO” for the ECO Member States on July 02-04 2013 in Istanbul. The Council underlined the need for holding the event on regular basis to facilitate the integration of the Member States into the multilateral trading system.

3. Database of ECO Importers & Exporters

51) While appreciating the Secretariat's efforts to upgrade the existing ECO Web-Portal into ECO Business Directory of Exporters/Importers and Manufacturers, the Council called for early completion of the Project after getting necessary approval by the forthcoming 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade.

4. Study on Trading Patterns in ECO Region

52) Noting that the first phase of the study on Trading Patterns in the ECO Region completed in April 2011 which has helped to increase understanding about the problems and prospects of intra-regional trade, the Council underlined the importance of starting the 2nd Phase of the Study after the approval of its Terms of Reference (ToR) by the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade.

5. ECO Project on Expanding Intra-regional Trade

53) The Council, while acknowledging the importance of the Project on Expanding Intra-Regional Trade for promoting trade and investment in the region through organizing business forums, buyers-sellers meetings, seminars, and specialized trade fairs, urged the Member States, which have not already done so, to send their specific proposals to the Secretariat under the Project.

6. ECO/IDB Joint Project on preparation of a regional programme for implementation of the TTFA

54) The Council expressed the satisfaction on the successful completion of the rail, road and insurance components of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on the TTFA, and urged the Member States, the ECO Secretariat, IDB and the relevant international organizations to follow up the outcome of the Project. The Council also requested IDB and the ECO Secretariat to expedite commencement of the second phase of the project on customs transit and modernization of border crossing points in the region with technical support of UNECE and UNCTAD.

55) The Council also asked the ECO Secretariat and the ECO-TDB to expedite organizing the first session of the regional partnership forum for implementation of the ECO Railway Network Development Plan and the ECO Road Network Development Plan.

56) The Council called upon ECO Secretariat to continue its efforts in inviting relevant national, regional and international organizations and funding institutions, including IDB, ADB, ECO-TDB and WB to actively participate in financing and implementing the projects envisaged in the "ECO Railway Network Development Plan (ECORNDP).

7. Construction of Railway b/w Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran

57) The Council urged the enroute Member States and ECO Secretariat to take necessary measures to complete the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway project in 2014. The Council called for expediting convening of next meeting of the Trilateral Coordination Committee (TCC) in Tehran in early 2014.

8. ECO Container and Passenger Train Istanbul-Almaty

58) The Council urged the Secretariat and the enroute Member States to resolve the existing obstacles to regular operation of the ECO Container Train along the Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty route. The Council called for expediting convening of next meeting of the HLWGM in Tehran in early 2014.

9. ECO Container Train on Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route

59) The Council urged the Secretariat and the enroute Member States to resolve existing obstacles to regular operation of the ECO Container Train along the Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route. The Council also called for expediting convening of next meeting of the HLWGM in Tehran in early 2014.

10. ECO Container Train Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul

60) The Council urged the enroute Member States to resume the operation of the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train in line with the Action Plan signed during the 7th Meeting of the HLWGM (Ankara, June 2012). The Council also called for expediting convening of next meeting of the HLWGM in Tehran in early 2014. The Council asked the ECO Trade & Development Bank to finance the up-gradation of Quetta-Taftan railway project.

11. Construction of standard gauge railway from China to Europe through the Kyrgyz Republic Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran

61) The Council hoped that the feasibility study on the Tajikistan segment of Kyrgyz Republic-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran Railway project would be completed by March 2014 and hoped that the feasibility study on Afghanistan would also be completed in 2014. The Council requested the interested Member States and the relevant international financial institutions to support financing the feasibility study of this project in the Kyrgyz Republic.

62) The Council requested the interested Member States and the relevant international financial institutions to participate in construction projects identified along this corridor.

63) The Council called upon the Republic of Tajikistan to expeditiously convene the Ministerial Meeting of the enroute countries in Dushanbe in early 2014.

12. Railway Project on Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran) – Astara(Azerbaijan) Route

64) The Council expressed satisfaction on the progress achieved on Qazvin-Rasht Segment of the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)–Astara (Azerbaijan) Railway Project and urged the enroute Member States to expedite implementing the remaining segments from their national budget. Meanwhile the enroute Member States may approach financial institutions including ECO-TDB and IDB for co-funding the project.

13. ECO Road Transport Corridors on KTAI & ITI

65) The Council urged the enroute countries to expedite implementing the Action Plan on the Kyrgyz Republic-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran road transport corridor. The Council asked the Secretariat to initiate the field study along this Corridor utilizing the budget allocated by the CPR. The Council also requested IRU to co-share cost of the study. The Council expressed satisfaction on the reactivation of the TIR Convention in Afghanistan and called for efforts for further enhancing the implementation of the TIR in Afghanistan.

66) The Council requested the enroute Member States, the ECO Secretariat, UNECE, and IRU to take necessary measures to implement the TIR Pilot Project along the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Road Corridor by using TIR as the transit system. The Council was informed that test run of the trucks along the corridor will be organized by the end of April 2014.

67) The Council asked the Secretariat and the Member States to complete the remaining items of the action plan for operationalizing the ECO White Card in the ECO region particularly on KTAI and ITI Road Corridors. The Council also asked the Secretariat to conduct study on Road Safety along these corridors with the cooperation of UNECE.

14. ECO/IRU project on monitoring of Regular Run of Trucks in the ECO region

68) The Council expressed satisfaction on successful completion of the ECO/IRU joint project on Regular Monitoring of Trucks and urged the Member States and ECO Secretariat to follow up the key findings and recommendations of the project.

15. Visa Sticker for Drivers and persons involved in the transit transport

69) The Council requested the Member States and the Secretariat to take necessary measures for facilitation of visa for drivers and other persons involved in transit operations.

70) The Islamic Republic of Iran made a presentation on visa stickers for drivers and persons involved in transit transport. The Council requested the Secretariat to provide necessary information about the proposal on a unified visa sticker regime to

the Member States before the next Senior Consular Officials Meeting for consideration.

16. ECO Online Money Transfer System

71) The Council invited the interested Member States to sign and implement the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Online Money Order (OMO) for financial postal services in the region.

17. Feasibility Study on Development and Harmonization of Environmental Standards in ECO Region

72) The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for providing the report of the 1st phase of the abovementioned Feasibility Study and asked the Member States and ECO Secretariat to ensure smooth implementation of the project.

18. Project Proposal: "ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Programme"

73) The Council took note of the decision made by the 189th CPR Meeting regarding the "ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Programme" (ECO SHARP) and requested all ECO Member States to take active part in implementation of the Programme.

19. ECO-FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the ECO Region

74) The Council welcomed the operationalization of the ECO-FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development, with its seed inception workshops this year. The Council, while appreciating the signatory countries of the ECO/FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the region, requested the non-signatory countries to sign the project document and actively participate in its implementation. The Council also requested the FAO-SEC to prepare the draft agreement for utilization of US\$ 50,000 from ECO Feasibility and General Purposes Fund as ECO contribution for the said project.

20. EU-funded Project titled "Fight Against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan with the ECO Member States"

75) The Council expressed satisfaction on the activities undertaken within the framework of the abovementioned project and asked the Member States to actively support implementation of the project. The Council also appreciated the European Commission for extending the project for another year i.e. till December 2014.

21. Afghanistan Reconstruction Projects

76) Appreciating completion of two projects for Reconstruction of Afghanistan, the Council urged the Member States to honour their pledges to contribute to the ECO Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan (SFRA). As part of Turkey's pledge to this fund, the relevant authorities of Afghanistan were requested to officially send the new proposal, as already discussed with Afghan authorities to the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) through the ECO Secretariat. The

Council requested the remaining Member States to make pledges to SFRA to express solidarity with the people of Afghanistan.

22. Presentation on the activities of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology

77) The President of the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECOIEST) made a presentation on the activities of the Institute. The Council appreciated the presentation made by the President of ECOIEST on the activities of the Institute. In line with the recommendation of the 23rd RPC Meeting, the Council authorized the CPR to implement the said recommendation regarding changing the status of the Institute into an affiliated body of ECO.

Programmes and Proposals

1. Regional Programme for Implementation of the Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming for ECO Member States (2011-2015), jointly with ECO Institute for Environmental Science and Technology

78) The Council invited the Member States to make financial contributions to the abovementioned Programme.

2. Establishment of ECO Blood Safety Network

79) The Council noted with satisfaction the establishment of the ECO Blood Safety Network and requested the Member States to promote cooperation in the field of blood/blood products safety through the Network.

3. ECO/FAO Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS)

80) The Council while appreciating the Republic of Turkey for their financial support to the implementation of RPFS, requested other Member States to make financial contributions to the Programme. The Council requested Member States to provide financial and technical support to the activities and cooperation efforts of the ECO Regional Coordination Centre for the implementation of Regional Programme for Food Security (ECORCC).

4. FAO Technical Cooperation Project: (TCP) "Support for the Implementation and Development of the CountryStat Framework ECO Countries (Pilot Country Afghanistan)

81) The Council appreciated FAO for their contribution to implementation of statistical capacity building of the ECO Member States and successful conducting of the 1st Regional Training on CountryStat Programme. It took note of the expected completion of the project by June 2014.

5. ECO Joint Economic Research Programme

82) The Council welcomed establishment of the ECO Research Centre in Baku to integrate ECO Member States' economic think tanks for implementation of the ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research and to develop long term economic strategies and policies for the region. The Council rendered full support to the implementation of the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme.

83) The Council expressed its satisfaction on regular updates of ECO Statistical Network (ECOSTAT) and urged Member States to submit their updated statistical data and information for development of ECOSTAT.

Agenda Item No.15

Review of ECO's External Relations:

- i) Status Report on Agreements and MoUs signed between ECO and other Regional/International Organizations

84) The Council appreciated the efforts made by ECO in strengthening its cooperative relations with the United Nations system, regional and international organizations under the bilateral and multilateral MoUs.

- ii) Status of Cooperation with International/Regional Organizations, States and Institutions

85) The Council took note with appreciation of the steps taken by ECO in advancing its cooperation with the United Nations system, regional and international organizations and other relevant states and institutions. It asked the Secretariat to take further necessary actions to enhance this cooperation and requested the Member States to support the Secretariat in this regard. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to consider UN's initiative within MDGs regarding green economy.

Agenda Item No.16

Review and approval of ECO activities:

- i. The Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

86) The Council adopted the Reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) for its eight meetings (182nd – 189th ECO CPRs), held since the 20th COM Meeting (Baku, 15th October, 2012) and appreciated the hard work done by the CPR during the period.

- ii. Reports of the 23rd RPC Meeting, including:

- Annual Calendar of Events for 2013-2014
- Work Programmes for 2013-2014

87) The Council adopted the Report of the 23rd Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held in Tehran, Iran on 6-8 May, 2013, along with the ECO Calendar of Events and Work Programme of ECO Secretariat for 2013-2014.

iii. Reports of the Sectoral Ministerial Meetings held following the 20th COM Meeting:

88) The Council took note of the reports of the following sectoral Ministerial meetings held since the 20th COM Meeting (Baku, 15th October, 2012) and urged the Member States to take necessary measures to implement the decisions of those meetings and asked ECO Secretariat to actively follow up on decisions of the meetings on regular basis:

- a. 1st Meeting of the Ministers of ICT
- b. 5th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture
- c. 3rd ECO Energy/Petroleum Ministers' Meeting

iv. Status of implementation on the decisions of the 20th COM Meeting

89) The Council appreciated the preparation of a comprehensive follow-up report on implementation of decisions of the 20th COM meeting. The Council emphasized the need for speedy implementation of decisions of the COM.

Agenda Item No.17

Financial and Budgetary Issues:

▪ The ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2013

90) The Council approved the Secretariat's budget for 2013 amounting to US\$ 3,552,274/-, which included US\$ 169,156 as Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (5% of the budget). The budget was endorsed by the 182nd CPR meeting (16th December, 2012 – Tehran), on behalf of the Council of Ministers.

▪ The ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2014

91) The Council approved the budget for 2014 amounting to US\$ 3,913,625/- subject to concurrence by the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

▪ The ECO Secretariat's Audit Report for 2012

92) The Council approved the Audit Report of the Secretariat's budget for 2012, endorsed by the 186th CPR meeting.

▪ The ECI's Budget for 2013

93) The Council approved the ECI Budget for the year 2013 amounting to US\$ 457,330, endorsed by the 8th Meeting of the ECI-CPR.

▪ The ECI's Audit Report for 2012

94) The Council approved the ECI's Audit Report for the year 2012.

- The ECO Science Foundation Budget for 2013

95) The Council approved the budget proposed by the ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) for the year 2013, amounting to US\$ 626,680 based on the revised scales of salaries.

- The ECO Educational Institute Budget for 2013

96) The Council approved the ECOEI Budget for the year 2013, amounting to US\$ 501,520/-.

- ECO Reconstruction Fund for Afghanistan

97) The Council expressed satisfaction on completion of four projects in Afghanistan and requested the Member States to make further contributions to the ECO Reconstruction Fund for Afghanistan.

- ECOTA Implementation Fund

98) The Council, while noting that ECOTA Implementation Fund can contribute to the implementation of the Agreement, called upon the Member States to contribute generously to the Fund. The Council also approved the Secretariat's proposal to hold a seminar and a training workshop, out of the Fund in one of the ECOTA Contracting Parties to highlight the significance of ECOTA as well as facilitate the Agreement's implementation.

- TTFA Fund

99) The Council appreciated the implementation of the Work Programme, approved by the TTCC, utilizing the TTFA Fund. It called upon the interested Member States and the international funding institutions to consider offering volunteer contributions to the TTFA Fund.

- ECO Tourism Promotion Fund

100) The Council requested the Member States to contribute generously to the Fund and participate in tourism promotion activities financed from this fund.

- ECO SF-Science and Technology Fund

101) The Council called upon the Member States to contribute generously to the Science & Technology Fund for funding the Foundation's activities.

- Proposed amendments in Audit Procedures

102) The Council asked the CPR to establish a Working Group to improve the mechanism for implementation of audit observations and make amendments to the relevant provisions of the ECO Financial Regulations. The recommendations of the Working Group will be submitted to CPR for approval on behalf of COM.

- Draft Financial Regulations of ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF)

103) The Council authorized the CPR to consider and approve the draft financial regulations of the ECOSF, on its behalf.

Agenda Item No.18

Administrative Matters:

- a. Extension of tenure of Deputy Secretary General

104) The Council approved the extension of Mr. Altaf Asghar, Deputy Secretary General (TC, PERS & CFU) till 2nd January 2015.

- b. Appointment of new Deputy Secretary General of ECO

105) The Council authorized the CPR to approve the appointment of Deputy Secretary General (Admn,HRSD&EME), the nominee of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on its behalf.

Agenda Item No.19

Discussion on Follow-Up of EPG Recommendations and other proposed reforms

106) The Council authorized the CPR to approve the roadmap for implementation of the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), on its behalf.

Agenda Item No.20

Any other business

107) The Council appreciated a presentation made by the ECO Secretariat on ECO Web Portal.

Agenda Item No.21

Date and venue of the next meeting

108) The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the 22nd COM alongwith 13th ECO Summit in 2014.

Agenda Item No.22

Adoption of Tehran Communiqué

109) The Council adopted the Tehran Communiqué. Text is placed at **Annex-X**.

Agenda Item No.23

Consideration and adoption of 21st COM

110) The Council unanimously adopted the Report.

Agenda Item No.24

Retreat Session for Foreign Ministers to discuss Regional and International issues

111) On the sidelines of the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers, a Retreat Session for the Ministers of the ECO Member States was held to discuss the regional and international issues.

Agenda Item No. 25

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

112) The Meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for conducting the proceedings of the meeting in an efficient and professional manner, and to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality extended to all delegations. The Council appreciated the able Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the Meeting of the Senior Officials. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretary General and his team for preparing comprehensive documents and assisting the host authorities in making the 21st Council of Ministers Meeting a complete success.
