



**ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)
SECRETARIAT
(TEHRAN)**

**Statements by the Foreign Ministers/Heads of Delegation
21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers,
(26 November, 2013 – Tehran)**

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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Zarar Ahmad Osmani, Acting Foreign Minister of the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers
(Tehran – 26th November, 2013)**

**My dear brother and friend, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign
Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegation of ECO Member States,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

May please, mercy and the blessings of Allah be upon you all.

At the outset, on behalf of the Government and People of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I would like to express sincere greetings and warm wishes to the Government and People of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all participants of this Summit.

Allow me to congratulate my colleague H.E. Foreign Minister Zarif on his assumption as the Chair of the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). I wish him success towards realization of the goals of our organization. I also commend the excellent manner in which the Republic of Azerbaijan led the work of our organization since last COM meeting.

Taking this opportunity, I also pay tribute to H.E. Shamil Aleskerov, the ECO Secretary General for his enduring commitment and tireless efforts in advancing the work of our organization.

Mr. Chairman,

With a quick look at the constitution of ECO it can be seen that the Member States have established this organization to achieve the following goals:

- To develop trade through appropriate access to each others' markets
- To create the right conditions to encourage Member States to ensure sustainable economic growth with the aim of continuous improvement of people's living standards
- To consolidate cultural, spiritual and fraternal interests of the citizens of Member States through social and cultural channels
- To contribute to the expansion of international trade and efforts to address unfair trade measures, which often create unfavorable trade conditions for developing countries

Although a review of plans and activities conducted in the framework of this organization over the past years represent significant progress towards these

objectives, comparing the achievements with the potential and current capacities for further cooperation in our region reflects the fact that there is a long way ahead of our nations to achieve a desirable end-state that our peoples expect of us. Perhaps some of these weaknesses are justified in the face of challenges such as potential instability, terrorism, war, absence of infrastructure and appropriate institutions among Member States. However, we cannot justify all of our weaknesses through these challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

History has proved that many political, security, economic and cultural issues could be better approached and solved in a relatively homogenous framework provided by regional cooperation formats and initiatives. We therefore firmly believe that through regional cooperation and convergence we can address a lot of the problems facing our nations.

Afghanistan attaches great importance to the consolidation and expansion of regional cooperation and will spare no effort to cooperate with our neighbours and other countries in the region that geography has tied together. In this context, we are strongly committed to use our geographic and historic position to serve as a land bridge in the Heart of Asia connecting Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East.

To realize this vision, despite many daunting challenges, we have been trying to develop our physical infrastructure and necessary legal frameworks to enhance Afghanistan's potential and capacity to serve as the centre of regional economic integration.

Major regional projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project and the Central Asia South Asia electricity project (CASA-1000), which we hope will soon pass through Afghanistan, can bring changes in the lives of millions of people of Central Asia and South Asia regions.

We are also engaged with many of our immediate neighbors and countries of the region as well as regional organizations through bilateral and multi-lateral agreements to consolidate regional cooperation. The Istanbul process or Heart of Asia process is another significant step towards mobilizing political will for cooperation, confidence building and promoting a culture of working together in topical areas of interest. I also would like to take this opportunity to encourage ECO to play a pro-active role in advancing regional cooperation. In addition, I would like to thank all Member States for their positive and constructive role in this process so far.

Mr. Chairman,

The growing phenomenon of religious intolerance, violence, extremism and terrorism has become a major challenge and has undermined our peace, stability and security. Our experience has proven that no single country can tackle these challenges. To that end, our sincere cooperation is needed to destroy the sanctuaries, disrupt

communication networks, dry up the financial resources, and defeat the organizational capabilities of these networks. In our part, Afghanistan, as the prime victim of terrorism and extremism and as the forefront in the fight against this evil, is committed to continue its noble struggle against these evil phenomena in all their forms and manifestations.

Narcotics also pose a significant threat to the security and safety of our societies. Despite considerable counter-drug successes in recent years, illicit drugs remain one of today's biggest challenges. We believe combating narcotics requires a comprehensive international and regional effort. For enhancing the effectiveness of counter narcotics, there is need to share responsibility and form a balanced prospective in the decision-making circles of our countries. We cannot reach to an outcome in this painstaking fight through cosmetic unilateral action, shirking responsibility and blaming each other. Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is directly linked with the activities of terrorist networks in the region, increasing demand in the market, existence of safe operating areas for drug trafficking networks, and circulation of money arising from the illicit narcotics-related revenues generated at the regional and international levels. In order to deal with this phenomenon, it requires correct planning, firm determination and sincere efforts at the regional and international level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year will mark a milestone for the people and government of Afghanistan. Afghan national security forces will have full and comprehensive responsibility for security across the entire country. Next spring, the Afghan people will participate in presidential and provincial council elections. We believe that the success of these historic events will not only entrench our gains of the past decade but also would allow the country to meet the needs and requirements of the post-2014 Transformation Decade.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to H.E. Foreign Minister Zarif and his colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran for their warm hospitality, to ECO and ECO Member States for their ongoing support and generous assistance to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We are also grateful for projects financed through the ECO Special Fund for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Thank you for your patience and attention.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Kairat Sarybay, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers (Tehran – 26th November, 2013)

**Dear Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Ministers and Heads of Delegation,**

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov for effective and fruitful Chairmanship of his country in the ECO, and wish success to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif in this capacity during the next year.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the very moment of joining ECO Kazakhstan is an active member of the Organization and is deeply committed to the consistent development of regional cooperation.

All these years, our country's participation in integration processes was among the main foreign policy priorities.

We assumed that integration – is an urgent demand of the time, failure of which will inevitably take us to the outskirts of the world economy. The modern world required concerted efforts to meet the existing challenges.

The concept of regional cooperation for the region's economic recovery and prosperity of our peoples is in complete concurrence with the goals and principles of the policy of our nation.

The analysis of ECO activities during the recent years shows that the organization is still in its stage of transformation into a fully fledged regional economic organization. There are factors that affect the implementation of agreements. These are that our economies are at different stages of economic development and our economies are in the process of application of new economic models, there is also an issue of regional security in the region and international political factors that extensively affect economic processes.

The organization has a number of unresolved issues that delay the implementation of decisions which directly affect the overall performance of the ECO Secretariat.

First, one of the issues are the outstanding arrears of some Member States before the organization. We are aware of the steps taken by the Secretariat to address these issues, but to date no positive results observed.

Secondly, it is the ambiguous system of distribution of posts in the Secretariat. As the result, there instances when the Member States cannot agree on one or another position, and some positions remain vacant for years. Therefore, we believe that the most equitable system on acquiring posts at the Secretariat is on the basis of the contributions of member countries to the organization.

The third outstanding question is that we have constantly “increasing cumbersomeness” of the structure, leaving it extremely immobile.

The Economic Cooperation Organization was created for regional integration and to help to contribute for reaching this goal in practice, and not to serve to short-term interests of some Member States. The primary focus should be placed on the development of the economies of Member States.

We all know that the ECO region covers an area of 7 million square kilometers with a population of over 380 million people that demonstrates huge economic potential of the Organization.

We truly hope that the coming in years 2014-2015 become a milestone for the organization and for the entire region. During this period, we will review all major regulatory and organizational documents of the organization. I am sure the internal reform of ECO will lead to positive results, making it capable of addressing to new challenges.

As the result of our mutual efforts to reform the organization will allow us to observe its real potential through a consistent and gradual economic integration and establishing of mutually intraregional cooperation and mutual assistance in various aspects of socio-cultural, scientific and technological development.

Dear Heads of delegation,

Kazakhstan is like to any other Member States is in the process of the economic recovery in the post-crisis period and we are searching new and effective solutions of economic development in the context of global economic turbulence.

As a result of taken effective anti-crisis actions, Kazakhstan’s economy has ensured the sustainable growth. In the first three quarters of this year, our country has achieved annual growth of 7%. If we talk about the forecast for the medium term, in the years 2013-2017 real economic growth is being predicted at 7.6% a year, to ensure the growth of GDP per capita of more than 20,000 U.S. dollars by 2018.

A clear vision and plan for further development of the Republic, through the development of a new political course – The Strategy “Kazakhstan – 2050” helps in ensuring the real economic growth.

The main objective of our strategy is to turn Kazakhstan into one of the 30 most developed countries, on the basis of innovative economic and social principles.

Kazakhstan, implementing the main task, closely links its development with the cooperation of states in the region, we further plan to remain active and responsible member of the international community.

The areas of transport, food security, energy and environmental protection remain the priority for Kazakhstan in the framework of ECO.

Last year we have completed the construction of the Kazakh part of the railway “Uzen – Kyzylkaya – Bereket – Etrek – Gorgan” linking Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran. Inauguration of the this railway in the middle of the next year promises a significant increase of turnover in trade between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Also, we are implementing another two rail projects that will create a new Transkazakhstan rail link direction starting from China border to the Aktau international seaport.

We are ready to consider new approaches on putting on regular operationalization of trains on routes “Istanbul-Almaty” and “Bandar Abbas – Almaty”.

As we all know, Iran is located at the center of our region, that unites our states and the economic activity of Iran is very important for the increase of trade between our countries.

I would like to especially note the positive trend in the international arena. And we are pleased to mention that the full involvement of Iran in the world economy is in the core interest of the region and to promote positive economic processes in our countries.

In the energy sector, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to energy security as a key international and regional stability.

Kazakhstan with full responsibility refers to building an effective global energy architecture.

Therefore, the main course of the country’s foreign policy is aimed at resolving the problem of stability, security and environmental routes of hydrocarbon exports.

Our energy strategy is also based on the principles of economic viability and minimize the anthropogenic impact of energy on the environment.

We will continue to remain for further diversification of the transport of goods to the world markets and the most efficient operation of pipeline systems and look forward to the active participation of ECO member countries in the process.

As you are aware in 2017 Kazakhstan will hold international exhibition “EXPO 2017”, which will give a powerful impetus for the further diversification and modernization of the economy, transition to a “green economy” and should become a platform for innovation in the global energy sector. The theme of the exhibition is “Future energy”, which is based on solving the problems of global scale, such as lack of access to electricity, reducing poverty, the risks of depletion of conventional energy sources, negative consequences on environment.

In this regard, we consider extremely important and correct the current work of the organization on the development and exchange of experience in a high tech and intellectual sphere, as renewable energy sources (RES). We invite ECO Member States for an active participation in EXPO – 2017.

Gradual emergence of global economic crisis will inevitably lead to a massive increase of production and consumption. In this context, the transition to “green” energy and the introduction of “green” technology is a growing vector of the global economy.

In this regard, we consider it appropriate for the Secretariat to explore Kazakhstan’s initiative “Green Bridge”, which is a practical mechanism for the development of clean industry and the transition to a “green” economy and extend this concept to all the ECO Member States.

Implementation of “Green Bridge” initiative will give a significant advantage in attracting additional investment and technology to renovate and modernize the economy as well as to increase the country’s competitiveness.

Kazakhstan, despite the vast natural resources, including hydrocarbons, intends to vigorously develop renewable energy and plans to invest annually funds in the amount of 2 percent of the national GDP in “green modernization”.

In this regard, it is extremely valuable for us the experience of our neighbors, the ECO Member States in the field of renewable energy development. The organization should act as an effective bridge for exchanging information and ideas initiated to promote the concept of “Green Bridge” in the region.

**Mr. Chairman,
Dear Heads of delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Trust and unity among all peoples is the foundation of a new and fair world order. We are looking forward for a successful cooperation between the Member States of the organization for the benefit of our people.

On behalf of the Government of our country, I would again confirm that Kazakhstan will continue to implement open and transparent policy in relations with all the partners.

In conclusion, I would like to express my confidence that this meeting will be another important step towards the effective implementation of the multifaceted potential of ECO Member States leading to the welfare and prosperity of our countries and people. Let me also express my heartfelt gratitude to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif esteemed and brotherly people of Iran for warm and friendly hospitality.

Thank you for your attention.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Erlan Abdyldaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers (Tehran – 26th November, 2013)

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a big honour for me to represent today Kyrgyz Republic at the 21st ECO COM in a beautiful city Teheran.

First of all, allow me, on behalf of the Kyrgyz Republic delegation and indeed on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to welcome our esteemed participants and also to congratulate H.E. Mr. Javad Zarif on his election as Chairman of this high level meeting and to express sincere thanks to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its warm hospitality and cordial welcome, excellent arrangements provided for the participants.

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,**

Our today's Forum provides valuable possibility for all of us to summarize the main results of cooperation over the last year and to discuss prospects of further potential of our countries for the development of regional cooperation within the framework of ECO.

As we can see from the Annual Economic Report that the ECO countries economy grows at a high rate, trade grows rapidly, including trade between the ECO region countries, investments increase, financial possibilities of the most of the ECO countries have grown, certain progress in poverty reduction and MDG was achieved.

At the same time our integration aspiration faces certain difficulties in practical implementation of the decisions on the main directions of ECO activity, basically decisions related to financing of the joint projects and their implementations.

Our countries in current conditions should shift to a new level of cooperation; take joint efforts on the global financial and an economic crisis impacts reduction in ECO region, which undoubtedly has negative impact on financial and economic conditions of our countries. In this context activation of the ECO Trade and Development Bank can play significant, positive role. All the more, I am glad to inform you that Kyrgyz Republic has sent the relevant application to the Bank which has been considered positively.

Also I would like to welcome our efforts to ensure stability, first of all, in consecutive transit-transport development and emphasis interaction in tariff reduction and removing tariff barriers. And from this point of view Kyrgyzstan is the supporter of intraregional trade development. Three countries of the Organization are members for the WTO- Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, accordingly Kyrgyzstan provides most favorable environment for Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. ECO has all necessary conditions really to become the effective tool of regional integration. ECO relations with the other regional economic organizations, international economic and financial institutions, first of all with the United Nations, IDB, ADB, IMF and SCO should be consecutive and stable in order to ensure a sustainable development of multilateral and multi-plan economic cooperation in the region for joint implementation of the projects and programs on economic potential capacity building.

Dear Colleagues,

All of us unanimously notice that the key for solving the Afghanistan's problem is first of all in the hands of the Afghani people and its Government and political stabilization processes and government strengthening in Afghanistan directly depend on rates and methods of solving the social and economic problems.

Involving of Afghanistan in regional cooperation and expansion of trade and economic interaction with the neighbouring countries is a key condition for the further sustainable development of the region and ensuring peace and trust.

We successively do support the Istanbul Process we participate in all working group meetings on strengthening the trust measures and are ready to actively promote implementation of the regional projects on Afghanistan.

The Kyrgyz Republic actively supports implementation of unique energy project CASA-1000, regional transport corridors development, which can give an access to our region's potential. My country fully supports Afghanistan in joining the Agreement on Transboundary Transportations within the framework of CAREC. My country with the essential support of UNDP is initiating establishment of Trilateral Agro-Industry Consortium (Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan) for introducing our countries ecologically pure agricultural products to the world market.

Development of the regional transport and trade infrastructure is a necessary condition for effective intraregional and inter-regional cooperation in all other spheres of interaction.

Jointly with other ECO countries we actively participate in development of East-West and the North-South transport corridors which give the CA countries access to Persian Gulf through Turkmenistan and Iran.

It is important to speed up timely operationalization of the ECO Container and Passenger trains at full capacity. We also support measures on extension of Istanbul-Almaty container train to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Dear Colleagues,

In the recent years, we do observe fast social, economic, political and technological changes. In the conditions of global financial and economic crisis ECO should study economic situation of the region and make comprehensive research including assessment of economy development existing tendencies of the countries, their complementarity, transport and trade condition and other sectors, development of private sector and realisation of economic reforms in the countries. In this context, the Organization is to propose main tendencies of the ECO development strategy for sustainable economic and social development and increasing standard of living in the countries.

Thus, mentioning the certain progress reached in the Secretariats activity in Project and Economic Research we consider that in the conditions of global financial crisis the Secretariat should strengthen research on ECO social and economic development strategy jointly with the national research centres and institutes in the field of economy.

Distinguished participants,

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the ECO countries possessing substantial potential and being in the centre of the Eurasian Continent are fully capable to fulfil the objectives of the Organization, i.e. to become a sanguineous and important part of world economy.

I am confident that Tehran Communiqué satisfies the interests of all ECO members and I do hope that the today's our meeting demonstrates our common aspiration to take concrete steps towards mutually beneficial cooperation.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for excellent arrangement of the 21st ECO COM.

Thank you for your attention

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs
and National Security of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers
(Tehran – 26th November, 2013)**

**Your Excellency Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Chairman of the twenty first ECO Council of Ministers,
Your Excellency Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, Secretary General (ECO),
Distinguished Ministers,
Honorable delegates,
Excellencies,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to address this eminent gathering of the twenty first Council of Ministers of ECO. I also thank the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this meeting and its warm and gracious hospitality.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Javad Zarif on his election as Chairman of this session and indeed for his outstanding accomplishment in Geneva last week. I would also like to thank Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan for leading the work of this Organization last year.

Mr. Chairman,

ECO was established on high ideals and with great hopes. It envisaged a close fraternity of member states, in an integrated interconnected and prosperous region. A region brought together by free trade, infrastructure and energy connectivity and the collective well-being of the people of the region.

Today, our Organization has a solid programme of cooperation, a forward looking agenda and an expanding horizon of activities. Yet, in terms of actual outcome, ECO has made only modest progress over the years. We have not been able to harness ECO's full potential to bring tangible benefits to the people of the Region.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting at a time when we are faced with immense challenges from global economic recession, affecting the very foundations of world financial architecture to the specter of extremism, militancy, terrorism and narcotics. From climate change impacting agricultural productivity, to natural disasters. From rising poverty to rapidly depleting natural resources, the world is becoming an increasingly inhospitable place.

Our region is affected by all these developments and is seriously affected by most. We have a special responsibility towards our people and our region to convert challenges into opportunities, dilemmas into solutions, and ideas into reality.

Pakistan believes that ECO has the collective strength to measure up to these challenges. Together we can, and should make a difference History will not forgive us if we fall.

Mr. Chairman,

The launching of ECO Silk Road Truck Caravan was an important milestone achieved by this organization. This linkage could help to promote trade, people to people contacts and tourism among the member countries. We hope that this Caravan would be able to start its regular run in the near future.

Mr. Chairman,

ECO was established to bring about greater economic cooperation, removal of trade barriers and eventual establishment of free trade regime in the region. Regrettably, these objectives have not been fulfilled due to our collective failure to operationalize the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) since its signing more than ten years back in July 2003. Allow me to say that ECO's relevance will be judged by the progress on ECOTA, as President Rouhani remarked in his inspiring inaugural address, the regional share of trade and investment is very small.

As the coordinating country on ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) Pakistan attaches great importance to its early implementation. Different deadlines were set in past for the implementation of this Agreement. However, in the absence of requisite data from some of the members, the agreement has not taken off. Beside provision of lists, we hope that the remaining partners will sign, and join this agreement soon.

Mr. Chairman,

We are happy to inform the members that ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF) has become operational in Islamabad after a period of 17 years.

The Foundation has been established pursuant to the Charter of the ECO which envisaged the establishment of ECO-SF as a Specialized Agency of the Organization to function as a reservoir of highly skilled scientific and technical manpower and to facilitate promotion of scientific research among the member States.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the biggest challenges faced by our region today is the growing water and energy scarcity and frequent natural disasters. These are only a few manifestations of global warming. This phenomenon has pushed environmental concerns to the forefront of international agenda. We believe that ECO should adopt a concrete programme of cooperation in this important area. We are also expanding our cooperation in the energy

sector through CASA 1000 MW, Iran Pakistan Gas Pipeline and Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India Gas Pipeline Project.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan wants a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. We will be happy to join the ECO's endeavors for the reconstruction of our important and brotherly neighbor, Afghanistan. We have pledged a total of US\$ 5 million to ECO's fund and already remitted US\$ 2 million. I am pleased to announce that Pakistan will shortly be making its remaining contribution.

Excellencies,

For the success of ECO itself, and that of its programme activities, the organization would require a sustainable financial base. To this end, it would be essential for us, as its members to meet the obligations by timely providing financial contributions. This is all the more essential for those of us, who are running in arrears of budgetary contributions.

As Member States, it is our responsibility to make this Organization more efficient and transparent. In the same spirit it is essential to improve the present mechanism to implement the recommendations of the Audit Board. We, therefore, propose that a system may be devised in which views of the Audit Board can be placed before the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) or Council of Ministers (COM).

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to point out that some of the ECO affiliated bodies have either completed their tasks or have become less relevant. We would, therefore, urge that there is a need to carry out a review and also to improve the efficiency of bodies that are retained.

Pakistan has always attached great importance to ECO and will remain in the forefront for the actualization of the ECO's agenda. We have full faith in ECO's manifest destiny. We urge ECO Member States to closely coordinate their policies to minimize adverse impact of the current global economics crisis. Pakistan would like to see projects of infrastructure and energy connectivity as well as trans-regional development, put on fast track. We wish to see ECO Region transform into a prosperous trading bloc that stimulates and promotes industrial growth, reduces and eventually eliminates tariff and non-tariff barriers, to promote free trade within the region and becomes a factor of global peace, stability and prosperity.

I thank you.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Davlatali Hotamov, Ambassador of the Republic of
Tajikistan to Iran at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers
(Tehran – 26th November, 2013)**

**Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished Head of delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the H.E. Distinguished Mr. Muhammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this meeting and warm hospitality extended to all the delegations.

Also, appreciate H.E. Mr. Shamil Aleskerov, ECO Secretary General and his staff for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting.

I do hope, that today's meeting will encourage us in solving crucial problems accrued, serve for further enhancing our cooperation, promote highest possible implementation of Organization's potential for the benefit of sustainable development and economic exuberance of ECO region.

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is implementing all necessary measures in order to achieve its strategic goals, namely ensuring energy stability, removing communication deadlock and ensuring food supply security. Among the most important directions within the Organization, the Republic of Tajikistan also emphasizes establishing reliable transport-transit systems, simplification of trade procedure, encouragement of frontier trade, effective utilization of water-power resources, creation of an integrated power system and free movement of goods and labour.

ECO initiative on investment attraction for the implementation of trade projects between Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan is a response to our interests. The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan recognizing significant importance of the utilization of water-power capacity of the region supports realization of project CASA-1000. This Project is one of the main points in mutual beneficial cooperation between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan.

As we have mentioned above, one of the strategic aims of Tajikistan is removing communication barriers. And we endeavour to achieve our goals by construction of tunnels, bridges, roads, railways and transport communication infrastructure.

It should be noted that construction of roads which would connect the countries of region and provide Central-Asian countries an access to ports of Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean is our common interests. Thus, this is not only a question of creation of modern communications but also about provision of free movement of the goods, labour and assets.

In this regard, mentioned Transit Transport Framework Agreement becomes effective and it is considered as an effective strategy for expanding trade by transit-transport regional cooperation which urged to facilitate movement of goods and services of the region.

Nowadays, trade cooperation among the ECO Member-States play key role as the priority field of cooperation in promoting integration process ensuring establishment of dynamic regional economy.

It may be recalled that ECO region market is becoming more open and profitable for the Republic of Tajikistan. At the present time, ECO member-states play key role in external trade of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Dear colleagues,

One of the most acceptable ways of implementation of efficient programmes, in our opinion, is establishing of the free economic zone. These zones are urged to become main factors of development, promote economic activities and enhance regional trade and transit. Many ECO member states have wide experience in this regard.

Oil and gas trade by preferential prices to the Member States, which possess limited oil resources and natural gas, can be a good initiative.

As is known the ECO region possesses huge Hydrocarbon resources and colossal water-energy potential and that defines its place in the world economy. Effective utilization of available potential will allow to intensify a role of the countries in determination of world market conjuncture of power resources and to reduce negative influence of world prices fluctuation and global economy.

Transportation and trade of oil, gas, energy and other forms of energy within and across ECO region, human resource development, research and development, energy policy and planning, effective coordination and cooperation are determined as the priority fields of the mentioned Plan of Action.

We believe that effective utilization of power and water resources of region is to be considered in the context of adaptation to climate changes. Practical results in this direction can be achieved by stable water resources management and solving hydroeconomic problems at national and regional levels on the basis of an optimum combination of the international support and national efforts.

Ecological and social consequences of climate changes cause general concern. One of the key points of these destructive processes is certainly intensive ablation.

According to forecasts of specialists, global warming of the climate will cause the losses of main glacial formations.

In Tajikistan more than 14 thousand big and small glaciers which supply about sixty percent of flowing of the Region Rivers. Meanwhile more than thousand of them disappeared in the last years only. This is the most dangerous tendency. We should not admit disappearance of the glaciers which are the source of life in this vast region.

Climate changing also is fraught with boosting of intensity and frequency of nature disaster – serious obstacles on way of achieving sustainable development. We believe that joint efforts are to be intensified for reducing the risks and mitigating consequences of nature disaster. In our opinion joint efforts should be directed towards potential strengthening on prevention, increasing awareness of risks of nature disaster to improve monitoring and estimate consequences with use of science data.

Distinguished Participants,

The Government of the Republic Tajikistan welcomes the activities of Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (DOCCU) and emphasizes the necessity to strengthen cooperation in the field of combating drug trafficking.

Tajikistan supports efforts made on increasing efficiency and overall activity of the Organization. We believe that currently drastic reforms are needed with an aim at further increase of output of ECO activities, strengthening of its coordinating role, acclimatization to realities of today and future challenges, rational recruitment policy, and also on actualization of the Organization's agenda.

The consolidating role of ECO should be enhanced and its renewed frameworks should become effective, capable to react regional developments quickly and adequately.

This Meeting demonstrates the will of Member States to improve ECO activities and multiply its potential.

The Republic of Tajikistan endeavours to continue to take active part in ECO activities and enhance its multilateral cooperation. We always support and will support strengthening of regional cooperation within all ECO regions for the blessing of prosperity of the people of the Member-States.

Thank you

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Turkey at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers
(Tehran – 26th November, 2013)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ministers and Colleagues,**

It is a great pleasure for me to meet with you all in Tehran, on the occasion of the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my distinguished colleague H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif for the excellent organization of this meeting and the warm hospitality of the Iranian authorities.

Global challenges such as economic and financial crises, energy and food security and climate change as well as regional political transformation processes in our neighbourhood call for prompt and coordinated action at regional and global levels. Therefore, regional cooperation and solidarity in these areas have become crucial more than ever.

In this regard, ECO provides us with a solid basis to enhance our collective efforts in order to help to meet contemporary challenges. We, as ECO members, have a unique geo-strategic location. Our region, with its significant economic assets, vast natural resources and dynamic work force, has a huge development potential which we should utilize in the interest of all our nations.

By pursuing regional cooperation, enhancing existing relations and strengthening economic ties among us, we can reshape our organization to enable it to realize our hopes for the future.

On the other hand, we have to intensify our common efforts to reach the unachieved goals from the past three decades.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Today we are holding the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers of an “economic cooperation organization” which was founded in 1985, enlarged in 1992 but is yet to have an operative Trade Agreement. Moreover, the level of intra-ECO trade, unfortunately, is still far from the target figure envisaged in the ECO Vision 2015.

Enhancing the volume of trade must be the most important aspect of any economic cooperation model. In this regard, the idea of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) presents a great opportunity. However, not all Member States are party to this trade cooperation agreement. We must strive to ensure that ECOTA becomes operational as soon as possible, at least among the Parties which have submitted their Lists and completed all other legal and procedural requirements. ECO as a multinational

economic platform that aims to contribute to the economic stability and prosperity in the region should immediately put ECOTA into force.

Furthermore, the objective of enhancing intra-regional trade requires the presence of a well-functioning system of transport in the region. Our region is at the heart of Eurasia, at the crossroads of three continents. The implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and the realization of our transport-logistics corridors will be instrumental in establishing viable region-wide corridors of transport.

We have to overcome certain operational and infrastructural problems along the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad railway route. The corridor's strategic importance implies the need to forward our collective efforts to solve the problems being faced and increase the volume of freight transported via this route.

Turkey, as the coordinator country of the ECO Regional Program for Food Security, attaches great importance to cooperation in the field of agriculture among the ECO Member States. The issue of food security is vital for our region's future. In this regard, I invite all Member States to cooperate for the success of the ECO Regional Coordination Center for Food Security.

Distinguished Ministers,

In the past three decades, the enormous potential of our region has encouraged us to initiate numerous cooperation areas and launch a large amount of projects. This enthusiasm has sometimes led to a loss of focus in our efforts to realize concrete projects and attain in-depth goals. Therefore, as a mature regional organization, ECO should determine its priority areas of action and strive to realize concrete projects in time.

Implementation of projects in priority areas of cooperation will benefit all Member States. Turkey is actively contributing to ECO projects at all stages, including from planning to endorsement and implementation. It is essential for all of us to allocate the necessary financial and technical support for the accomplishment of the projects.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize the importance of the ECOBANK which aims to contribute to the financing of ECO projects and the sustainable economic development of the Member States. I strongly encourage and invite all the other Member States that have not done so to join this important ECO institution.

Our region is a fertile geography for cooperation not only in terms of economics but also in culture. In this context, I would like to praise the valuable activities of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI). I am confident that in the coming years, we will witness admirable work by this institution which reflects the distinct cultural heritage of all member countries and the vast collective cultural wealth of our region.

Excellencies,

While heading towards the 30th Anniversary of ECO, we need more than ever to create an effective and productive organization. Therefore, I would like to once again express my firm conviction that a comprehensive structural and financial reform process is required to achieve the fundamental objectives of the organization.

In this regard, the formation of the “Eminent Persons Group (EPG)” constituted a unique opportunity for the better functioning of ECO and the Secretariat. I am grateful for the valuable efforts of the EPG. I believe that EPG recommendations endorsed by the Council deserve more attention from the Member States. The Group has already said what is necessary for our organization. Now it is time to implement their recommendations without further delay.

Distinguished Colleagues,

I am delighted to welcome H.E. Özdil Nami, the Honorable Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. I am sure that the presence of the TRNC as an observer member will enrich our common efforts to create a more prosperous region. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the TRNC for generously hosting the “1st ECO University Sports Games”. I hope that the TRNC will also soon join the meetings of Parliamentary Assembly of ECO (PAECO).

I also welcome H.E. Ambassador Halil Akinci, the Secretary General of the Turkic Council. The prospects for cooperation in our region between the Turkic Council and ECO are high and I am sure that both organizations will come up with joint activities that will serve our welfare and prosperity including the ones under the Istanbul Process.

I would like to pay a special tribute to my distinguished colleague and friend, H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for his constructive efforts during his Chairmanship of the ECO Council of Ministers, and wish every success to H.E. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on assuming the Chairmanship of the Council. I present my gratitude to the Secretary General and his dedicated staff for their efforts and contributions.

In concluding, let me express my sincere hope that this meeting will provide impetus to our common efforts to further strengthen ECO's role in advancing cooperation and understanding between our countries, in our region and beyond.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. B. Taganov, Minister of Economy and Development of
Turkmenistan at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers
(Tehran – 26th November, 2013)**

**Distinguished Ministers,
Heads of delegations,**

Let me on behalf of the Government of Turkmenistan welcome you and express my appreciation for the proposal to take part in The 21st Meeting of Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

I am pleased to note that our states have been promoting strong partner relations for many years. Enhancement of trade and economic cooperation between our states is a clear example to that. I would like to emphasize that currently ECO share in the export of Turkmenistan is 21%, in import – 32%. Nowadays, 868 enterprises and 1654 projects with the participation of ECO member states capital are registered in Turkmenistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Being committed to the policy of peace, friendship and good neighborhood, Turkmenistan puts and gradually develops important international initiatives. First of all, they are related to global energy security and serve the interests of world community, including ECO member states.

Actuality of energy problems is very crucial not only for Turkmenistan as a possessor of rich hydrocarbon resources, but also for all countries of Central Asia and Caspian basin. Our country fully supplies itself with electric power which is partially exported to neighboring countries.

During UNGA sessions as well as other international for a, distinguished President **Gurbanguly Berdymukhammadov** repeatedly put forward initiatives on providing comprehensive guarantees for reliability and stability of supplies of energy resources to world markets. Turkmenistan is continuing consistent work on strengthening positions and enhancing cooperation in different fields of energy trade. This is the establishment of Interregional Energy Dialogue under the UN auspices with the participation of Central and South Asian, Caspian, Black Sea and Baltic states, European Union, Middle and Near East countries, all interested states, companies, international financial institutions with a view to form a united, integrated and balanced strategy, effective legal modalities of international cooperation in this vital field, hold international expert group meeting on energy in 2014.

Our country is implementing a number of large-scale energy projects. Currently functioning Trans-Asian gas pipeline is a successful example to this. Presently, Turkmen “blue fuel” is delivered to China. Within this policy we are actively expanding our involvement into fuel market, which is shown by the increase of the volume of gas

supply through the “Korpeche-Kurtkui”, “Dovletabad-Sarakhs-Khangeran” pipelines in Iran.

Preparation for the “Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran” (TAPI) pipeline project construction is underway. We attach great international significance to TAPI gas transportation mainline, designed not only long-term supply of natural gas from Turkmenistan to big South Asian countries with stable demand growth for energy resources, but also become a strong incentive for further social-economic development of the whole region. Signing of service agreement between competent authorities of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Asian Development Bank is a testifying fact.

Occupying advantageous geographical position and being a crossing point for strategically important transcontinental trade routes, Turkmenistan implements large international projects on establishing transport-communication corridors along with other states and interested parties. Cooperation in this field is very prospective and we stand ready to enhance it to bilateral and multilateral level.

I would like to mention that Turkmenistan put forward a number of initiatives on the establishment of new “North-South”, “East-West” transport corridors as well as the construction of “Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran” railway which will open the shortest way from Europe to the seaports of the Persian Gulf and India. Its northern segment – “Uzen-Bereket” is already constructed and put into operation.

Launch of transit corridor connecting Turkmenistan with the Danube region on South Caucasian route through Azerbaijan and Georgia will facilitate cross-border cooperation as well as participation in regional programs such as TRASECA and CAREC.

Thus, our seaport of Turkmenbashi can arrange freight transportation to European and Asian direction.

During 68th UNGA session our country came forward with an initiative to host International Conference on the Role of Transit Transport Corridors in International Cooperation, Stability and Stable Development in 2014 in Ashgabat.

Significant reforms made in our country by the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan, construction of huge industrial and transport complexes, as well as infrastructure development allow our country to keep high economic growth (110-111%) and investment activity allowing to invest 40% from GDP investments into effective, diversified and competitive economy through constructive partnership with ECO member states as well as other regions.

In conclusion, I would like to express my assurance that our meeting will extend the fields of our cooperation, help each participating country to get more success and

become another step on the way of effective realization of multidimensional potential of ECO for the well-being and prosperity, peace and progress.

Thank you very much

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ilkhom Akramov, Ambassador of the Republic of
Uzbekistan to Iran at the 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers
(Tehran – 26th November, 2013)**

**Distinguished Chairman,
Honorable Ministers and Heads of delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me welcome you and express my appreciation to H.E. Mr. Mohammad Zarif, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the warm hospitality.

Today, we are following good traditions of holding regular and fruitful high level meetings which give good opportunity to overview our vision and assess current directions of mutually beneficial regional cooperation, particularly, in trade and economic fields.

Distinguished meeting participants,

The Republic of Uzbekistan consistently supports objective approaches and reasonable initiatives on enhancing trade-economic relations in the region, development of transport-communication corridors and energy infrastructure.

Uzbekistan stands as supporter of gradual development of regional economic cooperation, achievement of economic prosperity on the basis of collaboration, ECO goals and objectives makes relevant efforts within the organization.

Further improvement and expansion of international transport-communication infrastructure has great importance for stable development of the whole region, effective utilization of rich mineral-raw natural resources.

In this context, I would like to brief on very prospective directions which are opened for our countries in utilization of communication potential of our region taking into account modern realities.

It's about large regional projects, such as International Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor through the territory of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Iran and further to the seaports of the Persian Gulf, Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman Transport Corridor. These projects may create big opportunities for entering into world market and have strategic significance for the whole region.

Another direction of cooperation within ECO is energy development. Uzbekistan having huge gas resources, attaches great significance to the issues of transportation, identification of optimal routes of future regional pipelines. The achievement of Uzbekistan for the past period of fuel-energy independence testifies long way of growth and development.

Moreover, currently, mass introduction of economically effective energy resources is very critical and, first of all, such field is of practical interest for the regional countries and may become a stimulating factor for speedy growth of developing countries.

From the point of view of geographical location and climatic conditions Uzbekistan has exclusively favorable opportunities.

Solar energy researches much developed in Uzbekistan in 80s of the last century when Scientific Experimental Center “Physics-Solar” SPA of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan was constructed and became famous far beyond our country.

Within the SPA “Physics-Solar” along with ADB, International Solar Energy Institute was established in Tashkent designed to become a regional center for scientific and experimental researches, the results of which might be realized as prospective technologies of utilization of solar energy.

Together with ADB we launched the implementation of the pilot project on the construction of solar, photovoltaic station with the capacity of 100 megawatt in Samarkand district.

I would like to emphasize that Uzbekistan has richest raw resources for production of photovoltaic modules and other equipment for solar energy.

Distinguished Chairman,

New fields of cooperation might also be explored throughout the development of our organization. One of the priorities of ECO for Uzbekistan is the issue of cooperation in the fields of investments, through which we could facilitate economic and social development of the region. We need an access to external markets, particularly, technology transfer which is a decisive factor in stimulating economic development.

The leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan makes immense efforts towards the development of international trade on the territory of the country. The example is the Decrees of H.E. the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Islam Karimov on Additional Measures on Stimulating the Attraction of Foreign Direct Investments and on Establishment of Free Industrial-Economic and Special Industrial Zones in Navoi, Tashkent, Djyzak and Syr Darya districts.

Excellencies,

We have a great task before us – to create a democratic state with market economy, civil society and join the ranks of developed countries of the world.

I am sure that the participation of Uzbekistan in the Economic Cooperation Organization with its dynamically developing market and speedily growing economy will bring mutual benefit and profit to all ECO countries.

Dear Colleagues,

In conclusion, I would like to note that the Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the ECO, to our mind, was active and constructive and facilitated further promotion of common goals and objectives of the member states within the organization.

Availing myself of this opportunity I would like to congratulate Iran with the election as Chairman in the ECO for the forthcoming period and wish H.E. Mr. M. Zarif, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran much success in the fulfilling this responsible task.

Thank you very much for attention
