

26th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)

13 – 17 December 2015
ECO Secretariat-Tehran

Report

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The Twenty-Sixth (26th) Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on 13 - 17 December, 2015 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. Sectoral Committee meetings were also held on the sidelines of the RPC Meeting.

2. The Meeting was attended by the delegations from all the Member States i.e. the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as the delegation of ECO Secretariat. The Meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States in their capacities as Observers. The representatives of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies also participated in the Meeting. The list of participants is placed at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

3. The ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça, at the outset, welcomed the visiting delegations to the 26th RPC Meeting and presented a comprehensive overview of the main activities of the Organization during 2015. He said that RPC is a forum and a decision making body, where the Organization finds out its main directions. The Secretary General highlighted major achievements and progress made in various key areas, including trade, investment, transport, communications, energy, environment, agricultural, industry, tourism, economic research, statistics, human development, disaster risk reduction, drugs and organized crimes and the international relations. He impressed upon the Member States to put ECOTA on fast-track and complete its procedural requirements without further delay. The Secretary General mentioned the need in the field of trade and investment for expeditious signing and ratification of already development agreements as the challenges need special consideration of the Member States to translate the efforts into socio-economic sustainable development for the betterment of the people of the region. He requested the Member States to play a proactive role to host the ECO meetings/events in their countries. He also emphasized the importance of the 26th RPC Meeting keeping in view the implementation of the EPG recommendations and the need to formulate a new ECO Vision for the upcoming decade. He said that the Secretariat has initiated preparation of a roster list of the experts and training facilities available with the ECO Region for capacity building and training of the officials on issues related to drugs and organized crimes. The Secretary General urged the ECO Member States to actively participate in the ECO meetings. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-II**.

4. The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Seyed Abbas ARAGHCHI, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his inaugural address he on his behalf and also on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran warmly welcomed the distinguished delegates of the ECO Member States. He said that the ECO has achieved many important milestones in its work for regional development through common efforts, building on the Member States' close cultural ties, shared historical past and joint plans for the future.

He mentioned that the idea of institutionalizing cooperation for regional development helps take a holistic look at the region, its resources and economy, business interests and the potential for growing stronger together. He expressed that ECO Region enjoys immense potential to ensure successful regional cooperation and integration. All these need a new architecture for cooperation and the RPC can play a pivotal role in this regard. He also said that RPC is an annual exercise that plays a crucial role in providing the high-ranking officials of the Member States with solid basis for important decision. He further said that the ultimate goal is to increase the overall efficiency as well as the consistency of the Organization and its components. He expressed the hope that the 26th RPC meeting would serve this purpose. The Deputy Foreign Minister stated that more than two decades of expanded cooperation has developed a new pattern of regional cooperation which has yielded notable achievements in a wide range of areas covering trade, energy, transport and transit, agriculture, industry, environment, human development, education and culture. He emphasized that we must build upon these achievements and intensify our efforts to further attain the common goals.

5. The Chief Guest also touched upon the need to conclude consultations for setting the strategic direction of the Organization for the coming decade namely a new “ECO Vision 2016-2025”. He also highlighted the importance attached by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the initiatives within the framework of ECO and ensured his country’s continued support for ECO’s activities and programmes. He also appreciated the Secretary General of ECO and his team for diligence and coordination for making necessary preparations for the holding the 26th RPC Meeting. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

6. His Excellency Mr. Majid Bizmark, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was elected as the Chairman of the 26th RPC Meeting. In his opening statement, Mr. Bizmark highlighted the importance of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting and underscored the need for appropriate decisions to help in strengthening the economic cooperation among the Member States.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Council adopted the following agenda items for its deliberations:

1. Inauguration of the Meeting
2. Election of the Chairman
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Statements by the Heads of delegation on the implementation of the decisions of the 25th RPC Meeting
5. Review of the progress of implementation of the ECO approved programmes/projects and consideration of proposals for new programmes and projects for the year 2016-17:
 - Trade and Investment
 - Transport & Communications
 - Energy, Minerals and Environment
 - Agriculture, Industry and Tourism
 - Project, Economic Research & Statistics

- Human Resources & Sustainable Development
 - Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination
 - ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies and International Relations
6. Exchange of views between Secretary General and the Heads of delegation on ECO Vision 2025/Brainstorming Session on ECO Vision 2025 entitled “Future Search Conference”
 7. Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2016-2017
 8. Any other business
 9. Date and venue of the next Meeting
 10. Adoption of the Report
 11. Closing Remarks
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Agenda Item No. 4

Statements by the Heads of delegation on the implementation of the decisions of the 25th RPC Meeting

8. The Heads of delegation of the ECO Member States made their statements outlining their country’s policies and views on the programmes and activities of the Organization. They also highlighted the progress achieved on the implementation of the decisions taken during the 25th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council. Copies of their statements are placed at **Annex-IV**.

9. The Heads of delegation of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States also delivered their Statements. Copies of their statements are placed at **Annex-V**.

10. The Heads of delegations of the ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies, including ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECOCCI), ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECO TDB), ECO College of Insurance, ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO RCC) and ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) also delivered their statements highlighting their activities and progress achieved since last RPC Meeting. Copies of their statements are placed at **Annex-VI**.

Agenda Item No.5

Review of the progress of implementation of the ECO approved programmes/projects and consideration of proposals for new programmes and projects for the year 2016-17:

- Trade & Investment;
- Transport & Communications;
- Energy, Minerals & Environment;
- Agriculture, Industry & Tourism;
- Projects, Economic Research & Statistics;
- Human Resources & Sustainable Development;
- Drugs & Organized Crime Coordination;
- ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies and International Relations

11. The Council elected the following delegates to chair Sectoral Committees:

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| (a) Trade & Investment | - Mr. Selcuk Koc, Republic of Turkey . |
| (b) Transport & Communications | - Mr. Abolghasem TAHMASEBĪ,
Islamic Republic of Iran . |
| (c) Energy, Minerals & Environment | - Mr. Hussain Haider,
Islamic Republic of Pakistan . |
| (d) Agriculture, Industry & Tourism | - Dr. Baitullahi,
Islamic Republic of Iran . |
| (e) Projects, Economic Research & Statistics | - Dr. Hameed Sultan Shah,
Republic of Tajikistan . |
| (f) Human Resources & Sustainable Development | - Mr. Asad Ali Shah,
Islamic Republic of Pakistan . |
| (g) Drugs & Organized Crime Coordination | - General Effendi,
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan . |
| (h) ECO Regional Institutions/
Specialized Agencies/Affiliated
Bodies and International Relations | - Mr. Fatih Unlu,
Republic of Turkey . |

12. The Sectoral Committees thoroughly discussed the ongoing programmes and projects as well as the areas of future cooperation, including those reflected in the Working Papers prepared by the ECO Secretariat and proposed the sectoral Annual Work Programme/Calendar of Events to the RPC Plenary Session for approval. The Council noted, with appreciation, the work of the Sectoral Committees as well as the ECO Secretariat for the proposed ECO Work Programmes and Calendar of Events for 2016-2017, as shown below:

a. Trade & Investment

13. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for confirming to host the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade (ECO-MM on CFT) in the 1st half of 2016 and requested to announce exact dates, venue and hospitality details of the meeting at the earliest convenience. The Council also requested the Member States to confirm their participation in the meeting accordingly.

14. The 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade (ECO-MM on CFT) established the Joint Working Group (JWG) to prepare and finalize the ECO Multi-Dimensional Trade and Investment Strategy and Prospects of Establishing a Free Trade Area in the Region. The Member States did not announce the schedule of the JWG Meeting. The Council requested the Secretariat to host the Meeting of the JWG in 2016.

15. The Council thanked the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 6th Meeting of ECOTA Cooperation Council on 15 June 2015, in Ankara.

16. Noting the importance of completing all legal and procedural requirements for implementation of ECOTA, the Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan to complete all legal and procedural requirements including submission of Concession Product Lists and ratification of the Annexes to ECOTA to pave the way towards effective implementation of the Agreement. The Republic of Turkey expressed its

desire to provide technical cooperation to the Republic of Tajikistan in case of technical difficulties.

17. The Council took note of the Islamic Republic of Iran's new proposal on implementation of ECOTA, which has already been circulated among the Member States by the Secretariat. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan was of the view that the Iran's new proposal circulated by the Secretariat may have the effect of amending the ECOTA.

18. The Council called on the non-signatory interested Member States to join the ECOTA to fully harness the regional trade potential and enable their business communities to reap the benefits of preferential market access in the region so as to expand intra-regional trade to the desired level.

19. The Republic of Turkey highlighted the importance of fulfilling legal and procedural requirements for effective implementation of ECOTA in order to have fruitful deliberations.

20. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the 7th Meeting of ECOTA Cooperation Council in 1st half of 2016 and requested to announce exact dates, venue and hospitality details of the meeting at the earliest convenience. The Council also requested the Contracting Parties of ECOTA to confirm their active participation in the meeting for effective implementation of the Agreement.

21. The Council took note of the postponement of the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Heads of Trade Promotion Organizations (ECO-TPOs) in 2014 and 2015 due to lack of quorum. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey to announce the fresh date of 11 May 2016, the Council also requested the Member States to ensure to attend the Meeting of ECO Heads of TPOs.

22. The Council appreciated the Republic of Azerbaijan for announcing to host the 4th ECO Business Forum in Baku on 16 December 2015 but due to engagements of the Member States, ECO-CCI and the Secretariat in 26th Regional Planning Council (RPC), it has been rescheduled to 28 December 2015, the Council requested the Member States to confirm their participation before 21st December, 2015 in the Forum.

23. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to announce the exact date and venue for holding the 3rd ECO Trade Fair in the 1st half of 2016, as the same was offered/announced in 25th RPC by Iran for holding the event in 2015. The Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to hold the 3rd ECO Trade Fair in the 1st half of 2016.

24. While welcoming the offer of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) to hold the 4th ECO Trade Fair in 2nd half of 2016, the Council requested to convey the exact date, venue and hospitality details to the Secretariat.

25. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the ECO-ASEAN Joint Business Forum in March 2016 in coordination with the ASEAN Secretariat, and requested to convey the exact date, venue and hospitality details to the Secretariat.

26. The Council welcomed the offer of ECO-CCI to hold the ECO-SAARC Joint Business Forum in the 1st half of 2016, in Islamabad, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and expressed their hope to make it successful event through active participation of the ECO Member States.

The Council also requested to convey the exact date, venue and hospitality details to the Secretariat.

27. The Council also appreciated the offer of the ECO-CCI to allocate dedicated booths for ECO Member States in "Expo Pakistan" and "Texpo Pakistan".

28. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey for announcing the meeting of the Joint Working Group thrice for drafting an ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement in the light of the decisions made in the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade (ECO-MM on CFT), the same were postponed due to lack of quorum. The Republic of Turkey highlighted the importance of contribution of all Members to design an effective ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement and suggested to hold the meeting only, if majority of the Member States express their interest through the Secretariat on the subject.

29. Taking into account the significance of the 7th Meeting of the Council of ECO Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) for strengthening cooperation in customs matters, the Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 7th Meeting of CHCA on 16-17 May 2016 alongwith the 3rd Meeting of the Sub-Committee of Customs Experts (SCOE). The Islamic Republic of Iran requested the Member States to confirm their participation after the circulation of dates among the Member States.

30. While noting offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for holding the 7th Meeting of CHCA in January or February 2016, the Council invited the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to consider for holding the 8th Meeting of CHCA in first quarter of 2017.

31. The Council requested the Secretariat to circulate the modification on the draft text of the Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters to get the views of the Member States on the Turkish proposal.

32. The Council called upon the ECO Member States to sign the agreement on the establishment and operation of the ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank and the signatory countries (except Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) to ratify the Agreement on the Establishment and Operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank at the earliest convenience. The Council also requested the Member States concerned to convey to the Secretariat the status of their accession to the agreement accordingly.

33. The Council appreciated the willingness of the Republic of Turkey to ratify the Agreement of ECO Reinsurance Company in 2016. Moreover, with a view to accelerating commercial activities in the region, the Council also requested the remaining Member States to consider joining the ECO Reinsurance Company on priority basis.

34. While appreciating the ECO-CCI in enhancing its role through number of steps for strengthening private sector and cooperation in the region, the Council thanked to announce the 14th General Assembly and 20th Executive Committee meetings of ECO-CCI alongwith the 6 Specialized Committees, in Ankara on 21-23 December, 2015, in association with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) of the Republic of Turkey. The Council requested the Member States to ensure active participation of their National Chambers in the events organized by the ECO-CCI.

35. The Council took note of the proposal to establish an ECO-CCI Arbitration Centre. The Council requested the ECO-CCI to provide detailed information to the ECO Secretariat regarding the establishment of ECO-CCI Arbitration Centre and to discuss in the forthcoming ECO-CCI meetings to be held on 21-23 December 2015, in Ankara, Republic of Turkey.

36. Keeping in view the importance of promoting cooperation among the Member States on E-Commerce, the Council requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to announce the exact date and venue for hosting the 2nd Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on E-Trade Cooperation in 2016. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan conveyed that the exact date and venue of the meeting will be communicated later through diplomatic channels.

37. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for hosting/ holding the Meeting on Simplification/Harmonization of Visa Procedure in 2016 for businessmen and drivers. The Council also requested the Member States which have not signed or ratified the Protocol on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen and Transit Drivers, to do the needful at the earliest convenience, so that the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen may come into effect without further delay. The meeting will also discuss the details on the visa free structures of the ECO Member States and ECO Visa Stickers for their facilitation.

38. The Council requested the member states to ratify the Additional Protocol on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen and Transit Drivers for ECO region so as to implement at the earliest.

39. The Council requested the Member States to provide details on visa free structure for the businessmen of the region, for single/multiple entry and their anti-narcotics regulations to the ECO Secretariat to be placed on the ECO Trade-Net Web Portal.

40. The Council welcomed the offer of the Iranian Mercantile Exchange Company to host “the 1st Meeting of the Heads of the Commodity Exchange of ECO Member States” on 1-2 February 2016 in Tehran.

41. The Council underlined that the First Meeting of the Experts of Tax Administration held on 26-28 May, 2014 in Tehran had finalized the following three draft Documents on ECO Tax Cooperation namely,

- a) the Charter for Establishment of ECO Tax Administration Cooperation Society (ECOTAX);
- b) ECO Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Taxation and Related Matters; and,
- c) Agreement on the Exchange of Information in Tax Matters among ECO Member States.

42. The Council requested the Member States to volunteer hosting the 2nd Meeting of the ECO Heads of Tax Administration in 2016 to consider the aforesaid three draft documents and submit them to the appropriate ECO forums for approval. If no Member State volunteers to host the Meeting, the Secretariat will consider holding the Meeting.

43. Referring to the decision of the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy, the Council requested the Member States to volunteer hosting the First Meeting of ECO Heads of Capital Markets Supervisory Authorities in 2016 to improve coordination between the

Capital Markets Supervisory Authorities, which will go a long way in facilitating capital formation and improve the working of the capital markets. If no Member State volunteers to host the Meeting, the Secretariat will consider holding the Meeting.

44. The Council thanked the Republic of Turkey for confirming to host the Seminar on Risk-Based Analysis Management System in May 2016. The Council requested the Republic of Turkey to convey the exact dates, venue and details of hospitality to the Secretariat in due course.

45. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey dates, venue and details of hospitality for the delegates to the Secretariat for hosting the 2nd Meeting of ECO Heads of Central Banks in 2016 at their earliest convenience. The Secretariat will consider holding the Meeting at the Secretariat if it is not possible for Iran to hold the meeting in 2016.

46. While thanking the Secretariat for preparing and circulating a Note on the status of the Implementation of the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) and its Amendment Protocol, the Council requested the Member States, which have not already done so, to sign or ratify the Agreement along with the Amendment Protocol at their earliest convenience. So far five Member States have signed the APPI along with its Amendment Protocol and out of these five countries one Member State has ratified and deposited its instrument of ratification.

47. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the Council that the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) alongwith the Amendment Protocol has been ratified and the instrument of ratification will be conveyed to the Secretariat in due course. The Republic of Turkey informed that the ratification process of the APPI alongwith the Amendment Protocol is under process.

48. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the First Meeting of the ECO Investment Promotion Agencies (ECO-IPAs) in Islamabad in 2016. Taking into account the postponement of the subject meeting twice in 2015 due to lack of quorum, the Council requested the Secretariat to decide the new dates for the 1st Meeting of ECO-IPAs on completion of the confirmation from majority of the Member States and inform the concerned authorities of Pakistan at least six weeks before the confirmed dates.

49. The Council requested the Member States to convey to the Secretariat updated information regarding the potential of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in their countries highlighting the potential of PPP in the ECO region. The Council also asked the Secretariat to compile a report on the potential of PPP in the ECO region based on the inputs to be received from the Member States and circulate the same among the Member States. The Council also recommended that the report be compiled by the Secretariat submitted to respective ECO fora.

50. The Council appreciated the Republic of Tajikistan for confirming to host the 4th ECO Investment Conference in 2016, and requested to convey the exact dates, venue and details of hospitality to the Secretariat in due course.

51. The Council took note that the Republic of Kazakhstan became Member of the WTO in 2015 and Afghanistan's accession package will be submitted to the Ministers for formal decision at the Tenth Ministerial Conference of WTO on 15-18 December 2015.

52. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for confirming to host the 3rd Seminar on Accession of the ECO Member States to WTO in 2016. The Council agreed with the proposal of Pakistan to change the title of the Seminar into a Seminar on Trading Patterns in ECO Region and Accession of ECO to WTO. The Council reminded that the ECO Trade and Development Bank will provide financial support to organize the Seminar in Pakistan and requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to convey to the Secretariat the dates and venue and other details for hosting the Seminar in 2016, after the Secretariat has confirmed the necessary funding for the Seminar.

53. The Council agreed that seminars to support and encourage the remaining four ECO Member States for accession to WTO should be organized on regular basis. In this respect, the Council:

- a) requested the other WTO members of the ECO to volunteer hosting such seminars
- b) asked the Secretariat to continue to seek financial and technical support from the relevant international institutions/organizations for arranging the WTO seminars and
- c) agreed that also to discussions on the relationship between the commitments of the ECO Member States arising out of their membership of WTO and regional trading agreements in the agenda of the these seminars may be included.

54. The Council referring to the relevant decisions of the meetings of the Council of Minister (COM) and Regional Planning Council (RPC) invited Member States who have not hosted Trade Policy Review Sessions (TPRS) to consider hosting these Sessions. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for offering to hold the Trade Policy Review Session.

55. The Council welcomed the membership of the Kyrgyz Republic to the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) in 2015.

56. While underlining that the current membership base of the ECO-TDB includes six ECO Member States with the participation of Kyrgyz Republic, the Council invited the remaining ECO Member States to start the membership process of the Bank at their earliest convenience to get benefit from its resources.

57. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey for conveying views/comments on the draft Terms of Reference (TORs) prepared by ECO Trade and Development Bank to launch a periodic Regional Partnership Forum (RPF).

58. The Council urged the Member States to encourage their relevant national institutions/organizations to actively participate in the subject Forum. Therefore the Council while requesting other Member States to also convey their views to the Secretariat on the draft TORs of RPF also called upon the ECO-TDB to expedite finalizing the TORs and organizing the said forum.

59. The Council reiterated its request to the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) to create a Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF) to assist development projects in the region in close consultation with the ECO Secretariat and the Member States.

60. The Council appreciated that the 3rd Phase ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project (TCBP) in Standardization, Metrology, Testing and Quality Policy (SMTQP) is being

implemented as scheduled with the full support of the Member States. The Council thanked the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 2nd Validation Workshop and Trainings of Lead Master Trainers on 13-17 September 2015 in Gebze and Ankara.

61. While welcoming the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) and Training of the Lead Master Trainers (TLMT) from the Member States in 2016 as a part of the implementation of ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project, the Council called upon the Member States to fully participate in the EGM and Training to formulate a National Quality Policy in SMTQP for the Member States.

62. While noting that ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project in ECO Member States in Standardization, Metrology, Testing and Quality Policy would go a long way in reduction of non-tariff barriers and will pave the way for increasing the intra and inter regional trade, the Council requested the Member States to provide technical and financial support for the remaining amount required for the completion of the Project. The Council also appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretariat to secure funding from international organizations for the Project.

63. The Council thanked the Secretariat for updating the information concerning ECO projects/activities in the field of trade and investment on the existing ECO Trade Web Portal (www.tradeeco.org) on regular basis. The Council also reiterated its request to the Member States to ensure regular flow of information to the Web Portal to achieve the objectives of the ECO. Flow of information to the Web Portal is required mainly for the pages under the title of Member Countries i.e. economic indicators, regulatory regimes, policies, events, contacts/references, enquiries, trademarks, bilateral/multilateral arrangements, WTO related activities of the Member States, and companies forms and links.

64. The Council appreciated that the CPR has approved to allocate fund to upgrade the existing trade web-portal and establishing an ECO Data Base of Traders and Manufacturers from Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF). The Council requested the Secretariat to take the necessary actions and the Member States to provide their full support for setting up the data base, which will serve as an effective source of business match-making in the region.

65. The Council recalling that the First Empirical Study on Trading Patterns in the ECO Region was completed in 2011 by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), and agreed that the Second Phase of the Study should be started. Therefore the Council requested the Member States to give their full support to the Secretariat to hire a relevant organization to carry out the study. The Second Phase of the Study will analyze the new economic developments in the region and make updated policy recommendations for the use of the Member States.

66. The Council agreed with the proposal of Pakistan that the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) may consider allocating the required funds from the General Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF) to conduct the Second Phase of Study on the Trading Patterns in ECO Region by PIDE.

67. The Council took note that the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy could not be held in 2015 and agreed to reconsider the matter in the next RPC.

68. The Council agreed to the proposal by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to hold the “Seminar to highlight the significance of Implementation of ECOTA for enhanced Regional Trade Inflows, Integration of the Member States into the Multilateral Trading System, Economic Growth, Job Creation and Poverty Alleviation”, only after the submission of Concession Product Lists by the Contracting Member States.

b. Transport & Communications

69. The Council asked the Secretariat to keep in touch with the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting the 9th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport. The Secretariat’s fresh Note Verbale in this regard will be conveyed to the Republic of Azerbaijan shortly.

70. The Council took note of the communications made by the Secretariat to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to expedite signing and ratifying the TTFA. Turkmenistan was requested to expedite ratification of the TTFA. Uzbekistan was requested to expedite signing and ratifying the Agreement.

71. The ECO Secretariat was asked to visit Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in order to meet with officials of the concerned authorities in order to provide them with the latest developments on the implementation of the TTFA, discuss possible more active involvement of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in ECO’s regional projects in the field of transport and communications and encourage signing/ratification of the TTFA by them.

72. Appreciating the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Turkey for conveying to the Secretariat their comments and views regarding the proposals provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Financial Guarantee Mechanism of the White Card scheme, other member states were requested to do so at the earliest.

73. In pursuance of the decision of the 6th Meeting of the Insurance Committee, the details of the website of ECO White Card have been circulated among the Member States for their comments/views. The council was informed about the establishment of the website. The concerned National Bureaus of the Member States, except Turkey, were also requested to convey to the Secretariat their tariff table for the Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability insurance in their respective territories for onward submission to the concerned authorities of Iran for their placing on the Web Site.

74. The Council welcomed the joining Republic of Azerbaijan to the International Green Card System. It is informed that vehicles holding the Green Card would be able to move through Azerbaijan territory from January 2016 or those vehicles without Green Cards may get Green Cards at the border for one, three, six months or one year. Other Member States except Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey are requested to take necessary measures to join the Green Card System.

75. The 7th Meeting of the Insurance Committee/6th Meeting of the ECO-CB will be held in consultation with Member States keeping in view that issue of financial guarantee mechanism of the scheme needs to be adequately dealt with beforehand. The Meeting will be covered by SSF and TTFA Fund.

76. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 12th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities/6th Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC (17-18 May 2015, Tehran) and expressed satisfaction with the accession of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to OSJD and its membership in UIC as well as the accession of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic the Republic of Pakistan to COTIF.
77. Expressing satisfaction with conduction of the OTIF/UIC/ECO conference on COTIF (11-12 November 2014, Tehran), the ECO Secretariat was asked to continue organizing such events regularly in the region in line with the MoU signed between ECO and UIC and ECO and OTIF.
78. Subject to completion of the legal formalities outlined by the MoU signed between ECO, IDB and UNESCAP in 2009, the ECO Secretariat was asked to keep in touch with these institutions regarding possibility of the renewal of the MoU.
79. The Council appreciated ECO Secretariat for preparation of the revised map of ECO Member countries Transit Railways and distribution among all Member States and international organizations.
80. The Republic of Turkey expressed its readiness to organize the training course for 20 Afghanistan Railway staff on the "railway freight operations" for one month in 2016 in Ankara. The exact dates and details of hospitality will be conveyed in due course. Other Member States and International Organizations were requested to support Afghanistan Railway Authority (AfRA) in organizing capacity Building programmes and training courses for Afghanistan Railway staff.
81. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed about the problem faced concerning export of Afghan goods to Central Asian countries through the railway constructed between Termez and Mazar-e-Sharif. Afghanistan was requested to convey the details of obstacles it faces and the kind of assistance it expects through diplomatic channels for subsequent follow up.
82. The Council asked the Member States to consider hosting and intimating the dates and the venue of the 13th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities/7th Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC through official channels. The Meeting will be covered by SSF and TTFA Fund.
83. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 7th Meeting of the Road Committee of TTCC and 7th Meeting of TTCC on 11-12 November 2015 in Ankara preceded by the Regional Workshop on ADR, Modernization of Border Crossing Points and digital tachograph system. The Council asked the Member States to consider hosting and intimating the dates and the venue of the 8th Meeting of the TTCC and Road Committee through official channels. The Meetings will be covered by SSF and TTFA Fund.
84. The Council was briefed about the decisions taken by the 7th Meeting of the Road Committee and implementation of road related provisions of the TTFA. The Council requested the Member States to convey their updates on customs duties, taxes and other levies and charges for the trucks passing other contracting parties.

85. The Member States except Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic and Turkey are requested to provide with the status of the road transport permits with other contracting parties. It is also requested to provide the Secretariat with any cases of violations regarding road related provisions of TTFA by the contacting parties.
86. The Member States are requested to provide the requisite data (technical requirements for roads and vehicles, tariff and national customs law/regulations) for ECO website.
87. The Council took note and welcomed the adoption and approval of the revised ECO Road Transit Routes Map by the 7th Meeting of TTCC and encouraged its publication as mandated by the 7th Meeting of the TTCC.
88. The Council appreciated Afghanistan for hosting the 4th Meeting of Customs Transit Committee of the TTCC in Kabul on 26th August 2015. The Council decided that the 5th Meeting of the Customs Transit Committee of the TTCC will be held back to back with the ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) if agreed by Islamic Republic of Iran or else to be held in Afghanistan as kindly offered by its representative. The Islamic Republic of Iran was requested to confirm the date and venue for this event. The Meeting will be covered by SSF and TTFA Fund.
89. The Council recommended keeping in touch with IRU regarding the 4th ECO/IRU Regional Conference on Facilitation of Transit by Road and TIR Convention.
90. The Council noted with satisfaction the accession of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Customs Convention on the International Transportation of Goods under cover of the TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) which culminated in the accession of the whole ECO region to the TIR instrument and provided ECO the Member States with a better position to further promote smooth and seamless transit transport in the region.
91. ECO and IRU were appreciated for organizing National Capacity Building Workshops on TIR Convention on 17 and 19 November 2015 in Karachi and Islamabad and were asked to continue providing technical assistance to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to assure effective implementation of the TIR System in line with ECO/IRU Action Plan.
92. The Council welcomed the successful implementation of phase-I of e-TIR project between Iran and Turkey under UNECE and IRU and took note of Pakistani delegation's proposal to involve in the next phases of this project, in particular under ITI corridor. To this end the meeting called on Pakistan to expedite the process of preparation for implementation of the TIR system by 21 January, 2016.
93. The Republic of Turkey briefed the Council on the status of the customs transit operations in the Republic of Turkey and its membership to TIR convention and Common Transit Convention leading to the paperless system. Turkey informed that it attaches great importance to transit trade and transit transport with all ECO Member States.
94. The Council asked the Secretariat to contact with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to revitalize the MoU signed between ECO and WCO in 2003 with the purpose of expanding the tools and capacity building programmes for the Member Countries in respect of modernization of the border crossing points and facilitation of the transit trade in the region.

95. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed about the latest status of reactivation of the TIR convention and the problems being faced by Afghanistan in application of TIR system while travelling to the Central Asian countries. The delegate emphasized on the importance of TIR system as well-organized mechanism for facilitation of transit trade between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries in the framework of TIR Convention.

96. The Council requested Islamic Republic of Pakistan to complete accession to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR).

97. Noting the importance of modernization of border crossing points in the ECO region, the Member States were requested to provide a status report about the current and future projects for modernization of border crossing points.

98. The Member States that are not contracting parties to the International Convention on Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (revised Kyoto Convention) were requested to consider taking necessary measures to accede to these conventions. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkmenistan are requested to consider taking necessary measures to accede to the International Convention on Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (Harmonization of Frontier).

99. The Member States and the ECO Secretariat were asked to actively participate in the meetings of the UNECE's Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) and Administrative Committee (AC.2).

100. The Council noted satisfaction with organizing the ECO/IRU National Capacity Building Workshops on CMR, ADR, and TIR Convention in Kabul on 24-25 August 2015 back to back with the 4th meeting of the Customs Transit Committee of TTCC.

101. The Council was briefed about the decisions taken by 7th Meeting of TTCC (Ankara, 12 November 2015). The ECO Secretariat was asked to continue making necessary arrangements for designing capacity building programmes in cooperation with relevant international organizations for accession to, and implementation of conventions/agreements by the Member States.

102. The Council welcomed IDB's concurrence with the commencement for Customs Component of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on Customs related provisions of the TTFA and expressed satisfaction with the preparatory measures to start the Project, appreciated nominations of National Consultants from eight Member States, namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan, encouraged Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to expedite nominating their National Consultants together with their contact details for the said project and urged all the Member States to give their full support to successful fulfillment of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on Customs related provisions of the TTFA as mandated by the 4th Meeting of Customs Transit Committee and 7th meeting of the TTCC.

103. The Council took note that the Workshop with participation of International Consultant and National Consultants will be organized tentatively in January/February 2016, followed by a field visit to the border crossing point of Turkey. The costs of airfare and accommodation of consultants will be covered by ECO/IDB Joint Project on implementation of TTFA.

104. The Council requested the Republic of Turkey to provide the Secretariat with two tentative dates in January/February 2016 for organizing the field visit to the Turkish border crossing point, preferably with Bulgaria, preceded by the said Workshop. The Republic of Turkey was also requested to provide local hospitality (venue, meals and local transfer) for this event. Turkey asked the Secretariat to invite the ECO-CCI and private sector of the Member States for the field visit.

105. The Council requested the Member States to provide their full support to the International Consultant and the consultancy team in their visits from the border crossing points of the Member States recognized as highly important.

106. The Council while taking note of the brainstorming session on the ways and means of promoting the regional partnership for implementation of the “ECO Railway Network Development Plan”, which was held during the 12th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities/6th Meeting of Railway Committee of TTCC (17-18 May 2015, Tehran), requested the ECO Trade and Development Bank to expedite conveying to the Secretariat the dates for organizing the Regional Partnership Forum by the ECO-TDB and status of establishment of Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF) to assist development projects in ECO region, including ECO Rail and Road Network Development Plans.

107. The Council noted with satisfaction that the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was approached for possible collaboration on activities serving the development of infrastructure projects and those mentioned in the ECO Road and Railway Development Plans.

108. Turkey informed about the status of operation of the container train along Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul since its inauguration in 2009. It further informed about the obstacles regarding the resumption of the train such as prolonged journey of the train, long waiting time at the border crossing, and poor infrastructure in some segments of the route and relevant problems between Pakistan and Iran railways.

109. The Council, while taking note of Pakistan’s views regarding commercial viability of the container train, emphasized that the involvement of the private sector is the key issue for the success of the train services which is being followed up by the HLWG meetings and reflected in the MoU signed between Pakistan Railways and TOBB where the role of BALO (Great Anatolya Logistic Organization) is to provide services of the ECO Container train for the first six months (two services per month) together with relevant sales and marketing expenses in order to generate commercial cargo to sustain profitable operations. BALO Company in order to carry out analytical commercial studies requires information regarding railway operations between Iran and Pakistan and to this end Iran and Pakistan railways may provide the required information.

110. The Secretariat was asked to assure participation of representatives of BALO in the 9th HLWG meeting on ITI container train to be hosted by the relevant authorities of Pakistan in the 1st quarter of 2016. Pakistan was requested to provide the exact dates of the Meeting together with details of hospitality.

111. The Council was informed about the meeting of the ECO-CCI scheduled to be held in the next week in Ankara which can be utilized as an opportunity to discuss marketing issues of this train between Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and BALO. ECO Secretariat may consider participating and facilitating the discussions. The Council requested Pakistan to conduct the discussion with the BALO and provide the Secretariat with the feedback.

112. The Council while welcoming the idea of extension of Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty routes up to China and reduction of tariff rates proposed by Kazakhstan requested the enroute member states to provide their proposals to the Secretariat regarding the reduction/unification of tariff issue to be discussed during the HLWG meeting. Turkey informed that the train services along this route are operational since 2002 where about 6000 TEUs were recorded to be carried via this route towards Central Asian countries and regretted that trains are returning empty. Kazakhstan informed about inauguration of the joint Kazakh-Chinese terminal at Lianyungang port of China in February 2015 which may provide new opportunities for activating the train services along this route.

113. The next HLWG Meeting will be held at the Secretariat and the dates will be intimated accordingly. The airfare of one delegate from each enroute Member States will be covered by SSF. The Secretariat was asked to invite Demiryolu Logistics Company, a private company based in Istanbul, to this meeting. Uzbekistan was requested to kindly adjust the time table for its territory based on revised table of Turkmenistan.

114. The Council took note with satisfaction that the railway connecting China to the Europe through Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran will be constructed based on the standard gauge (1435mm). The enroute member states updated the meeting on the latest status in their respective territories concerning this project. Iran informed that the segment of the Sangan-Khaf has been completed and will be inaugurated soon. Tajikistan informed that the segment between Dushanbe and Kurgan-Tube will be completed in 2016. Kyrgyzstan informed that the feasibility study which is conducted by the Chinese Company will be completed in 2016 as well. Kyrgyzstan requested the Secretariat to approach relevant funding institutions for possible funding of the infrastructure projects in its territory along this route.

115. The Meeting reemphasized that the ECO Secretariat will continue performing its functions as the coordinator of the corridor as mandated by the Ministers of the enroute member states. The Secretariat was asked to follow all necessary coordination with China on behalf of the enroute Member States. The Secretariat was requested to coordinate future HLWG meetings of KTI and KTAI rail corridors. Recalling the decision of the last KTAI meeting in Bishkek on 15th October, 2015, the Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the next HLWG meeting of KTAI in Tehran in 2016.

116. Tajikistan expressed its readiness to hold the ECO Ministerial Meeting on KTAI Railway preceded by Senior Officials' meeting. The Secretariat was requested to approach the relevant authorities of China to attend the meeting since China is an important part of the project. The exact dates will be conveyed in due course.

117. In pursuance of the informal trilateral meeting on Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) railway, held on the sidelines of the 12th Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, Iran

informed about latest development regarding unification of tariff and timetable along Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway. The enroute Member States were requested to provide the Secretariat with the tariffs and time table of train. Turkmenistan was requested to host the High Level Working Group Meeting on KTI railway. Local hospitality will be provided by the host authorities. Airfare will be covered from SSF.

118. The Council asked the ECO-CCI to convey the latest developments regarding establishment of a commercial Working Group for KTI Train and also requested the ECO Secretariat to approach other international bodies to take measures and encourage assistance for commercializing this route.

119. The Council took note of the ongoing works on the segments in the respective territories of the member states enroute Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) Railway. Iran informed that the segment of the Qazvin-Rasht is planned to be completed by the end of 2016 and Rasht-Astra segment still requires financing which will be settled in due course. The ECO Secretariat will coordinate holding the 3rd HLWG Meeting of the project with the enroute countries via diplomatic channels.

120. Azerbaijan informed about passage of three block trains from China through Kazakhstan up to Azerbaijan. He further dilated that with completion of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway in 2016, the capacity of this route may increase. The Council took note of information provided by the representative of Azerbaijan on the possibility of East West Rail Corridor connecting China to Western Europe through Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.

121. The Council took note of the progress report on the ECO road corridor along Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran route. It was informed that half of the remaining missing link of 231 KM between Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif will be completed in 2016. As regards the TIR parking places to be constructed in line with the international standards in Afghanistan, Iran expressed its readiness to share its experience and provide information on the standard rules for TIR parking as well as possibility of extending financial support for establishment of parking places, subject to official request of Afghanistan. Accordingly, Afghanistan will convey national rules/regulations in context of utilization of foreign investment. The 4th HLWG meeting of this corridor will be held in Tajikistan once the field study is completed.

122. Further to the decisions of the 2nd HLWG on KTAI (Bishkek, October 2013) that the national consultants, who have contributed to the road component of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on TTFA, to continue the same function for the field study on KTAI, the enroute member states were requested to confirm their national consultant names or, in case of their non-availability, introduce a new nominee to provide country inputs. The field study will be performed according to the ToR approved by the 3rd HLWG on KTAI (Tehran, October 2014). The Council requested Afghanistan to take measures to assure improved security for vehicles of the Member States passing through the territory of Afghanistan. The Council asked the Secretariat to approach CPR in case an extra amount would be required for undertaking or completing the study. The Secretariat was asked to take necessary measures to select international consultant as per previous practice, as soon as possible.

123. The Council expressed satisfaction with the approval of the revised ToR for ITI Road Corridor during the 7th Road Committee of the TTCC (11 November 2015, Ankara). It also welcomed the decision of the meeting to proceed with each of the ToRs of ITI and KTAI Corridors on its own. ITI member states were also requested to confirm the names of the national consultants who have contributed to the road component of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on TTFA or, in case of their non-availability, introduce a new nominee for the study.

124. The Council asked the ECO Secretariat to organize in collaboration with IRU a test run under the coverage of TIR Carnet along ITI once Pakistan completes all preparatory measures to start TIR operations. The Council requested Islamic Republic of Pakistan to convey the dates for 4th Meeting of the HLWG of ITI Road Corridor through diplomatic channels, in consultation with the enroute Member States.

125. The Council was informed on TOBB's readiness to share its experience on TIR with Pakistan and Afghanistan in terms of capacity building training courses. This issue will be coordinated by the ECO Secretariat. Afghanistan had a request for sharing the format of TIR Parks and Turkish TOBB is ready to organize a programme for Afghanistan.

126. Kazakhstan informed about the ongoing project "West Europe-West China International Transit Corridor" being implemented under the umbrella of the State Programme "Nurly Zhol" and invited the Member States to explore its potential.

127. The Council while appreciating Iran's efforts to hold the 1st meeting of ECO Senior Consular Officials on Facilitation of Visa for Drivers, which was postponed due to lack of quorum, requested Iran to provide new dates for this important event. Keeping in view the significance of the issue, the Council urged the Member States to actively participate in the meeting.

128. The Council was updated on the status of registration of the ECO Logistics Providers Associations Federation (ECOLPAF) in Istanbul. National Associations of the member states who have not yet provided requisite documents to Turkey were requested to do so. Turkey informed about the lack of requisite documents from the relevant associations of the Member States for finalization of registration process. The list of needed documents and application form for foreign legal entities was provided by Turkey for circulation by the Secretariat accordingly. The Member States were asked to act at the earliest.

129. Further to the recommendation of 25th RPC, the Secretariat has communicated with the Member States who have not provided their comments and views on Turkey's proposal and the draft MoU for establishment of Working Group on Civil Aviation. Accordingly, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan provided their views.

130. The Council asked Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan to provide their comments and views on the proposal of Turkey for establishment of a Working Group on Civil Aviation.

131. The Council decided that in case no Member State volunteers to host the 5th Meeting of the ECO Heads of Reference Marine Organizations in 2016, Iran will kindly host and convey the dates of the event.

132. As per the discussion, the Pakistan delegation informed the Council that the information provided by the ECO Secretariat is inadequate on the establishment of ECO Zone in Chabahar. The Pakistan delegation requested the Secretariat to provide more details regarding the specific decision for the establishment of ECO Zone in Chabahar. Moreover, details regarding the facilities to be provided at Chabahar Free Trade Zone through diplomatic channels would be appreciated.

133. The legal advisor based on the request of Afghanistan and Iran's delegations, was asked to provide his legal opinion on this issue. Accordingly he referred to the obligation of the Member States under the TTFA by which the Member States have access to open seas undertook to provide facilities at the ports for other parties. Islamic Republic of Iran therefore, offered to establish the ECO Zone in Chabahar which was welcomed and appreciated by CPR and TTCC as the decision making bodies of the ECO and TTFA, which implicitly means acceptance of the offer by these bodies.

134. The delegation of Islamic Republic of Pakistan while taking the note of the legal opinion underscored that Pakistani delegation did not request the Council for legal opinion. Moreover, the explanation provided by the Legal Advisor is still insufficient to establish the facts. It would, therefore, be appreciated if more comprehensive details regarding establishment of ECO Zone in Chabahar could be provided through diplomatic channels.

135. The Republic of Turkey is of the view that since free trade zones are out of the scope of Transport and Communications section it may be moved to the Trade and Investment Section. The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its opposition to the view.

136. The Council was informed by Iran regarding availability of the following facilities in the ECO Zone in Chabahar for the ECO Member States especially the landlocked countries i.e. 20 years tax exemption, possibility of registration of foreign companies with 100% ownership, repatriation of the capital and profit thereof, protection/guarantee on the side of Iran for the capital investment of the foreign companies. Pakistan while appreciating the information provided by Iran asked the information to be communicated in writing. The Council was informed by the Afghanistan that Chabahar is one of the best options for Afghanistan to reach open seas. Afghanistan articulated appreciation to Iran for offering a land and tax exemptions and announced its willingness to develop a logistics center in Zaranj capital of Nimroz province for streamlining transit trade via Chabahar. Any support from the Member States in this regard would be welcomed.

137. The Council appreciated the ECO Postal Staff College (ECO PSC) for organizing the international course on "Postal aviation and Mail Security for ECO countries" (16-20 March 2015, Islamabad). ECO-PSC was asked to consider possibility of organizing an international course in 2016 within the remaining funds available for this purpose.

138. The Council asked the Secretariat to communicate with the Member States to consider hosting the 6th Meeting of the ECO Postal Authorities in 2016.

139. The Council expressed its appreciation to ITU for its valuable support provided through funding a qualified expert to serve as the international consultant for conducting the study on development of the ICT and telecommunications infrastructure connectivity and

services in the ECO Member as mandated by its 1st Ministerial Meeting, through inter alia preparing a comprehensive Questionnaire to cover all areas of ICT and telecommunications sector.

140. The Council appreciated Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Turkey for providing their country inputs for the study. The Council requested Azerbaijan to convey the Secretariat the filled in questionnaire at the earliest.

141. Noting that provision of nominations of focal persons/contact persons from the relevant authorities of the Member States as well as completion of duly filled in Questionnaires have been the most time consuming factor, the Council asked the Secretariat to approach ITU for the possibility of extending the deadline for the provision of the consolidated final report up to the end January 2016. Taking into account the exhaustion of the extended deadline for conveying national focal points nominations from relevant authorities of Member States, the ECO Secretariat may ask the International Consultant to utilize other reliable sources in order to cover all ECO Member States. The final report may reflect the latter for consideration of the relevant Member States.

142. The Council welcomed that Optic Fiber Cable at Mirjaveh border point with Iran was reported to be completed.

143. The Council asked the Secretariat to keep contacts and enhance its cooperation with international organizations. Noting that IDB in collaboration with UNECE prepared an Action Plan to the trilateral MoU between ECO, IDB and UNECE to cover three main areas, notably, “regional infrastructure connectivity, corridor activation initiatives and implementation of UN major facilitation legal tools”, the Council asked the Secretariat to proceed with this action and circulate this document once it is finalized.

c. Energy, Minerals & Environment

• Energy

144. The Council took note of the postponement of the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum scheduled for 2-4 December 2015 in Istanbul and appreciated the Republic of Turkey for rescheduling the Meeting at the end of February 2016 and requested the latter to convey exact dates, venue and hospitality details through official channels, as well as requested the Member States to participate in the Meeting at the highest level.

145. The Council welcomed the ECO Secretariat's efforts for organizing "ECO Ministerial Meeting on Renewable Energy" on 15 January 2016 in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on the sidelines of the 6th Session of the IRENA Assembly, and requested the Member States (except Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey) to accelerate confirming their participation in this important Meeting at the highest level.

146. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for preparation of an Evaluation Report on the implementation of the ECO Plan of Action on Energy/Petroleum Cooperation (2011-2015), and requested the Member States (except Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey) to provide their feedback on PoA. The Council also urged the Member States and Secretariat to consider

key findings and conclusions of the Evaluation Report during the process of revision/extension of Plan of Action.

147. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 3rd High Level Experts Group (HLEG) Meeting on Energy on 25-26 May 2015 in Tehran and while stating the importance of effective follow-up to the outcome decisions of the ECO Ministerial Meetings on Energy/Petroleum and requested the ECO Secretariat to communicate and coordinate with the interested Member States the issue of hosting the 4th HLEG Meeting on Energy sometime in 2017.

148. The Council welcomed the readiness of the Republic of Turkey to host the 2nd Experts Meeting on "Establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market" in 2nd half of 2016, and called for active participation of Member States in the Event.

149. The Council took note of the postponement of the 2nd Iran-Turkey Bilateral Meeting on establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market scheduled on 19-20 April 2015 in Tehran. The Council appreciated the offer by the Islamic Republic of Iran to host this Meeting in late April/May 2016 in Tehran and requested the latter to communicate exact date and venue as early as possible. The exact dates for the 3rd Iran-Turkey Bilateral Meeting on Establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market will be decided during April/May Meeting of Experts in Tehran.

150. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to explore the possibilities of funding feasibility study for "Establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market through harmonizing and merging the electricity markets of Iran and Turkey"; through submission to pertinent financial/development agencies; and seed financing from concerned Member States; as well as through ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF).

151. The Council requested all Member States to consider hosting the 4th Meeting of the ECO Experts Group and 6th Workshop on Renewable Energy Sources (RES) in 2016 to ensure proper follow up to the decisions of the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Experts Group and 5th Workshop on RES (15-17 September 2014, Kabul) and asked the Secretariat to follow up this issue with the Member States.

152. To contribute to the awareness raising and knowledge sharing among the Member States, the Council requested the Member States to realize an idea on establishment of "Virtual University Network" (VUN) on Renewable Energy among the relevant academic circles of the Member States.

153. The Council requested the Member States (except Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey) to accelerate providing their relevant Country Report/Questionnaire on RES for further integration into the "ECO Data Information Network on RES" (ECO DIN on RES) portal (<http://abemda.az/eco>) established by the State Agency on Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources (SAARES) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Council took note of an idea on possible merging of ECO DIN on RES with IRENA's Renewable Readiness Assessment (RRA) portal in the future.

154. The Council welcomed the readiness of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) to host the "1st Meeting of the ECO Public and Private Sector

Energy/Petrochemical Consortium/Companies" in cooperation with ECO-CCI and ECO Secretariat in Tehran on 18-19 January 2016, and requested the Member States to confirm their participation in this important Meeting, which may further facilitate B2B energy dialogue within the Region and beyond. The Council also called the Member States to communicate their views/comments on Roadmap for Establishment of the ECO Energy Consortium (except Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey).

155. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for preparation of the modalities/concept paper for establishment of a Trust Fund for financing the high priority ECO regional energy projects, and requested the Secretariat to circulate it among the Member States before the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum scheduled for the end of February 2016.

156. The Council took note of the postponement of the 1st Meeting on Establishment of Refinery Association in the ECO Region scheduled for 21-22 December 2015 in Tehran due to lack of quorum. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for rescheduling the Meeting in May/June 2016 and requested the ECO Member States to actively participate in this important Meeting.

157. The Council acknowledged the strong need to enhance coordination between relevant national focal points and the Secretariat and among themselves, as well as the reporting and feedback mechanism and requested the Member States to update/nominate their National Focal Points (NFPs) in relevant energy fields.

158. The Council appreciated joint efforts by the ECO Secretariat, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (TAVANIR) and Renewable Energy Organization of Iran (SUNA) to initiate a pilot Proposal for possible installation of Solar Rooftop Panels/Solar Water Heating Systems in the ECO Secretariat premises in Tehran and called for all stakeholders to make this project operational in 2016.

159. The Council recommended the Secretariat to maximize its efforts to strengthen its cooperation with relevant international and financial entities, including but not limited to, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as well as relevant regional and international financial/development cooperation agencies.

- **Minerals**

160. The Council welcomed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 6th ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting on 23-24 October 2016 in Tehran and requested the Member States to participate actively in the Meeting.

161. The Council while indicating the need for active follow-up to the outcomes of the 2nd Meeting of ECO Heads of Surveying and Mapping Organizations (8-9 May 2014, Ankara), requested the ECO Secretariat to communicate and coordinate with the interested Member

States the issue of hosting the 3rd Meeting of ECO Heads of Surveying and Mapping Organizations in 2016/17.

162. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 1st Meeting of ECO Geomatics Committee on 20-21 October 2015, and requested the Member States and the ECO Secretariat to implement the recommendations of this Event, including the Terms of Reference (TOR) of "ECO Geomatics Committee" and convey to the Secretariat feedbacks on outcomes of the Meeting, including criteria for election of the Secretary of the Committee, ECO Economic Atlas, and appointment of the Editorial Board for the ECO Geomatics Journal at the earliest. The Council requested the Secretariat to share with the Member States consolidated view on the issue of criteria for election of the Secretary of the Committee based on feedbacks received from Member States and follow up with the volunteer Member States for hosting the 2nd ECO Geomatics Committee in 2017.

163. The Council welcomed the proposal of the National Cartographic of Center (NCC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a Training Course on "Unification of the Height Datums" on 10-25 July 2016 in Tehran and requested the Member States to attend this important training course.

164. The Council while appreciating the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) for hosting the 1st Workshop on ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Programme (ECO-SHARP) on 10-12 May 2015 in Tehran, welcomed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 2nd Workshop on ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Programme (ECO-SHARP) in July 2016 in Tehran and urged the Member States to actively participate in the Event.

165. The Council appreciated the GSI as the Project Manager for its efforts on the implementation of 50% of ECO-SHARP project and requested the Secretariat to engage in regular contacts with the Project Manager, for necessary coordination and supervision on the implementation of the Project within the agreed timeframes in line with signed Contract.

166. While appreciating the Iran Minerals Processing Research Center (IMPRC) for hosting the 2nd Workshop on "Ferrous and Base Metal Mineral Processing" on 8-9 September 2015 in Karaj, the Council requested the Member States to volunteer hosting the 3rd Workshop on "Ferrous and Base Metal Mineral Processing" by May 2016, otherwise the IMPRC would host the Event in September 2016.

167. The Council acknowledged the need for coordination between the Secretariat and national focal points and among themselves, as well as reporting and feedback mechanism requested the Member States to update/nominate their National Focal Points (NFPs) in relevant fields of Secretariat's Minerals domain.

- **Environment**

168. The Council while appreciating the Republic of Azerbaijan's willingness to consider hosting the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, preceded by Senior Officials in 2016, asked the latter to reply to the ECO Secretariat on the matter in due course.

169. The Council recalled the ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment held on the sidelines of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in June 2014 in

Nairobi, Kenya and called upon the ECO Secretariat to ensure necessary preparation and coordination to convene the 2nd ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment on sidelines of the forthcoming UNEA scheduled for 23-27 May 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya and requested the Member States to attend this important Meeting.

170. The Council acknowledged that Extraordinary COM Meeting (2 October 2015, New York) endorsed the decision of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment (17 December 2014, Istanbul) to designate environment and impacts of climate change as a cross-sectoral priority of the Organization. Accordingly, the environmental dimension and observations shall be an integral part of any policy making and activities of all economic sectors within the Organization.

171. The Council while appreciating Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its willingness to host the 6th Working Group Meeting on Environment in February 2016 in cooperation with ECO Science Foundation, requested the relevant authorities of Pakistan to inform the Secretariat through official channels the exact date, venue and hospitality details for hosting the Meeting in 1st quarter of 2016 in Islamabad. The Council further requested Pakistan to inform the Secretariat via formal channels on its willingness to organize the Ministerial Conference on Climate Change back to back with 6th WGM on Environment as earlier indicated informally by the Ministry of Climate Change of Pakistan.

172. The Council appreciated the ECO Secretariat for organizing the ECO Coordinating Meeting on Environment on 7 December 2015 on sidelines of the 21st UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Paris and appreciated the ECO-IEST for assisting the Secretariat in preparation of policy paper on "ECO Climate Change Roadmap to Paris and Beyond", based on the inputs received from the Member States. The Council requested the Member States to follow up the recommendations of the ECO Coordinating Meeting and during the COP 21/UNFCCC in Paris.

173. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey to host the 3rd Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity back to back with the 2nd ECO Pre-COP Meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) from 1 to 4 March 2016 in Antalya. Moreover, the Council, requested the Republic of Turkey to consider hosting the Workshop for capacity building and sharing best practices on Biodiversity issues back-to back with above Meetings. The Council also requested Turkish side to communicate their offer via official channels, along with hospitality details and urged the Member States to ensure their high level participation in these important events.

174. While appreciating the Secretariat for following up the key decisions of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, held on 17 December 2014 in Istanbul, including submitting ECO's application for observer status at the forthcoming sessions of the COP to the UNFCCC, the Council asked the Secretariat to participate in the 22nd COP of UNFCCC scheduled for 7-18 November 2016 in Morocco and to explore the possibilities of organizing ECO Ministerial Meeting on sidelines of the 22nd COP of UNFCCC in Morocco, as well as requested the Member States to participate in the Meeting at highest level.

175. The Council reiterating the outcome recommendations of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment (17 December 2014, Istanbul), requested the Secretariat to explore the

possibility of organizing the workshop on “Optimal ECO Regional Approach to Green Economy in the context of Outcome Document of Rio+20” in 2016 in collaboration and support of ECO-IEST and interested European countries and International Organizations.

176. The Council requested the Secretariat to finalize the modalities of establishment of the Experts Group on regional approach to the environmental impacts in the post disaster situations and adaptations and requested the volunteer Member States to host the 1st Meeting of this Group sometime in 2016.

177. The Council noted the importance of the State of Environment (SoE) Report in advancement of ECO’s environmental agenda and requested the Secretariat to explore the possibilities of organizing in cooperation with ECO-IEST and UNEP the Inception Workshop on Modalities of First State of Environment (SoE) Report for ECO Region (based on UNEP Live Model) in 2016 in line with the mandate given by the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment and urged the Member State to nominate their relevant experts to participate in the workshop.

178. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for submitting formal request to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for its observer status in the IPCC in line with mandate given by 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment and asked the Secretariat to participate in the forthcoming IPCC Sessions, to be held in 2016.

179. The Council asked the Secretariat to submit its formal request to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) for its observer status to the UNCBD in line with mandate given the Environmental Ministers during the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment and asked the Secretariat and Member States to actively participate in the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNCBD scheduled for 4-17 December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.

180. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for co-organizing ECO-UNFF Capacity-building Workshop on Project Design for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in the ECO Region from 26-30 October 2015 in the Secretariat, with active participation of Member States, Tehran Process Secretariat for Low Forest Cover Countries (TPS for LFCCs) and ECO-IEST, and requested the Secretariat to share outcomes of the Workshop with Member States, as well as urged the Member States to closely cooperate with Secretariat and UNFF consultants for proper follow up and pragmatic implementation of recommendations of the Workshop. Moreover, the Council further request the Secretariat to continue its dialogue and hold future active engagements with UNFF Secretariat, including ECO’s participation in the 12th Session of the UNFF scheduled in mid-2017 in New York. Besides, the Council also requested Member States to convey their ideas and needs to the Secretariat as possible topics for future workshops.

181. While appreciating the significant role being played by the ECO-IEST with regard to following up and implementation of ECO’s environmental agenda and overall profile also providing the ECO Secretariat with commendable assistance and expertise in this regard, the Council reiterated its 25th RPC Meeting decision which was further endorsed by the Extraordinary Session of ECO Council of Ministers held on 2 October 2015 in New York concerning the change of status of the ECO-IEST from a project based into an ECO Regional

Category (B) Centre. However, the Council requested the remaining Member States (except Iran and Turkey) to communicate their final views/comments on draft Charter of the ECO-IEST at the earliest for further review and approval by the ECO decision making bodies.

182. The Council noted the pivotal role of National Focal Points (NFPs) in respective fields related to environment such as climate change, biodiversity, forests, etc., in transmitting necessary data on fast-track basis to enable Secretariat to ensure enhanced communication system. For this purpose, urged the Member States to furnish the latest details of their NFPs dealing with respective subjects to ECO Secretariat as soon as possible.

183. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Turkey for providing their National Progress Reports (NPRs) on Environment for the 2013, as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic Turkey for their NPRs for 2014, and urged remaining Member States to communicate their NPRs for the 2013 and 2014, to the Secretariat at the earliest. Moreover, the Council also urged Member States to forward their NPRs to ECO Secretariat annually within the first quarter of each calendar year, which will enormously help identify weaknesses and gaps to be addressed accordingly.

184. The Council while reiterating the mandate given by the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment concerning the ECO Bulletin on Environment in raising environmental and climate change awareness in the ECO Region, requested the Member States to prepare and send relevant materials/articles to ECO Secretariat for publication of the bulletin by ECO Secretariat in collaboration with ECO-IEST on quarterly basis in the electronic format and annual issue in hard copy at the earliest.

185. The Council while appreciating the Islamic Republic of Iran for submitting 3rd and 4th reports of the Feasibility Study on "Development and Harmonization of Environmental Standards in ECO Region", requested the concerned authorities of Iran to submit the remaining project reports to the Secretariat and urged the Member States to furnish their views/comments on the last report to be submitted by the project manager to the Secretariat.

186. The Council while acknowledging the pledges by the ECO Secretariat (50,000 USD), and the Islamic Republic of Iran (100,000 USD) to project profile on Framework Plan of Action on Environmental Cooperation and Global warming (2015-2020), requested the Secretariat to draft proper contract for further submission to the contract parties. The Council also requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure its voluntary contribution of 100,000 USD and urged the other Member States to also consider allocation of remaining 100,000 USD, respectively, for early implementation of the project profile in line with decisions of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment.

187. The Council appreciated the ECO-IEST for providing the Member States with Preliminary Study on the Regional Project to Combat Desertification with a Special Emphasis on Dust Haze and Sand Storm in the ECO Region. The Council also requested the interested Member States to cooperate actively with the Secretariat and ECO-IEST for proper implementation of this project. The Council was informed by the Secretariat that the issue of allocation of 50,000 USD from the Feasibility General Purpose Fund (FGPF) to ECO-IEST for

preparation of an elaborated project proposal for further submission to relevant financial institutions/donors is under discussion in CPR.

188. The Council while appreciating the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 2nd Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity, held on 4-5 November 2014 in Antalya, urged the Secretariat and the Member States to follow up decisions and recommendations of the Meeting. The Council urged the Member States (except Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) to convey their views/comments on the draft of the “Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2016-2020)” at the earliest in order to pave the way for future action as envisaged in the Work Plan.

189. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for vigorously following up the implementation process of outcome decisions of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, *inter alia*, enhancing ECO’s cooperation with International Organizations and Conventions, such as UNEP, UNEA, UNFCCC, IPCC, UNCCD, UNCBD, UNFF, UNESCAP, etc., and urged the Secretariat to explore further the possibilities of enhancing synergic cooperation with these organizations and actively engaging in the important environmental foras.

190. The Council while expressing satisfaction for getting ECO’s observer status with UNEP and UNCCD, requested the ECO Secretariat to explore also the possibilities of getting observer status with other international organizations, including but not limited to UNFCCC, UNCBD, and IPCC for enhancing ECO’s activities and visibility in line with mandate given by the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment.

d. Agriculture, Industry & Tourism

Agriculture

191. The Council requested the Member States to consider hosting the 6th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture, preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in their respective countries, in 2016-17.

192. The Council welcomed the offer of Republic of Turkey to host the 2nd Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee of the ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC) for Implementation of the ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS) and 2nd Workshop on Enhancing Food Security in the ECO Region on 10-11 January 2016. The Council requested the Republic of Turkey to kindly consider re-scheduling of the Meeting for ensuring highest possible participation. The Council also requested the Steering Committee to consider the revision of the ECO-RPFS, if necessary, during its second meeting.

193. The Council thanked the ECO-RCC for preparing the “Working Principles of the ECO-RCC for Implementation of the ECO-RPFS” and requested its finalization during the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting of the ECO-RCC in Turkey. The Council also requested ECO Secretariat to re-circulate the draft “Working Principles” for the consideration of the Member States well before the Meeting.

194. The Council requested the Member States (except Iran and Kyrgyzstan) to nominate their ECO-RCC Programme Steering Committee Members. The Council also requested the Member States to participate and extend their support to the ECO-RCC’s forthcoming

activities. In this context, the Member States are requested to prepare Project Proposals on Food Security within the framework of RPFS and convey the same for coordination to the said Centre.

195. The Council requested the Member States to consider providing funds for implementation of the ECO-RPFS, so as to facilitate securing financial assistance from the donor institutions/organizations, as decided during the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy held on May 22-23, 2014 in Astana-Kazakhstan.

196. The Council requested the ECO-RCC to cooperate with the ECO Secretariat for preparing bankable project documents for the components of the ECO-RPFS.

197. The Council thanked the ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) for its activities carried out so far and requested concerned authorities of Azerbaijan/Pakistan to consider organizing the 7th ECOSA International Seed Trade Conference and Seed Trade Fairs and 5th General Assembly Meeting in their respective countries, in 2016.

198. The Council while thanking the Republic of Azerbaijan for organizing the Workshops on Field Control between June 1 and 10, 2016 in Baku, requested Member States to confirm their participation in the said workshop. The Council also requested ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) to cooperate with concerned authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan for necessary preparation in this regard. The Council also requested Iran and Pakistan to announce the exact dates for the Workshops on Plant Variety Protection (PVP) and Seed Testing scheduled to be held in 2016 in their respective countries.

199. The Council thanked the FAO, concerned Member States and the ECO Secretariat for the successful implementation of the ECO/FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the Region, which was completed with organizing the Final Regional Seed Workshop on November 4-6, 2015 in Antalya, Turkey. The Council also welcomed the formulation of the ECO Regional Seed Agreement as an outcome of the said project, which was sent to the Member States for their views and comments if any. The Regional Seed Strategy and National Seed Policy documents have also been prepared as outcome of the project, to be circulated in due course.

200. The Council while appreciating the concerned authorities of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for organizing the 2nd Working Group Meeting on the Establishment of the ECO Center for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture (ECO-CEUW) on February 8-9, 2016 in Islamabad, Pakistan, requested all Member States to confirm their participation in the said Meeting. The Member States (except Turkey) are requested to convey their views/comments on the Draft Plan of Action and Draft Statute for establishment of the ECO-CEUW to be finalized during the 2nd Working Group Meeting.

201. The Council appreciated the finalization of the Draft Statute of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM), which includes the views of some Member States, and to be submitted to one of the CPR Meetings for endorsement/finalization. The said Statute will be submitted to the next COM Meeting for final approval. All the Member States (except Iran and Turkey) are also requested to contribute to and designate their

focal points for the Working Group to draw up Project Proposals for cooperation, as per decisions made by the 2nd Heads of Meteorological Organizations.

202. The Council requested the ECO-RCRM to send the detailed project proposal for the establishment of “Natural Disaster Data System” to the ECO Secretariat for consideration by the CPR. The Council also requested the ECO-RCRM to announce the exact dates for organizing the Workshop/Training Course on Drought Monitoring and Prediction in the ECO Region, in 2016 in Mashhad, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

203. The Council requested the Member States to voluntarily host the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Heads of Meteorological Organizations scheduled to be held in 2016, in their respective countries.

204. The Council while thanking again the concerned authorities of the Republic of Turkey for preparing the Draft Statute for the establishment of the ECO Meteorological Calibration Center (ECO-MCC), requested the Member States to send their views/comments on the said document.

205. The Council thanked the concerned authorities of the Republic of Turkey for organizing of the training programmes in the field of calibration and metrology so far. The Council also requested the Republic of Turkey to send the exact date for the Training Programme on the Basics of Calibration scheduled to be held in September 2016, in Ankara.

206. The Council requested the Member States (except Iran) to expedite signing/ratifying the Statute of the ECO Veterinary Commission (ECO-VECO).

207. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for sending the Plan of Action containing the activities within the ECO-VECO in Tehran for its implementation in 2015 and for its interest to organize the activities indicated in the said Plan in 2016. Iranian concerned authorities are also requested to announce the exact date and venue for the following activities scheduled to be held in 2016. The Member States are requested to collaborate for implementation of the said Plan including following activities.

- a. 3rd ECO Heads of Veterinary Organizations Meeting (2016);
- b. Workshop on Management of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Training Workshop on Laboratory Diagnosis of Animal Diseases ; and
- c. 1st Technical Steering Committee for early establishment/ operationalization of the ECO-VECO.

208. The Council while thanking the ECO-ABN for redesigning and updating a new dynamic website at www.eco-abn.org for better communication with the National Focal Points as well as Biotechnologists and Researchers in all Member Countries, requested the Member States (except Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Pakistan) to provide information in this regard and nominate their Focal Points for the Network.

209. The Council requested the concerned authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to send the exact date and venue for organizing the 2nd Expert Group Meeting of the ECO-ABN, scheduled to be held in August 2016.

210. The Council also requested the concerned authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to consider the following proposals for reviewing during the 2nd Expert Group Meeting:

- Establishment of a platform for harmonization of bio-safety regulations and capacity building for GMO detection (Iran, Pakistan and Turkey);
- Establishment of an intellectual property rights network and capacity building program in this field (Pakistan and Iran); and
- Using bio-technology tools for characterization and utilization of agricultural genetic resources for sustainable agriculture and food security (Iran).

211. The Council requested the Member States and other ECO Networks to kindly conduct their regional research and training activities in the area of genetic engineering, biotechnology and biosafety under the umbrella of ECO, through ECO-ABN as considering the mission and objectives of the ECO Agricultural Biotechnology Network in order to boost this Network in achieving its objectives and to enhance cooperation among the ECO Member States.

212. The Council while thanking the ECO and FAO for joint implementation of the Project Proposal on Technical Assistance for the Formulation of Strategies for the Control of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) at Global and Regional Levels, prepared by the technical services of FAO, requested all Member States to confirm their participation in the ECO/FAO/World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Regional Workshop for the PPR Road Map formulation as well as TCP implementation scheduled to be held on February 23-25, 2016 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

213. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to actively participate in the related international conferences to be organized in 2016 and prepare the project proposals on the events/activities for provision of financial assistance in this regard.

214. The Council requested Member States to voluntarily organize regional/international buyers/sellers meetings/trade fairs on agricultural products in 2016 in their respective countries with a view to improving intra-regional trade.

Industry

215. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry in 2016 and requested the latter to inform the exact date and details of hospitality to the Secretariat. The Council also requested the Member States to actively participate in the Meetings.

216. The Council requested the interested Member States to sign (except Afghanistan and Turkey) and ratify (except Iran) the Statute of RISCAM to pave the way for early operationalization of the Institute.

217. The Council appreciated Iran and Turkey for hosting several meetings and workshops on standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation and requested the remaining Member States to consider hosting such meetings and technical workshops on quality infrastructure (standardization, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology) and convey their readiness to ECO Secretariat.

218. The Council welcomed the allocation of office spaces for the “Central Secretariat of ECO – RISCAM” and the “Technical Management Board of Conformity Assessment” by the Islamic

Republic of Iran and requested the latter to invite the Secretariat and the Member States for the formal opening of the offices.

219. The Islamic Republic of Iran also informed that a preliminary study on establishment of a website for ECO- RISCAM is underway and will be submitted to the Secretariat for funding.

220. The Council reiterated its request to the Republic of Kazakhstan to reconsider its position on hosting the “Technical Management Board of Metrology” and inform the Secretariat and Central Secretariat of ECO - RISCAM as early as possible. The delegation of Kazakhstan informed the Meeting that the issue will be consulted with the capital and will keep the Member States abreast of its position.

221. The Council welcomed the preparation of the Second Roadmap by the ECO Secretariat and ICU - RISCAM for operationalization of ECO-RISCAM which will be circulated to the Member States for their views and comments.

222. The Council decided to organize the Meeting of Standardization Organizations/Institutes of the ECO Member States on the sidelines of the ISO Meeting in Beijing in September 2016 and invited the relevant organizations of the Member States to actively participate in the Meeting.

223. The Council welcomed the information by Iran regarding preparation of an operational project proposal to enhance the regional cooperation as recommended by the 6th HLWG Meeting on Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology and in accordance with the decision of the 173th CPR Meeting. The project proposal will be submitted to the Secretariat for circulation among the Member States.

224. The Council requested the Member States to provide the ICU (Interim Coordination Unit) of RISCAM with their views and comments on the draft basic documents i.e. Rules of Procedure, Financial Regulations and Staff Regulations by April 2016.

225. The Council appreciated Afghanistan for nominating its focal points and requested the remaining Member States to appoint at least two focal points to the Interim Coordination Unit (ICU) and support the activities of this Unit for operationalization of the RISCAM. The Meeting also emphasized the host countries of the Secretariats of the Technical Management Boards of RISCAM to start operating on interim basis.

226. The Member States and ICU (RISCAM) were requested to actively participate in the UNIDO/ECO Project on “Achieving Good Governance& Sustainability through Quality Policy Formulation in the ECO Region” and contribute to the objective of regional cooperation on standardization, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology.

227. The Council also requested the AIT Directorate to actively participate in the UNIDO/ECO Project on “Achieving Good Governance& Sustainability through Quality Policy Formulation in the ECO Region”.

228. The Member States were requested to volunteer for hosting the 7th HLWG on Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology.

229. UNIDO was invited to participate in the regional workshops on standardization, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology organized by the Member States and shares the outcome of the Project with the representatives.

230. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 3rd Meeting of Coordination Committee on Industrial Property Rights and the Workshop on IPR on 17-19 August 2015 and requested the interested Member States to consider hosting the next Meeting and inform the Secretariat by March 2015.

231. The Council noted the recommendation of the 3rd Meeting of Coordination Committee on Industrial Property Rights to establish IP Unit within the ECO Secretariat. However the Secretariat informed that establishment of any unit having financial implications shall be decided by higher decision making bodies of ECO. The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its readiness to cooperate with the Secretariat in this regard.

232. The Council welcomed the proposal of the 3rd Meeting of Coordination Committee on Industrial Property Rights to establish databank or a platform for virtual marketing of patent and facilitation of technology transfer and commercialization.

233. The Council welcomed the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize an IP Training Workshop for twenty participants from ECO Member States' IP Offices and requested the latter to inform exact date and details of hospitality to the Secretariat. The Council Requested the Secretariat to approach WIPO for their technical assistance.

234. The Council requested the Secretariat to organize contact group meetings and consultative sessions of the ECO Members on the sidelines of WIPO events for the purpose of coordination between Member States on IP matters which are discussed under the agenda of WIPO.

235. The Council welcomed Turkey's readiness for experience and knowledge sharing as well as IP expert exchange within the Region.

236. The Council noted with satisfaction that the Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of industrial property rights with WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) is prepared by the Secretariat and is in the process of negotiation with the latter and requested the Secretariat to keep the Member States abreast of the developments.

237. The Council requested the Member States to inform the Secretariat on their relevant programs/plans on industrial property rights.

238. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 4th Steering Committee Meeting on Entrepreneurship and SMEs Development and the field visit to Charmshahr Industrial Park on 24-25 May, 2015 and requested the Member States to implement the decisions of the Meeting.

239. The Council welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host the 5th SCM on Entrepreneurship and SME Development Meeting in Pakistan in April 2016 and requested all the interested Member States to participate in the Meeting and requested Pakistan to inform exact date and details of hospitality to the Secretariat

240. The Council also requested the CPR to support the 5th SCM on Entrepreneurship and SME Development Meeting by providing funds from SS Fund for participation of all interested Member States in accordance with the modalities for provision of SS Fund.

241. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to invite the Member States to participate in the Iranian Annual Leather and Footwear International Confobition (conference + exhibition) in 2016 and also its generous proposal to provide 10 free booths for exhibitors from the Member States.

242. The Council requested Republic of Turkey to keep the Secretariat abreast of the latest developments regarding organizing three workshops on projects on energy efficiency and environmental protection in SMEs as decided by the 4th Steering Committee Meeting on Entrepreneurship and SME Development (24-25 May 2015).

243. The Council thanked the Islamic republic of Iran for renewing its offer to host the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting on Establishment of the ECO Nanotechnology Network (ECONAN), and Workshop on NANO-technology activities in the Region in 2016 and requested for active participation of all the Member States in the Meeting and the Workshop. The Council also requested Iran to furnish the Secretariat with exact date and details of hospitality. The Council also requested the CPR to support the 2nd SCM on ECONAN by providing funds from SS Fund for air travel expenses for all interested Member States.

244. The Council welcomed the proposal to re-arrange the composition of the ECO-NAN Steering Committee to include only the ECO Member States in order to facilitate participation and decision making process.

245. The Council highly appreciated the Nanotechnology Council of Iran for the informative PowerPoint presentation on the comprehensive study conducted by the Iranian Nanotechnology Council titled "Nanotechnology in ECO Countries" in line with the Work Plan for the Establishment of the ECONAN and requested the latter to circulate it to the Member States through the Secretariat for their views and perusal. The Council also requested the latter to submit the breakdown of the costs of the Study to the Secretariat.

246. The Council was informed by the delegation of the Islamic Republics of Iran that the ECO-Nano website is currently being updated. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran has informed the Council that the website may be upgraded for sharing information in the ECO Region.

247. The Council requested the Member States to appoint their focal points to the ECO-NAN as soon as possible.

248. The Council requested the Member States (except Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkey) to inform their views and comments on the Project titled Pre-Feasibility Study of Removal of Arsenic Water Pollution in ECO Region using Nanotechnology Methods with the target of enhancing the regional cooperation in the field and implementation of the ECONAN by May 2016.

249. The Council requested Iran to commence the said project in collaboration with the interested Member States. The remaining Member States were also encouraged to join the

project as soon as possible. The Republic of Turkey expressed its support to the said Nanotechnology Project.

250. The Council reiterated its request to the interested Member States to offer their project proposals to develop and enhance the nanotechnology in the Region.

251. The Council requested the Member States, in particular ECONAN to organize capacity building and training courses for the interested Member States to publicize and build awareness on this technology.

252. The Council also appreciated the Iranian Nanotechnology Council for its continuous efforts to implement the ECO-NAN in the Region and requested the Member States to join these efforts for the benefit of the people of the Region particularly for health and environment and industrial purposes.

253. The Council reiterated its request to the Islamic Republic of Iran to submit the Project Proposals on (1) identifying potential transferors and transferees in the ECO Region and (2) identifying supporters of Technology Transfer process in the Region.

254. The Meeting appreciated Pardis Technology Park of Iran for hosting the Workshop on Management of Technology Parks and Commercialization and the visit to Nano Products Exhibition on 4-6 October 2015 in Tehran and requested the Member States to actively participate in such events.

255. The Iranian delegation expressed its readiness to share with the interested host country of the 2nd Workshop on Technology Parks Management and Commercialization its expertise and knowledge on technology parks through sending resource person/trainer /instructor with the possible cooperation and support of the ECOSF.

256. The Council also welcomed invitations by the Islamic Republic of Iran Pardis Technology Park extended to the ECO Member States to participate in the Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX 2016) in Tehran .The Council was also informed that the ECO Member States will enjoy a considerable discount on accommodation expenses and a free stall at the Exhibition for high-tech companies

257. The Meeting appreciated Iran for offering to extend technical cooperation to the Member States in the field of establishment of technology parks and requested the interested ones to communicate through the ECO Secretariat for arrangements.

258. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for initiating cooperation with relevant international organizations, development agencies and financial institutions including (but not limited to) UNCTAD, UNIDO, JICA, WIPO, ISO DEVCO for the purpose of regional development and encouraged it to do so with other international and regional organizations, institutions and agencies.

Tourism

259. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Tourism Ministers and the 5th HLEG Meeting on Tourism in June 2016 along with

ECO/ASEAN Forum on Tourism and the First Working Group on preparation of ECO Tourism strategy and requested the latter to specify exact date and details of hospitality for the said Meetings as soon as possible and called upon the ECO Members to actively participate in these events.

260. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Turkey to transfer their pledged contributions to the ECO Tourism Promotion Fund to the Secretariat as soon as possible and also encouraged the interested Member States to consider contributing to the said Fund.

261. The Republic of Turkey informed the Meeting that the allocation of the pledged amount to the Tourism Promotion Fund is in final stages and will be transferred at the earliest. The Islamic Republic of Iran also informed that the pledged contribution amount will be transferred and the Meeting of Board of Trustees will be hosted respectively.

262. The Council reiterated its request to the Member Countries, except Islamic Republic of Iran, to provide all the necessary information for the “Ecotourism Catalogue for the ECO Region” to be prepared by the Republic of Turkey.

263. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to circulate the questionnaire for collecting tourism information of the Member States to establish the ECO ecotourism database through the Secretariat to the Member States as early as possible.

264. The Council requested the Member States to host the 4th EGM on Ecotourism in 2016 to keep the pace of sustainable cooperation in this important field.

265. The Council requested the Member States to consider hosting the 2nd Confobition (conference+ exhibition) on Health Tourism and inform the ECO Secretariat accordingly.

266. The Council requested the ECO-CCI to provide the Member States with an implementation report of the 1st and 2nd Coordination Committee Meetings as well as the 1st Confobition on Health Tourism held in Ramsar, in August 2014.

267. While recalling the offer of the Republic of Turkey during the 25th RPC Meeting to host the Workshop on Health Tourism the Council appreciated the willingness of the Republic of Turkey to host this meeting and requested the latter to convey the date, venue and hospitality details of the meeting at the earliest. The Council also requested the ECO Member countries to actively participate in this event.

268. The Council reiterated its request to the Member States to encourage the private sector involvement in the regional tourism activities through participation in the relevant meetings/events/initiatives. And in this connection, the ECO CCI was requested to explore the possibility of setting up regional cooperation modality on tourism to strengthen cooperation among the national private sector associations/forums/federations with the purpose of sustainable tourism promotion and propose its study to the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in June 2016.

269. The Council reiterated its request that the Member States to form a contact group on the sidelines of Silk Road related meetings, conferences and events to effectively pursue the

collective interests of ECO Region and enhance the role of ECO in international tourism market.

270. The ECO Secretariat was asked by the Council to participate in Silk Road related meetings, conferences and events and coordinate participation of Member States in such events within and outside the ECO Region.

271. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for organizing the First ECO-SILK Road Food Festival on 31 August- 04 September 2015 in Zanjan Province and welcomed the offer of the latter to hold the Second Festival in Zanjan Province and requested the Member States and Silk Road countries particularly the Embassies in Tehran to actively participate in the event. Islamic Republic of Iran was requested to specify exact date and details of hospitality by March 2016. The Council requested the Secretariat to approach UNWTO for their collaboration in organizing the Event.

272. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to invite the Member States to the Third Tehran International Handicrafts Exhibition in 2016.

273. The Republic of Kazakhstan requested all the Member States to actively participate in the International Exhibition Expo-2017 which will be held in Astana, from June till September 2017. The following website provides detailed information on the Event: www.expo2017astana.com

274. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to invite the Member States to the First Tourism Ministerial Meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) in Tabriz in 2016. The exact date and details of hospitality will be circulated through the Secretariat.

275. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat for establishing ties with UNWTO, JICA and ASEAN and requested it to intensify activities to approach national and international development agencies like ECOTDB, IDB, OPEC Fund, etc., for securing fund for tourism related projects in the Region.

276. The Council appreciated the organization of "Workshop on Tourism" on April 28-30, 2015 in Girne, Turkish Cypriot State, which was co-hosted by the Republic of Turkey and Turkish Cypriot State.

e. Projects, Economic Research & Statistics

• Projects

Project Monitoring Group (PMG)

277. The Council noted with satisfaction the functioning of the ECO Project Monitoring Group (PMG) for effective implementation of ECO Projects through holding its regular meetings at the Secretariat. It also supported the initiative of the Secretariat for establishment of Project Management Information System (PMIS) at the Secretariat and Member States for obtaining greater efficiency & effectiveness of project operations through utilizing IT based system for tracing the projects progress in accordance with "Guidelines for ECO Projects" and online access to documents and reports of projects.

278. The Council highlighted the importance of regular holding of the Project Monitoring Group (PMG) Meetings by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Member States for achieving its responsibilities on effective supervision on implementation of projects which is essential for development of economic cooperation across the region.

279. The Council took note of the Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal to continue holding ECO Project Monitoring Group (PMG) Meetings on a quarterly basis.

Capacity Building on Project Management

280. The Council appreciated UNDP, IRTI and SESRIC for continuous support in organizing training workshops to enhance knowledge on project management and implementation for ECO Member States and ECO Secretariat's staff. The Council noted that based on the outcomes of the last project training in 2014 and proposal of Kazakhstan for hosting the next project training, the Secretariat included the regional project training workshop on "Project Management Information Systems (PMIS)" to be organized in collaboration with regional/international organizations for the ECO Member States.

281. The Council requested the Republic of Kazakhstan to convey dates, venue and details of hospitality to the Secretariat for hosting the Regional Training Workshop on "Project Management Information System (PMIS) for Member States in first half of 2016 at their earliest convenience. The Republic of Kazakhstan reiterated its interest to host the subject training workshop by the end of first half of 2016. Otherwise, the Secretariat will request the volunteer Member States for hosting the Workshop in 2nd half of 2016, if Kazakhstan does not announce the exact dates for holding the event. Else the event would be held at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

ECO Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan (SFRA)

282. Having in mind the ongoing projects/programmes/initiatives by international community for Afghanistan, the Council acknowledged the need for revisiting the terms of reference of the ECO Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan with a view to contributing more effectively to the development-related activities in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the Council requested the Secretariat to convene a special meeting on Afghanistan with the participation of Afghan authorities, Fund's donors and other interested ECO Member States to review the Fund's performance and to develop a new ECO advocacy approach/policy for Afghanistan including new possible missions for Fund. Potential partners from outside the Region may also be involved in this exercise.

283. The Council, while appreciating the generous contribution of the ECO Member States to SFRA, requested the relevant Member States to fulfill the remaining amounts that they have pledged to the SFRA to express solidarity with the people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Council further requested the other Member States, in a position to do so, to volunteer contributions to the SFRA.

284. The Council took note that the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) has agreed to finance the construction projects in Afghanistan under the terms & conditions of the Protocol between ECO & TIKA on reconstruction of Afghanistan. In this regard, the Council also took note that the TIKA has agreed on the establishment of Six Health Centers in Baghlan,

Parwan, Logar, Faryab and Takhar provinces, in line with the paragraph-264 of the 22nd RPC Meeting to provide the Republic of Turkey's remaining pledged amount for reconstruction of projects in Afghanistan.

- **Economic Research**

- **ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research**

285. The Council took note of the extension of the ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research as the framework for cooperation in the area of economic research in the ECO region for the next five years by the 4th Meeting of PSCER (3-4 December 2015, Ankara, Turkey), which reviewed the progress on implementation of the Plan and proposed for expanding of the Plan and including of the following new research projects:

- i. Setting Social Accounting Matrix, CGE & Capacity Building for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Azerbaijan)
- ii. The Decomposition of Inputs and Outputs Table on Regional Level (Kazakhstan)
- iii. Institutional Barriers to the Growth of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (Afghanistan) as well as the four on-going research projects undertaken by Azerbaijan and Pakistan into the "Economic Research Work Plan 2016".

- **ECO Joint Economic Research Programme (JERP)**

286. The Council appreciated the implementation of economic research studies in the framework of the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme (JERP) under coordination of ECO Permanent Steering Committee on Economic Research (PSCER), which has been established by Member States for implementation of the ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research. The PSCER meetings provide the environment and platform for Member States to discuss economic research related issues with the aim of exchanging best practices/experiences and good economic governance. In this regard, the Council thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey, particularly the Ministry of Economic Development for hosting of the 4th PSCER Meeting on 3-4 December 2015 in Ankara and encouraged the other member-states to volunteer hosting of the next 5th PSCER meeting in 2016 in their respective countries.

287. The Council further requested the Project coordinating countries to provide the Secretariat with regular updates on the progress of implementation of ongoing ECO economic research projects/studies and encouraged to provide the new project concepts and proposals related to economic research and development in the region, under the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme.

288. The Council took note of the Project Proposal titled "Economic Management Modeling in ECO Countries" by Pakistan as coordinating country, has been considered by the 7th and 8th PMG Meetings accordingly, and requested the concerned authorities of Pakistan for co-financing with an allocation of US\$ 10,000/- of total budget US\$ 50,000/- for the project. The Council also requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to submit the updated project profile form to the Secretariat for further action.

289. The Council took note of the Project Proposal titled “Trade Liberalization and Food Security in ECO Region” by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as Coordinating Country, and requested the concerned authorities of Pakistan for co-financing with an allocation of US\$ 10,000/- of total budget US\$ 50,000/- for the project. Moreover, the Council informed that this project proposal has been confirmed by the Member States through review at expert level meetings.

290. The delegation of Pakistan submitted revised proposals and informed that the Government of Pakistan agreed to co-finance for both the projects (rest of the financing will come from the ECO Secretariat). The Council thanked Islamic Republic of Pakistan for co-financing of the research projects and endorsed them.

ECO Research Centre (ERC)

291. While noting the establishment of ECO Research Centre in Baku by approval of its Charter by the 21st COM in 2013), the Council informed that the ECO Research Centre would serve as the ECO economic think tank to work out projects, economic development strategies and policies for the region.

292. The Council appreciated the willingness of the Republic of Azerbaijan to complete all mentioned procedures and expedite submission the requisite basic documents needed for operationalization of the ECO Research Centre (ERC) by 2016 for ratification of the Member States. In Addition to the all above mentioned procedures, Azerbaijan will finalize preparation Rules of Procedures, as well as staff, financial regulations and organization chart of the Centre. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan supports the proposal and informed the Council that the ratification process of Charter of the Centre will be started soon after receiving the requisite documents. The Council also requested the Member States to ratify the Charter after circulation by Azerbaijan for early functioning of the Centre.

ECO Economic Publications:

ECO Annual Economic Report & ECO Economic Journal

293. The Council appreciated the compilation and dissemination of two major economic publications of the Organization: ECO Annual Economic Report, which reflects annual economic performance of the Member States and ECO Economic Journal, which provides articles/papers/abstracts/ reviewers related to economic development and integration in the region.

294. While appreciating the compilation and dissemination of the ECO Annual Economic Report for 2013, the Council noted that the new structure of the Report as mentioned in the 4th Meeting of the Permanent Steering Committee on Economic Research (PSCER) held on 3rd December 2014 at Ankara, Republic of Turkey would be introduced for the next publication of ECO Annual Economic Report.

295. The Council further requested the Member States to their annual report on economic performance of 2014 at the earliest convenience to enable the Secretariat to compile and publish the ECO Annual Economic Report 2014. The Republic of Turkey informed the Council that the Annual Report of 2014 has already been sent to the Secretariat. The Islamic Republic of

Pakistan informed the Council as well that the Annual Report of 2014 will be submitted to the Secretariat in due course.

296. The Council took note of the suggestion of the Islamic Republic of Iran that the target of ECO Journal articles is of high importance while putting special attention towards creating incentives for increasing motivation of scholars, writers and authors to contribute quality research articles. The Authenticity and credibility of the Journal is of high importance, and mentioned their support of ECO Reinsurance College as well as any other universities and institutions of the ECO region to upgrade the scientific level of the Journal. The Journal should be a reference for decision making and for the use of the decision makers of the region; hence it should address the main challenges and needs of the ECO Member States.

297. The Council reiterated that the ECO Editorial Board is the central body of the Organization for consideration and approval of content of ECO economic publications. The Council further requested the Member States to cooperate actively with the Secretariat in implementation of the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme (JEPR) through proposing new economic research project proposals in line with the objectives of the organization for strengthening the financial development and trade markets for the region.

298. The Council also requested the Member States for more active cooperation for provision of articles/abstracts/papers relating to regional economic development to the ECO Editorial Board for further actions on regular publication of ECO Economic Journal.

ECO Economic Think-Tanks Forum

299. While appreciating the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting of two Forums of the ECO Economic Think Tanks in 2013 and 2014 in joint cooperation with ECO, the Council requested the Republic of Kazakhstan to hold the 3rd Forum of ECO Economic Think Tanks in first half of 2016, and convey the date, venue and details of hospitality to the Secretariat at their earliest convenience. The Republic of Kazakhstan reiterated its interest to host the subject Forum by the end of first half of 2016. Otherwise, the Secretariat will request the volunteer Member States for hosting the Workshop in 2nd half of 2016, if Kazakhstan does not announce the exact dates for holding the event. Else the event would be held at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

300. The Council appreciated and endorsed the proposal of ECO Secretariat to initiate a three year capacity building and technical training programme for the Member States in the areas of project management, “economic research and strategy” and statistics. The Council requested the Secretariat to communicate with the Member States to convey their specific requirements in the above subjects. The Council also requested the Secretariat to coordinate with Member States’ think-tanks and international training agencies to seek the possibility of conducting the above mentioned training and capacity building programmes.

Economic Modeling Training

301. The Council thanked the Kyrgyz Republic to host the 2nd Regional Training Course on Economic Modeling for ECO Members States during summer/autumn 2016 subject to availability of requisite finances for which the Council reminded that the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has allocated financial support of US\$ 20,000/- to organize the Training Course in Kyrgyzstan.

- **Statistics**

- **Development of ECO Statistical Network (ECOSTAT)**

302. The Council appreciated the Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its continuous technical support for the ECO Statistical Network (ECOSTAT). While appreciating ECO Secretariat efforts in regular updating and disseminating new data and statistics and new statistical publications, publishing documents and reports related to the ECO Statistical events alongwith news for major regional statistical events through the ECOSTAT website, the Council requested the Secretariat to manage and update the contents of the website regularly in collaboration with the ECO Member States as before.

- **ECO Key Statistical Indicators (ECOKSI)**

303. While appreciating the Member-States who have provided the ECO Secretariat with updated statistical Compendiums for 2013 and 2014, the Council requested those Member-States, who have not yet done so, to complete and submit to the Secretariat completed their Compendiums for 2013 and 2014 for further dissemination on the ECOSTAT.

304. The Council appreciated the compilation of ECO Key Statistical Indicators (ECOKSI) for 2014 covering the most significant socio-economic indicators of the region made by the Secretariat based on the updated Compendium for 2014 and 2013 that were provided by Member States to the Secretariat as well as updating of the ECOKSI 2014 with data for the period of 2000-2014 being disseminated on the ECOSTAT.

305. The Council requested the National Statistical Offices of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to forward their filled-in Compendium for 2014 to the Secretariat at the earliest possible time for publication on the ECOSTAT as well as preparing the regional statistical and economic reports for 2014. The above-mentioned countries, are also requested to submit their completed Compendiums for 2013 as well.

306. The Council requested the Member States to kindly make their contribution for development of ECOSTAT through regular submission of their updated statistical data, information and publications as well as proposals on more effective utilization of the ECOSTAT to intensify statistical cooperation across the region. In this regard, the Council requested the following information to be forwarded to the Secretariat for dissemination on the ECOSTAT:

- i. The filled-in Compendium for 2014 (by countries that have not provided yet) and preparation for completion of Compendium for 2015 (by all Member States).
- ii. Latest statistical publications (Statistical Yearbook, Report, Bulletins, News Letters).
- iii. News and reports on statistical activities and events of international, regional and national scope.

- **ECO Statistical Publications**

307. The Council appreciated the compilation and publication of the fourth volume of ECO Statistical Report for 2015 by the ECO Secretariat, which aimed at developing of statistical information and providing of the last updated statistical data. This new statistical publication

of the Organization aims to give a comprehensive picture of the region through presenting and analyzing the main socio-economic indicators of countries of the region, supported by variety of tables, charts and maps. This volume of the Statistical Report reviews development of key statistical indicators in population, economy and foreign trade of countries of the ECO region.

ECO Statistical Capacity Building Programme

308. The Council appreciated the ECO Secretariat for implementation of statistical capacity building programme for ECO Member States in 2015 through conducting three regional training workshops in joint collaboration with regional and international organizations.

309. In this regard, the Council thanked the Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran (SCI) for hosting of two out of three Regional Training Workshops for ECO Member-States, namely “Compilation of Quarterly Accounts for ECO Member States”, jointly conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), SCI and ECO (8-11 March 2015) and “Measuring the Informal Sector and the Non-observed Economy for ECO Member States”, jointly conducted by the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UNSIAP), SCI and ECO (4-7 October 2015).

310. The Council appreciated the FAO for organizing of the 3rd training workshop on CountrySTAT Programme for ECO Member States titled “Stocktaking and Lesson Learnt from the Implementation of CountrySTAT in the ECO Countries” in joint cooperation with ECO and participation of international partners (25-26 June 2015, Rome). The Council took note of the outcomes of the implementation of the 1st phase of CountrySTAT in Afghanistan and appreciated the work done by the FAO and the Government of Afghanistan for establishment of CountrySTAT System in Afghanistan despite all impediments and difficulties in the country and recommended that FAO support is needed for continuation and sustainability of the CountrySTAT project in Afghanistan in the coming years.

311. The Republic of Azerbaijan requested the Secretariat to develop online capacity building tool-kits on statistics for the use by relevant departments and institutions of the Member States.

312. Taking into consideration the importance of implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Council requested the Secretariat to develop and organize the capacity building programmes in the related fields of economic research and statistics for ECO Member States as one of the priorities in 2016.

ECO Statistical Project (CountrySTAT)

313. The Council appreciated the implementation of CountrySTAT Programme in the ECO region to develop statistics in agriculture and food security by completion of the first phase of CountrySTAT Programme in Afghanistan as pilot country in the ECO region through launching of the CountrySTAT website of Afghanistan in an official ceremony with participation of high-ranking authorities of the Government of Afghanistan and the FAO Representative in February 2015.

314. The Council took note of the outcomes of the 3rd Regional training workshop on CountrySTAT for ECO Member States titled “Stocktaking and Lesson Learnt from the Implementation of CountrySTAT in the ECO Countries” (25-26 June 2015, Rome, Italy) and

supported the FAO follow-up action for the implementation of the next phase of the project in three countries of the ECO region, namely Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, with total budget of US\$ 1.5 million in 18 months. In this regard, the Council encouraged the ECO to continue its collaboration with the FAO for working jointly to approach regional and international partners/donors for co-financing of the project.

ECO Statistical Events

315. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 4th Meeting of the Heads of ECO National Statistical Offices (MHNSO) in first week of December, 2016 and requested to convey exact dates, venue and details of hospitality to the Secretariat for hosting the event. The Council further requested the Secretariat to communicate with Member States (except Iran and Turkey) to volunteer for holding the 6th Meeting of High Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Statistics, and in case of no volunteer, it may be held in the Secretariat in Tehran.

Cooperation with Regional/International Organizations

316. The Council appreciated that ECO Secretariat continued to pursue interaction with regional and international organizations for their contribution in implementation of work programme for 2015, particularly the ECO statistical capacity building programme and progress in development of regional statistical projects. The Council further requested the regional and international bodies/agencies to continue their support to the ECO Member States as well as to the ECO Secretariat.

f. Human Resources & Sustainable Development

Human Development and Health:

317. The Council emphasized that regional cooperation on health and human development should get further momentum within the context of the ECO Vision 2016-2025. The relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others, constitute proper frameworks for actions.

318. The Council requested the Member States to offer topics and specific activities for cooperation in the field of Human Development and positively consider hosting the events and activities in this field in 2016/2017.

319. The Council noted the views shared by Republic of Turkey within the framework of COMCEC strategy regarding new implementation mechanism and requested the Secretariat to nominate a Focal Person to put action on the offer.

320. The Council valued the ECO Secretariat efforts regarding cooperation with international and regional organizations and called on the Secretariat to continue to interact with the relevant regional and international organizations, including IDB, UNESCAP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, UNESCO and WHO for joint programme in the areas of regional and global developments/concerns, particularly those of specific interest to ECO Region.

321. The Council further requested the ECO Secretariat to convene the First ECO High Level Experts Group Meeting on Human Development and Health related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016 with a view to identifying areas of possible regional cooperation.

322. The Council welcomed the renewed offer of Republic of Turkey to host the 2nd Meeting of the ECO Heads of National Organizations/Centers for Civil Registration in September 2016.

323. The Council requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with the web-addresses (English version) of their relevant main human development organizations/bodies in order to link them with the Human Resource Development webpage in the official website of the ECO Secretariat. The Council also requested the Member States to introduce/regularly update the information of their focal points on health related MDGs/SDGs, civil registration and human development.

324. The Council requested the Member States to provide their full support to the Secretariat for implementation of the decisions of the 2nd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Health (19 May 2015, Geneva). While recalling the Outline for "Plan of Action on Health Cooperation in ECO Region" as approved by the ECO Ministerial Meeting, the Council also requested the ECO Secretariat to organize two HLEG Meetings for developing and finalizing the "Plan of Action". The Council further requested the Member States to convey their views and inputs for developing the first draft of the "Plan of Action" by the end of February 2016.

325. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to make necessary coordination with the Member States and the WHO organizers to arrange the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Health on the sidelines of 69th World Health Assembly in Geneva on 18-26 May 2016.

326. The Council welcomed the renewed offers of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the High Level Experts Group Meeting on Human Resource in Health (HRH) in second half of 2016, and the High Level Experts Group Meeting on International Health Regulations (IHR) in May 2016 in Tehran.

327. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to submit project proposal on "HIV in the ECO Region" to the Secretariat in February 2016.

328. The Council requested the Member States to enhance cooperation in pharmaceutical area and welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a workshop on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in the second half of 2016 in Tehran.

329. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for providing academic scholarships in Master of Public Health in 2014 and requested the interested Member States to extend academic scholarships in health related areas.

330. The Council appreciated Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) for inviting ECO Member States to attend the "3rdInternational Congress of Transfusion Medicine on Evidence based Use of Blood Components and Plasma derived Medicines" and workshop on "Promoting Voluntary Blood Donation" on 15-19 December 2015 in Tehran. The Council requested the Member States to propose and host training courses/workshops/seminars on the blood priority areas such as training and education workshops on transfusion sciences and medicine, blood bags and equipments, GMP in blood banks as well as the plasma collection and plasma fractionation in 2016-2017.

331. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to convey the exact dates for holding the 4th Meeting of the ECO Heads/ Authorities of Blood Transfusion Organizations in 2016 in Pakistan.

332. The Council requested the Member States (except Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic and Turkey) to nominate designated accredited representatives to be granted access to the Blood Safety Network.

333. The Council requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with the information on their pharmaceutical websites (English version) in order to link them with the Pharmaceutical webpage in the ECO official website (www.ecosecretariat.org/pharmaceutical) and to introduce/regularly update the information of their focal points on Drug (Pharmaceutical) and Blood Transfusion Cooperation.

Disaster Risk Reduction

334. The Council reiterated that regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction should get further momentum and synergy within the context of the ECO Vision 2016-2025. The "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030" and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (goals 9 and 11), among others, constitute proper frameworks for regional actions.

335. The Council requested the Member States to enhance cooperation on disaster risk reduction at different levels and involve all stakeholders including local communities, non-governmental organizations and private enterprises, particularly within the Sendai Framework priorities.

336. The Council requested the Member States to propose and host events/conferences/seminars/workshops on disaster risk reduction in 2016/2017.

337. In order to increase public awareness on the importance of the disaster risk reduction, the Council requested the Member States to regularly submit information about their activities on disaster risk reduction and related regulations to the ECO Secretariat for further circulation among the Member States.

338. The Council requested the Member States to submit to the Secretariat the list of their disaster-related national stakeholders and players, including state organizations, institutes, local communities, non-governmental organizations and private enterprises active in the disaster reduction areas for the purpose of pooling the expertise, knowledge and experiences within the Region with the ultimate goal of utilizing the existing complementary regional capacities.

339. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to continue cooperation and seek technical and financial support from relevant regional and international organizations particularly UNISDR, UNESCO, UNHABITAT, UNDP, UNOCHA and UNESCAP towards ECO activities on disaster risk reduction.

340. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to enhance cooperation between ECO Secretariat and the Asian and Pacific Center for Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), a UNESCAP subsidiary, based in Tehran.

341. The Council valued/appreciated the joint project on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis by UNESCO and UN-Habitat in cooperation with ECO Secretariat in four ECO Countries, namely, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. The Council requested the ECO

Secretariat to co-organize with UNESCO-UN-Habitat, a workshop on "Induction Capacity of ECO-UNESCO-UN-Habitat Project on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis" in Tehran.

342. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to make necessary coordination with the Member States to organize the ECO meetings on the sidelines of the regional and international events on related disaster risk reduction issues.

343. The Council appreciated efforts by ECO Secretariat to prepare ECO Regional Strategy/Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and requested the Secretariat to organize a High Level Expert Group Meeting on this topic. The Council also requested the Member States to share their views with the Secretariat on the components of the envisaged Strategy/Framework.

344. The Council welcomed the renewed offer by Republic of Turkey to host the "8th ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management" in November 2016, and requested the Member States to actively participate in the Conference.

345. In line with the recommendations of the 7th ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management held in Gabala on 4-5 June 2014, the Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey regarding earthquake data sharing among the ECO Member States and requested the Member States to share their views on the MoU to be circulated by Turkey through the ECO Secretariat.

346. The Council requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with the information on the websites (English version) of their Disaster Risk Reduction bodies in order to link them with the webpage of Disaster Risk Management in the official website of the ECO Secretariat (<http://www.ecosecretariat.org/DRM>) and also requested them to nominate/regularly update the information regarding their related focal points on disaster risk reduction.

g. Drug & Organized Crime Coordination

347. The Council, while acknowledging the need to further strengthen the DOCCU, reiterated its request to the Member States to extend full support to the Unit, including through ensuring timely dispatch of their country reports and statistics on drug control to DOCCU for preparation of yearly "Statistics and Analytical Report of Drug Situation in the ECO Region".

348. The Council requested the Member States, who have not done so, to expedite nomination/update of their national focal points on drugs; terrorism, transnational organized crime; and human trafficking as well as liaison officers for police cooperation and anti-corruption agencies.

349. The Council took note of progress made towards the finalization of the draft Statute of ECOPOL (agreed ad referendum) in the 2nd Experts Group Meeting which will be submitted to the upcoming "2nd Meeting of ECO Chiefs of Police or "2nd Meeting of Heads of INTERPOL of ECO Member States" for its consideration. The Council also requested the Secretariat to ensure that amendments proposed by Republic of Turkey be considered by the Member States before final decision on adoption of the Statute.

350. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey for hosting Second Meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States held in Antalya on 3-4 November 2015. The Council was informed about the decisions by the “Second Meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States”. The Council requested the Secretariat to ensure effective follow-up to Meeting’s decisions. Republic of Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were also requested to convey the exact dates for hosting the first Follow-up “Experts Group Meeting” and the “3rd Meeting of ECO Attorneys/Prosecutors General”, respectively.

351. The Council recalled that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has expressed its consent to join the “ECO- Regional Centre for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen” (RCCACO). The Council encouraged the signatories, namely, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Tajikistan to ratify, and the other interested Member States to sign and ratify the RCCACO Statute so that the Center could start functioning.

352. In view of the importance of “UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on World Drug Problem” to be held on 19-21 April 2016, the Council mandated the Secretariat to host a regional preparatory meeting.

353. The Council acknowledged the need for increased ECO cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies and international and regional financial institutions to seek technical assistances and equipments in the context of global fight against drug-trafficking and in accordance with the principle of a common and shared responsibility.

354. The Council acknowledged the need for early meeting of the ECO Interior Ministers to discuss the areas of continued regional cooperation in post-2015. The Council, therefore, appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the “4th ECO Interior Ministers Meeting” and the “2nd Meeting of the Heads of Interpol of the ECO Member States” on 28-29 December 2015 in Islamabad. In view of the time limit, the Council requested the Secretariat to coordinate with the host authorities a new date for the meetings and inform the Member States along with the draft agendas.

355. The Council was updated that so far only the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have conveyed their list of institutions and trainers for capacity building programmes for the experts/officials of the law enforcement agencies of the Member States. The Council encouraged the other Member States to convey the list of their relevant institutions/trainers enabling the Secretariat to complete the envisaged roster for this purpose.

356. The Council welcomed the renewed offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Experts Group Meeting for Preparation of ECO Plan of Action on Terrorism on 25-26 July 2016. The Council requested the Member States to share with the Secretariat their views on the draft Plan of Action on Terrorism by end of June, 2016.

357. The Council reauthorized the ECO Secretariat to host “1st Meeting of ECO- Drug Liaison Officers” and the “2nd National Focal Points Meeting on Drug Control Matters” in 2016.

358. The Council recalled that due to absence of interested host countries, some important meetings such as 3rd Meeting of ECO Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and

Ombudsmen and 2nd Meeting of ECO Chiefs of Police are still pending. The Council requested the interested Member States to seriously consider hosting these meetings. As per ECO rules of procedure, the Council authorized the Secretariat, in the absence of interested hosts, to organize these meetings in the Secretariat premises. The Council also requested the Member States to consider hosting of the EGM on Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking.

359. The Council took note of suggestions of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan which mainly aimed at ensuring the effective cooperation among ECO Member States for fighting against drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, border cooperation, combating terrorism, information sharing and judicial cooperation including extradition of criminals.

360. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to report RPC on the outcomes of the non-ECO events.

h. ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies and International Relations

Intra-Regional ECO Activities

(i) ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies

361. In order to support and promote the broad objectives of the ECO, particularly in the fields of science, technology, culture, and education, the Council encouraged the ECO Specialized Agencies to synergize their activities to promote cooperation in the relevant areas.

362. The Council encouraged the Member States to join, where applicable, the ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies and Centres and support their activities in different areas for the shared goals

363. The Council requested the Secretariat to facilitate and assist the Specialized Agencies in developing cooperation with the relevant regional and international organizations in the educational, scientific and cultural fields, specifically UNESCO, within the framework of the MoU signed between the ECO and UNESCO.

• **ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)**

364. The Council appreciated the ECO Cultural Institute for organizing a broad range of events and activities in the fields of culture, literature, and arts aimed at promoting greater cooperation among the Member States. The Council encouraged the Institute to further expand the cooperation in the relevant fields for realizing the core objectives of ECI.

365. The Council appreciated and expressed commitment to the Khojand Declaration, adopted in 6th ECI BoT Meeting in Tajikistan on 21st March, 2015. Tajikistan was commended for the successful convening of the meeting and Member States and ECI were also requested to follow the decisions contained in Khojand declaration.

366. Taking note of the successful holding of the first ECO Poetry Night, the Council encouraged the Member States to organize the second ECO Poetry Night in the Region in collaboration with ECI. The Council appreciates promotion of common literary heritage of the great poets like Maulana Rumi, Hafiz Shirazi, Firdausi, Allama Iqbal, Mir Seyed Ali Hamedani, Makhdoom Quli, and Babajan Ghaforuv, etc.

367. The Council appreciated the Institute for holding the First ECO Chess Tournament, in collaboration with the Chess Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran, attended by players from all ECO Member States. The Council encouraged the Member States to consider holding similar events in collaboration with the ECI in the coming period.

368. The Council asked the ECO Member States, which have not ratified the Charter yet, to ratify the ECI's Charter and support its initiatives for promoting the commonly cherished rich cultural heritage of the Region.

369. The Council appreciated the nomination of national focal points to the Institute by Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan and requested the other ECO Member States to nominate their Focal Points, as this would help in ensuring effective coordination between the ECI and ECO Member States in relevant matters.

370. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for providing indirect support by contributing to different ECI events. The Council encouraged the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue its support for ECI and to favourably consider the issue of ECI Premises.

371. Keeping in view the financial problems being faced by the ECI, the Council requested the Member States to pay their annual budgetary contributions to the Institute as per the agreed scale of assessments and in a timely fashion as delays also hinder ECI's activities. Furthermore, ECI's budgetary allocations are the same as were approved at the time of its inception 17 years ago, hence these need a revision.

372. The Council requested Pakistan to convey the proposed date and venue of the 2nd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Youth Affairs. It was also noted that Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Kazakhstan expressed their interest to host the 3rd Meeting of ECO Heads of National Libraries.

- **ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)**

373. The Council appreciated the activities and initiatives of the Foundation for developing and promoting cooperation among the Member States in the field of science and technology and for the promotion of scientific research in the Region. The Council also appreciated the Annual Report published by the ECOSF for 2015.

374. The Council requested the Member States that have not yet ratified the ECOSF Charter to do so as soon as possible, so as to make the Foundation stronger to achieve its objectives.

375. The Council appreciated the partial payment of annual mandatory contributions by the Islamic Republic of Iran for 2013 and full payment of mandatory contribution by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the ECOSF for 2012-2014, and requested the remaining concerned Member States to contribute with their share.

376. The Council also noted the need for the Member States to fulfil their pledges towards the 'Science and Technology Fund'.

377. The Council also took note of the Foundation's request that the ECO Secretariat should be represented in all forums of the ECOSF, its meetings and events, to the possible extent.

378. The Council requested the Member States, who have not done so, to nominate their focal points in order to facilitate coordination between the Foundation and the Member States

on relevant issues. The Council also asked the concerned Member States to nominate their eminent scientists for the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees of ECOSF, who will formulate the Action Plan of the Foundation for the coming period.

379. As informed by the ECOSF, the draft Host Country Agreement, to be concluded between the ECOSF and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has been sent to the relevant authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Science and Technology) in Pakistan. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to expedite the finalization and conclusion of the Agreement.

380. The Council appreciated Pakistan for hosting the 2nd BoT Meeting in Islamabad on 11th of August, 2015.

381. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECOSF to hold regular consultations with the Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives of the Member States based in Islamabad to discuss issues of importance. The Council also asked the Secretariat to assist the Foundation in devising, at an appropriate stage, a mechanism for holding such consultations.

382. The Council appreciated the allotment of dedicated office premises to the ECOSF by Pakistan, the host country, in the Ministry of Science and Technology's building, Islamabad.

- **ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI)**

383. The Council requested the relevant members to ratify ECOEI's Charter to further promote cooperation in the field of education.

384. The Council requested the concerned Member States to pay their mandatory contributions.

385. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 2nd BoT Meeting in March/April, 2016, and called on the concerned Member States to actively participate in the event to deliberate upon the pending issues at the earliest.

386. The Council also appreciated the signing of the Host Country Agreement between the Educational Institute and Government of the Republic of Turkey. The Council also requested the relevant authorities of the Republic of Turkey to expedite the ratification process.

387. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECOEI to hold consultations with the Ambassadors of its Member States based in Ankara to discuss issues of importance. The Council also asked the Secretariat to assist the Institute in devising, at an appropriate stage, a mechanism for holding such consultations.

388. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey for organising the 9th International Robot Contest in May 2015 Canakkale-Turkey in cooperation with ECOEI with the participation of Secondary School students from the Member Countries.

389. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to initiate an exchange program for the upper Secondary School Students within the ECO Region as well as preparing and drafting regulations of the exchange program by benefitting from their experience on this kind of programs in collaboration with ECOEI.

- **ECO Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC)**

390. The Council requested the Member States to support ECO-CEC in becoming an active regional institution of ECO. The Council also asked the Member States and the Secretariat to utilize the expertise of the ECO-CEC in providing consultancy services for projects having regional character.

391. The Council encouraged the Member States to facilitate effective participation of ECO-CEC in the bidding process for the projects financed from ECO resources and for other national projects, specifically, by timely exchange of information related to the bidding process.

392. In order to promote a more direct and effective approach in securing new projects, the Council encouraged the representatives of Petrochemical Industries Design and Engineering Company (PIDEC), which is a founding company of ECO-CEC and has one-thirds share in ECO-CEC, to organize meetings of the Board of Directors with the relevant agencies for pursuing new business opportunities. The Council also asked the Secretariat to extend necessary assistance to the ECO-CEC and PIDEC in this regard.

393. The Council stressed on the need for effective communication and coordination between ECO-CEC and the ECO Secretariat for exploiting the emerging opportunities in the Region. The Council asked the Secretariat to share its relevant reports and publications, especially in the transport and energy sectors, with the ECO-CEC on a regular basis.

394. The Council took note of the request made by some Member States indicating that the ECO-CEC should prepare a report highlighting its core competencies in the field of engineering, which would be shared with the relevant agencies and authorities in the Member States for creating awareness about the Company.

- **ECO College of Insurance**

395. The Council appreciated the College for annual allocation, starting from 2014, of 40 Student Scholarships to the ECO Member Countries other than Iran. The Scholarship includes waiver of tuition fees and dormitory expenses. The ECO Member States may benefit from this opportunity, which will be announced regularly on the website of the College, as so far only Afghanistan and Pakistan have introduced their candidates for the program.

396. The Council requested the Member States to convey their focal points from the relevant authorities, and share proposals/recommendations for enhancing cooperation and improving the educational standards and performance of the College. The Council also asked the Member States to encourage their talented students to avail scholarship opportunities offered by the College.

397. The Council asked the College to initiate preparations for the 2nd BoT Meeting and convey the proposed dates for 2016, to the Secretariat and the Member States.

- **Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Countries (PAECO)**

398. As decided in the First Meeting of the Executive Council of PAECO held on 12 February 2013 at Islamabad, the Council requested the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to propose the dates for hosting the 2nd Conference of the PAECO in Kabul.

399. The Council also took note of the suggestion made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the 2nd Conference of the PAECO on the sidelines of the upcoming meetings being attended by the Parliamentarians/Speakers of the Member States, in case the Conference cannot be held in Kabul.

400. The Council also requested the six Member States that have signed the PAECO Charter (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey) to expedite the ratification process and update the Secretariat.

- **ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

401. The Council expressed hope that under the new chairmanship by Pakistan, the ECO CCI would continue to serve the interests of the private sector of the ECO Region contributing to the socio-economic development of the ECO Member States and people.

- (ii) ECO's External Relations**

402. The Council encouraged the Secretariat to take further steps in accordance with the Treaty of Izmir and the relevant decisions reached at different fora to strengthen the existing cooperation with the regional and international partners, including those within the UN system. The Council also requested the Member States to support the Secretariat in its efforts in this regard.

403. The Council pointed out that the MoUs signed between ECO and international organizations should be effectively operationalized and implemented in order to generate maximum benefit. The Council also requested the Secretariat that in signing the new MoUs with the potential partners, consideration should be given to the need for an agreed work programme to implement the MoU.

404. The Council requested the Member States to send instructions to their Permanent Missions based in New York, Vienna, Geneva, Rome, Bangkok, Nairobi and Jeddah to actively participate in the consultations/meetings of the ECO Contact Groups at these places. The Permanent Missions may be encouraged to play active roles within the framework of the ECO Contact Groups for enlisting support of the UN specialized agencies and other organizations for ECO's activities and programmes in various key sectors.

405. The Council requested the Member States to share substantive proposals for promoting ECO's cooperative relationship with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes.

406. The Council encouraged the Secretariat to develop and promote project-based cooperation with its regional and international partners and also asked the Member States to consider giving strategic direction to the Secretariat for undertaking such collaboration.

407. With the objective to develop and enhance interaction with ASEAN Ambassadors in Tehran the Council encouraged the Secretariat to take necessary measures for the enhanced cooperation between ECO and ASEAN, including through possible accreditation of the ASEAN Ambassadors in Tehran to the ECO.

Agenda Item No.6

Exchange of views between Secretary General and the Heads of delegation on ECO Vision 2025/Brainstorming Session on ECO Vision 2025 entitled "Future Search Conference"

408. A day-long Brainstorming Session on ECO Vision 2025 entitled "**Future Search Conference**" was held on 15th December 2015 on sidelines of the 26th RPC Meeting at Azadi Hotel, Tehran. It was attended by the Heads of the Delegation, Permanent Representatives of ECO Member States, Heads of ECO Institutions and Officials from the ECO Secretariat (List of participants is attached as **Annex-VIII**). The Secretary General, ECO apprised the participants about feedback received on the first Draft of ECO Vision 2025. He emphasized that the new Vision should be developed in light of recommendations of the Member States and it should incorporate critical elements.

409. Mr. Nahit Bingol, Director General (Regional Development and Structural Adjustment), Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey, moderated the Brainstorming Session. After extensive day-long deliberations on possible elements for the new ECO Vision 2025, the participants proposed the following as the new "Vision Statement" for ECO:

"ECO will pave the way to a territory of integrated sustainable economies as well as free trade area achieved by highly educated societies and improved governance through enhanced cooperation."

410. After thanking the participants, the Secretary General informed that in light of the proposed Vision Statement, a comprehensive Draft Vision would be developed and eventually circulated among Member States for their views.

Agenda Item No.7

Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2016-2017

411. The Council endorsed the Annual ECO Calendar of Events for the year 2016-2017, proposed by the sectoral Committees for further submission to the COM on the recommendation of the CPR for final approval, which is placed at **Annex-VII**.

Agenda Item No.8

Any other business

412. On the request of the Member States, the Council agreed that in future RPC Meetings may be convened for four days instead of five days and complete its proceedings during the morning session of the last day.

Agenda Item No.9

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

413. The Council decided to organize the next 27th RPC Meeting in early December 2016. The Secretariat would work out/coordinate the exact date and venue of the Meeting and inform the Member States accordingly.

Agenda Item No.10

Adoption of the Report

414. The Report of the 26th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No.11

Closing Remarks

415. On behalf of all the participating delegation, the Council expressed its appreciation and thanks to the ECO Secretariat for making excellent arrangements for this important meeting.

416. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council also thanked the Chairmen of various Sectoral Committees for successfully conducting the business of their respective Committees. It also appreciated the efforts made by the Secretary General and his staff for preparing comprehensive Working Papers and other documents for the Council.
