



ECO Secretariat Staff Papers

ECO's External Relations

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ECO's External Relations

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) represents a unique intergovernmental platform that brings together countries from Central Asia, Caucuses, South and West Asia. Because of its diverse membership, location and the potential to contribute to the economic growth of the member countries, ECO is drawing renewed interest of the regional and global partners for jointly addressing the socio-economic development needs of the region.

In order to support its agenda and activities in a variety of areas, enhancement of close cooperative relations with regional and international organizations and relevant non-member states is considered an important priority of ECO.

In view of the directives of the various decision-making bodies of the Organization, ECO has been engaged in developing and promoting long-term and mutually beneficial relations with a host of regional and international partners in a focused and sustained manner.

Over the period of more than two decades, ECO had strived to develop its cooperative relations with major international and regional organizations in line with the *'Treaty of Izmir'*, the Organization's basic document. The Organization has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with more than forty regional/international organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

The main objective guiding ECO's efforts in developing cooperative relations with international and regional organizations is to secure their technical and financial assistance for ECO's activities in the priority areas including among others: trade, transport, agriculture, energy, environment and drugs control. Such cooperative relations with regional and international organizations and relevant non-member states also help ECO

in fulfilling its socio-economic agenda aimed at enhancing growth and prosperity of the member countries.

In ECO's efforts to achieve regional integration and socio-economic development, the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations have been the former's main partners. The Economic Cooperation Organization enjoys observer status at General Assembly and participates in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in this capacity. Biennial resolutions adopted by the General Assembly provide the mandate and basis for deepening the existing cooperation with the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations for the purpose of accelerating regional integration and ensuring sustainable development in the ECO Member States.

Among the partners of ECO within the United Nations system, the major ones include the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

These UN agencies and programmes have been extending the required support to the ECO for the implementation of its projects and activities in a number of important sectoral areas. The assistance is aimed at ensuring food security, achieving MDGs, trade promotion, cooperating in the field of agriculture, addressing the special needs of the land locked countries and combating drug trafficking and organized crime.

For the purpose of enhancing trade capacities of the ECO Member States, ECO is currently being supported by UNIDO for strengthening the Standards, Metrology, Testing and Quality infrastructure of the countries.

After successful completion of the project's first two phases, the third phase of the project is currently under implementation. ECO remains committed to broadening its collaboration with organizations like UNIDO for ensuring growth and prosperity through inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

ECO is pursuing a long-term cooperative relationship with FAO for implementation of regional projects under the Regional Programme for Food Security aimed at supporting sustainable agricultural development of the member countries.

In order to address the development challenges faced by the seven landlocked countries in the ECO region, joint initiatives are being explored in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) that can promote cooperation in the transit trade and transport areas in this region.

Recently the Secretary General represented ECO at the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the Second UNIDO Forum on Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) held on November 3-5, 2014 in Vienna, where he highlighted the role of regional cooperation in addressing the special needs of the region's landlocked Member States.

Contacts have also been reactivated with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for developing a new framework for cooperation in the areas of environment and biodiversity conservation. A meeting was held between ECO and UNEP officials at Nairobi, Kenya in June 2014 on the sidelines of the first "United Nations Environment Assembly".

In addition to its cooperative relations with the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations, the Economic Cooperation Organization also maintains contacts with other regional and international organizations for supporting the development activities in the areas of

common interest. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ECO held their 14th Joint Ministerial Meeting 25, 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the sidelines of the General Assembly session. In view of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two sides, joint events and activities are planned to be held by the two organizations for developing cooperation in the areas of tourism and business promotion.

ECO is also exploring ways and means to establish cooperation with the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in areas of common interest, specifically in the areas of environment and energy. Earlier, the Secretary General represented ECO at the 4th Summit of the CICA, held in Shanghai, China on May 21, 2014, where he highlighted the role of ECO in supporting the initiatives aimed at sustainable development of the member countries.

The Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination Unit of the ECO has been an implementing partner of the EU-funded Project on “Fight against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan”, which was recently brought to successful completion. The project has played a vital role in strengthening regional cooperation for the purpose of combating drugs trafficking and organized crime that have the potential to adversely affect the regional economies.

In September 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ECO and the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) that envisages cooperation in a number of important areas including trade, transport, tourism, environment and sustainable development among others.

ECO has recently initiated cooperation with the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) with an objective to cope with the migration phenomenon in an effective manner and to promote innovative migration governance in the regional countries.

A regional training within the framework of the Silk Routes Partnership project was co-organized by ECO and ICMPD on 26-28 November 2014 at the ECO Secretariat. The training focused on the themes of legal and labour migration and integration and was attended by the representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and relevant experts from the European Union, the Swedish Migration Board and ICMPD.

Non-ECO member states that share common goals of regional integration are being engaged to support the development activities in the region.

The ECO Council of Ministers (COM), in its 20th Meeting granted observer status to the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS) and the Turkish Cypriot State. On the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the ECO Secretary General held bilateral meetings with the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Cypriot State during which it was agreed to strengthen the cooperation of ECO with the two observers members in the coming period.

Contact Groups of ECO Ambassadors in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Rome, Bangkok, Jeddah, and Jakarta are in place to secure technical and financial assistance of the agencies and organizations based in these capitals for ECO's projects and activities.

Keeping in view the ECO region's diverse membership, its potential to contribute to the overall regional growth and the breadth of the sectoral areas it covers; there is a general willingness on the part of regional and international organizations to engage with ECO in contributing to the growth and prosperity of the member countries and supporting the regional development agenda. There exist synergies and complementarities between ECO and other international and regional players which are being exploited to realize ECO's overall goals of socio-economic development through regional cooperation. ECO remains committed to building upon

these synergies in the period ahead for the betterment of the region and the world.