

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Jarullah Mansoori, Deputy Minister for Planning and Policy,
Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Excellency Mr. Chairman;
Most distinguish delegates of the member countries;
Respected secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is really a great honour and a great pleasure for me to represent my country Afghanistan in the 25th session of ECO regional planning commission (RPC), organized in the beautiful city of Tehran, Iran. Here, I would like to express my special thanks and appreciations to the organizers, especially government Islamic Republic of Iran for their kind incitements, as well as for their continuously excellent arrangements and hospitality, and secretary general H.E Dr. Shamil Aleskerov for his tireless support, cooperation and an outstanding leadership.

Excellences, distinguished delegates and members,

Promotion moderation, dialogue, solidarity, cooperation, poverty alleviation, economic empowerment and peace is the desire of all societies living in this planet earth.

The ECO represents almost 400 million populations of an important and a strategic geo-economic landscape of the world with the abundance of natural resources, mining, strategic geo-political locations, complementary economic capacities, and energetic human resources. So we all have to utilize all our efforts toward those ends that we set for this organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In spite of the odds, difficulties and challenges Afghanistan has continued to make progress during the past decades, particularly in the areas of reconstruction, infrastructure development, energy, transmission and telecommunication services, billions of dollars has been invested in some mega mines, private sector development and improvising an investment friendly fiscal regime, education, health, governance, justice system, freedom of speech, media, gender equality, human rights and remarkable transparent peace process. All these positive changes happened with the technical and financial assistance of the international communities and regional cooperation.

Honorable and distinguished delegates,

Allow me to point out to some key achievements of the past decade in Afghanistan:

- **Information technology and telecommunication sector**, Afghanistan raised significantly in this area. The advancement in this sector is phenomenal, currently 6 GSM and CDMA telecom and 44 internet service providers (ISPs) companies are

operating. Alongside, 86% of the nation are subscribed to the technological services including internet, mobile, and post services. Additionally, provided 115 thousand jobs nationwide. In the telecom sector Afghanistan has connected with Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan via fiber-optic cable connection. which will facilitate business, trade, transit and regional cooperation at all levels.

- **Energy sector is critical for economic growth.**

NEED: 5000MW

Hence, Afghanistan improved and reconstructed the existing electricity plants, generating 560 MW energy at domestic and importing 860 MW electricity from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Turkmenistan.

- **Transport Infrastructures:**

The roads and infrastructures advancement are seriously essential for the connection of region, economic growth and development. Afghanistan has constructed 8000 Km asphalt roads, 12000 Km gravel roads, and 2000 Km ring roads are completed, whereas, 1000 Km ring roads are connected with the neighboring countries.

We have already connected with Uzbekistan via railway, and the extension of this initiative with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan is under consideration. Of course we envisage rail connectivity with all our neighbors and there is work in progress.

- **Health Sector:**

89% of population are covered by the health services. Child mortality rates and maternal mortality rates has decreased drastically by about 60%. In these mortalities Afghanistan were ranked 145th in 2013 from 171stin 2009 worldwide.

- **Agriculture sectors:**

Agriculture sector can play the essential vital role in economic development and poverty elimination, to fulfill the agro-needs. From 7.9 million hectare arable land only about 2.5 million is currently irrigated. The sector absorbs about 60%-70% of the population, and 27% of the GDP is derived from this sector. which is not satisfactory.

Our efforts are focused to enhance productivity within the sector. Also to promote Saffron cultivation because it can be a good alternative for poppy and narcotics.

- **Education sector:**

Education sector has progressed momentarily, compared to decade back we have enrolled more than 9 million students, built thousands of schools, facilitated girls to obtain education and the quality of education is improved.

The educational facilities have also improved and it is convincing for the children to enroll. The new educational curriculums are developed and required text books for all classes including teacher training guides are distributed.

- **Mining sector:**

Afghanistan is rich of coal, copper, iron, gold, natural gas and many other reserves, where great potential for ECO members investment exist.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

let me to make the following suggestions:

- ❖ ECO trade Agreement has already signed by member states, but still the implementation is facing bottlenecks. let to tackle them wisely and nicely.
- ❖ The ECO visa agreement which is most useful for the traders has not yet been signed, Please get it done by adopting a proper model.
- ❖ The ECO transit and transport agreement should be brought into operation where creation of more facilities for trade and transit should be taken into account.
- ❖ Free trade Zones in the ECO region should be established because it will strengthen the trade relations and also remove trade-transit obstacles.
- ❖ The secretariat should follow the progress of ECO targets in member states.
- ❖ We want Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate and complete the remaining works of Khawaf-Herat railway line, which is part of KTAI corridor and connects Afghanistan with Iran.
- ❖ Representing Afghanistan's delegation, I want to request ECO member states and Islamic Development Bank to include Afghanistan in railway development projects.
- ❖ The ECO railway network development plan prepared up to 2025 by ECO secretariat and approved in the 11th session of railway meeting in the 2012 in Turkey, Afghanistan has been kept a side, so let me express that the planned railway project of Afghanistan is not yet included in the official corridors of ECO rail line, so from 6 railways, only one line has been mentioned. that's why I'm requesting the ECO esteemed member states to consider our request to review the plan and include Afghanistan's rail way to ECO networks.

Honorable and distinguished delegates,

With sincere wishes for the strengthening of economic ties with ECO and with cordial aspiration for 25th planning meeting, I would like to put an end to my statement here and say my god bless all of us and may god bless all ECO member countries.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Javanshir Akhundov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Iran at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Dear participants,**

It is a great honor for me to welcome all the participants at the 25th Session of the Regional Planning Council of Economic Cooperation Organization). I would like to thank ECO Secretariat for their efforts in organizing this event.

I congratulate Mr. Majid Bizmark, Permanent Representative/Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on his election as Chairman of the meeting.

The Republic of Azerbaijan continues to play an active role in the ECO and contributes to the development of the region. During the past year, as every year, our country hosted the seven ECO activities, namely:

"2nd Meeting of the ECO Coordinating Committee on industrial property rights", "7th ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management", "2nd Baku Forum of Economic Think-Tanks of the ECO member-states", "2nd International Conference on energy, regional integration and social-economic development", "Regional Training Course for the ECO member-states on practical economic modelling system (GAMS)", "2nd meeting of the Editorial Board of the ECO Economic Journal", "ECO Regional Seminar ECO on taxpayer services".

As you see, the Republic of Azerbaijan attaches special attention to regional cooperation within the ECO. Representatives of the Republic of Azerbaijan participate actively in other activities of the ECO and contribute to the development of the regional cooperation.

We believe that the establishment of the ECO Research Center in Baku and the adoption of its Charter are one of our important joint activity. I would like to bring your attention to the fact that for the first time among the non-founding countries one of the Regional Centre will be established in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Center will work on development of the economic projects, research programs as well as the economic models useful for the region. We believe that the Research Center will contribute to the future development of the ECO and becoming project-oriented Organization. We have already prepared Strategy of the ECO Research Center and submitted to the Secretariat. For early operationalization of the Research Center in Baku it is necessary to carry out intensive work and facilitate the Organization in the preparation of basic and financial documents, and work plans.

As you know, on the initiative of our delegation in the Report of the 21st meeting of ECO Council of Ministers held in November 2013 in Iran a Para on the review of UN Millennium Development Goals on the Green Economy was included. Our delegation suggested to reflect UN Millennium Development Goals on the Green Economy within the framework of the ECO in the report of the 24th meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council held in 2014. I would like to inform you that on the country's initiative at the closing session of

the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment/Ecology held in December 2014 in the Turkish Republic Istanbul Declaration on Climate Change and Green Economy in the context of sustainable development was adopted.

Renewable Energy is the another area within the ECO to which our country attaches great importance. I would like to bring your attention to the fact that the 2nd Expert Group meeting on Renewable Energy decided to establish an information network on renewable energy sources in Baku and in accordance with this decision we submitted to the ECO Secretariat concrete proposals on the functioning of the information network.

Currently we are working on two project profiles submitted to the Secretariat by the Republic of Azerbaijan, namely:

1. «Study on Applicability of General Equilibrium Model in ECO Countries and Capacity Strengthening»
2. «Exchange of Experience and Strengthening Inter-Agency Cooperation on the Development of Ecologically Clean Agriculture in ECO Member Countries»

Dear participants,

As for the transport sector, I can say that the early operationalization of the ECO railway project on "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan)" will create opportunities for all regional countries. As you know High Level Working Group on the railway project "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan)" was established and so far two meetings have been held. It is extremely important to accelerate measures on the above railway project and submit the project proposals to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB). Document on the feasibility study of the segment "Astara (Azerbaijan) - Astara (Iran)" was prepared by us and submitted to the ECO Secretariat. We do hope that Iran also submit the document on the feasibility study to the Secretariat. At the same time we consider, it is important to include the issue on financing the railway project "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan)" into the work program on ECO-IDB cooperation for 2015-2017.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of each member-state's approach towards cooperation in the ECO region in the context of the entire region. The Organization should become operation-oriented and regionally useful projects-oriented to enhance the cooperation with specialized UN agencies and international financial institutions for the successful implementation of economic projects of regional importance.

I wish the success to the Regional Planning Council and its Preparatory/ Review Committees and once again express my gratitude to the Organizers and the ECO Secretariat for hosting this event. Thank you for your attention!

**Statement by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran
at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Mr. Chairman,
Honorable ECO Secretary General,
Distinguished heads of Delegation,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed an honor to address the 25th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning council on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your election as the chairman of this august body. My delegation is confident that with your valuable experience and skills, this meeting would achieve a fruitful outcome. Let me also welcome all distinguished delegates from ECO Member States to the 25th RPC Meeting and wish them a pleasant and memorable stay in Tehran. Likewise, my sincere appreciation goes to Secretary General of the ECO and his entire team at the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and facilitations in organizing the ongoing meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Once a year, the RPC Meetings provide the Member States with an opportunity to review the progress of implementation of ECO's approved program of actions and projects, thus evaluating the achievements of the past year and deciding on the agenda for the next year through preparing the calendar of events. We should not miss this opportunity and take the advantage of collective wisdom in order to bring the membership to a closer and more constructive cooperation for the benefit of our peoples and countries.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been following an ECO advocacy policy. This has been our commitment since the establishment of the Organization and obviously since the last RPC meeting in Tehran. With that in mind, I would like to briefly touch upon the activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past year in line with the recommendations of the last RPC meeting as follows:

In Transport and Transit, the Islamic Republic of Iran has played a leading role in developing and facilitating transit transport in the ECO region. Since last RPC Meeting, tangible progress has been made in transport sector. The ECO new railway corridor connecting Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan was officially inaugurated by the Presidents of en-route Member States on 3rd December 2014 in Inche-Boroon which is expected to be a convenient and cost-effective route for cargo transportation with a view to boosting and facilitating the regional and international trade and transit cooperation.

In addition, four HLWGs and Committees on ECO Container Train Projects such as: the 1st High Level Working Group Meeting (HLWG) on the ECO Container on Bandar Abbas-Almaty route, the 1st HLWG Meeting on the ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Almaty route,

the 8th HLWG Meeting of the container Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul and the 3rd Meeting of the Tripartite Coordination Committee on Construction of Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan Railway on 2-4 March 2014 together with the 3rd Meeting of the HLWG of Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kyrgyz Republic Road Corridor (27th October 2014) and the OTIF/UIC/ECO Conference on COTIF (11-12 November 2014) were hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Furthermore, several ECO Transport related events are supposed to be hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran during 2015, as well as the 12th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, 6th Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC on 17-18 May 2015 and the ECO Senior Consular Official Meeting in the first half of this year.

In Communications, the Islamic Republic of Iran has extended full support to the ECO regional cooperation on Information and Communication Technology sector through its significant contribution towards implementation of the decisions made during Tehran Ministerial Meeting in 2012.

In this regard, we emphasize on the importance of conducting feasibility study on the needs for development of ICT and Telecommunication Infrastructure Connectivity as an essential tool to identify the priority areas and projects in order to promote development of ICT in the ECO region.

In Trade and Investment, according to the statistics released by the Secretariat, the total intra-ECO trade volume in 2013 has been around 10 percent of their total trade. Signing of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) was an important step towards trade facilitation and liberalization of the movement of goods and services among the Member States. Joining the non-signatory Member States to the ECOTA and taking advantage of this opportunity, will obviously be a great help to the expansion of ECO intra-regional trade.

As has been proved by precious experiences, if the interactions and exchange of ideas in the Experts' Group Meetings are followed by the meetings of the high ranking officials, such as Commercial and Financial Ministerial Meetings, Governors of Central Banks, Heads of Investment Promotion Agencies and other dignitaries whose decisions can improve the process of economic development of the Member States, and lead to the free movement of goods, services and capital in the ECO region, shall be highlighted in the working program of the year 2015.

Today, the fast and rapid progress of IT as well as the innovations in the communication technologies and their application in trade and transportation is mostly indebted to the efforts of the private industrial and commercial institutions and firms and lessening the interference of the governments in the private sector. For ECO to raise its share of the world economy there is no other choice but to boost up this sector. In this line, ECO-CCI and its national committees as well as the national stock exchanges (bourses) retain a considerable potential in demonstrating the private sector capabilities toward the expansion of economic and trade cooperation among the Member States. This great potential and capacity alongwith the supportive plans of ECO Trade and Development Bank multiplies the prospects for enhancing ECO trade and investment activities.

In Energy and Mines, the Islamic Republic has been in the forefront of regional cooperation in the field of energy through, inter alia, making efforts for the establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market. Following the Expert Group Meeting for establishment of such market in the ECO region in November 2013 in Tehran, the first Trilateral Meeting between Iran, Turkey and ECO Secretariat was held in September 2014 in Ankara and the second such meeting is expected to be held in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the near future. We are of the view that there is a strong need for establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market and invite the member States to take necessary steps for facilitation of this process. In line with the above-said, we also believe the idea of establishing a Trust Fund for financing high priority ECO regional energy projects, which was raised during the Third ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum in March 2013 in Tehran, needs special attention.

In Industry, as one of the core cooperation areas in ECO region, the National Standards Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted the 6th High Level Experts Group Meeting (HLEGM6) and the Workshop on Conformity Assessment on February 1st-2nd 2015, in Tehran. We request those Member States who have not done so yet, to sign and ratify the Statute of RISCAM to pave the way for early operation of the Institute.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has reiterated its readiness to hold the 4th ECO Steering Committee Meeting on Entrepreneurship and SMEs Development on the fresh dates of 24-25 May 2015 in Tehran. We invite the member States to attend this meeting for increasing collaborations in the field of SMEs.

Also, Iranian Nano-Technology Initiative Council (INIC) has prepared a "pre-feasibility study of removal of water pollution in ECO Region using Nano-technology Methods". This proposal has been introduced with the aim of promotion of cooperation among ECO Member for development and application of Nano-Technology and moreover for strengthening of technologists and industrialists network in this technology.

In Health related issued, the 3rd Meeting of the "ECO High Level Experts Group Meeting (HLEG) on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as post MDGs era" was held on 21-22 January 2015 in Tehran. The working sessions addressed the following topics:

- Emergency preparedness and response, monitoring and surveillance,
- Prevention and control of non-communicable disasters,
- Health technologies, medicines, blood transfusion, vaccine,
- Universal health coverage and strengthening health system,

In Tourism, as an important sector with great impact on sustainable development and regional integration, and with an important role in boosting relations among countries especially in the ECO region, the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted "ECO Tourism and Handicrafts Exhibition" in Tehran and ECO Confobition (Conference + Exhibition) on Health Tourism in Ramsar in 2014.

The Following suggestions are presented in accordance with promoting tourism cooperation in the ECO region:

- Holding of ECO week and exhibition,

- Issuance of an ECO Stamp,
- Holding different food festivals and culture exhibitions among the Member States,
- Establishment of an active information ECO Tourism network in the region in order to introduce and make utmost use of human capacity, capabilities and facilities,
- Investment in tourism industry and using technical and consultative assistance of regional and international specialized organizations,
- Providing updated electronic software of ECO TOURISM Guide Book,
- Establishment of an ECO Health Tourism network and preparation and implementation of a comprehensive and regional insurance services network
- Training and capacity building programs,
- Optimum use of existing potentials in tourism: Ecotourism, health tourism especially activating the private sector and tour operators and facilitating visas procedures and transportation services and establishment of direct and permanent flights among Member States.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,**

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Economic Cooperation Organization has high potentials to turn into a solid regional mechanism for economic development in this part of the world. Together, we have to realize it to the best interests of our peoples. The RPC is the best platform to serve this purpose.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Mr. Serik Zhumabekov, Minister-Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of
Kazakhstan at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan I would like to cordially welcome the participants at the 25th ECO Regional Planning Council meeting and wish fruitful work. Allow me also appreciate the ECO Secretariat's staff and personally the Secretary General, Mr. Shamil Aleskerov for the excellent organization of today's meeting.

Our state is an active player in regional integration and firmly committed to progressive development of regional cooperation. During all these years, our country's participation in the integration processes was among the main priorities of foreign policy.

We believe that integration is an urgent demand of time and the rejection of which will inevitably through us to the periphery of the world economy. Modern world requires joint efforts to respond current challenges.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Priority areas of Kazakhstan were repeatedly voiced at various events of the ECO.

One of the priority areas of cooperation for Kazakhstan is transit transport. In this area, Kazakhstan has been implementing large infrastructure projects realization of which along will meet quality needs of the economy in transport services as well as provide organic integration of transport networks in the world transport system.

In December 2014, the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkmenistan inaugurated "Uzen - Kyzylkaya - Bereket - Etrek - Gorgan" railway corridor connecting Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran at Iran-Turkmenistan border.

"Western Europe - Western China" transit corridor and completion of the construction of "Kazakhstan - Turkmenistan - Iran" railway are new ideas in the framework of the "New Silk Road" which are our country's contributions to regional integration.

Aktau port was selected as one of the most attractive "points" for the development of transport and logistics infrastructure in the country and is developing as "**Western Gate**"

We are ready for new joint approaches to further implementation of ECO projects on operationalization of "**Istanbul - Almaty**" and "**Bandar Abbas - Almaty**" trains.

Also, according to the decisions made by the 23rd and 24th RPC meetings, Kazakhstan hosted 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Economy and Finance back to back with Astana Economic Forum last May in Astana.

It is important to mention that **fighting against drug production and drug trafficking** is the main challenge of the regional development among today's problems.

We believe that Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics Drugs, Psychotropic Substances should play an important role in this process.

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the same time, I would like to mention that the Organization has many issues pending decision of which directly affects the efficiency of the Secretariat's functioning and activities, accordingly.

One of the most pressing problems is the bulkiness of the Organizations structure which makes it immovable.

The Economic Cooperation Organization was established in the interests of regional integration and its activities should facilitate practical implementation regardless of these or those concrete short-term interests of various member countries. Economic development of member-countries is to be main issue.

We do hope that upcoming 2015-2016 will become remarkable for the Organization and for the regional countries. During this period, all basic and organizational documents of the Organization will be reviewed. I am confident that the internal reformation of ECO will lead to positive results making it capable to meet new challenges.

Consequence of joint efforts in transformation of Organization will allow it to realize its potential through consecutive and gradual economic integration and enhancing mutually beneficial intra-regional cooperation and mutual assistance in various aspects of social, cultural and scientific and technological development.

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Heads of delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen!**

In conclusion, I would like to express my confidence that this meeting will be an important step towards effective implementation of a multifaceted potential of Member States of the Organization for the welfare and prosperity of our countries and people.

I would like to thank the participants for supporting the objectives of this forum and wish you all a fruitful work!

Huge potential for further development of economic relations is obvious.

I am confident that in the near future ECO's activities will be focused on practical implementation of projects and achieving tangible results. Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Mr. Nasriddin Shamshiyev, Head of Macroeconomic Policy
Department of Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic
at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Honorable ECO Secretary General,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen!**

The Kyrgyz delegation appreciates the ECO Secretariat and the Islamic Republic of Iran for good organization of the 25th Regional Council Meeting hopes for fruitful work during work of this Council.

Since the time of accession to the Organization, Kyrgyzstan has been cooperating in all interaction areas. Representatives of the Kyrgyz Republic take regular part in ECO's activities at various levels.

Transport and communications, development of trade and economic relations, energy and environmental are among priorities of Kyrgyzstan in cooperation within ECO.

Kyrgyzstan considers ECO as an effective tool for promoting socio-economic and technical cooperation between its Member States.

Latest global events concerning the continuation of economic crisis showed that countries, particularly, Kyrgyzstan cannot overcome new challenges single-handed.

Participation of Kyrgyzstan in Regional Training Courses on Practical Modeling with GAMS gives an opportunity to thoroughly understand the development of economy in compliance the new trend and improve socio-economic forecasts for the upcoming and long-term periods.

We would like to closely cooperate with EcoMod in this regard and actively participate in Regional Training Courses on Economic Modeling for ECO Member States. Initial agreement on this was reached in March, 2014 in Baku.

The agriculture is an important sector of economy of the Kyrgyz Republic and a basis for achievement of food security. The share of agriculture in GDP of Kyrgyzstan is about 17%. However, 66% of the population lives in rural areas.

Population increases at rather good rates during recent years.

Of course, relevant work in the field of food security of the republic aimed at reliable food supply of the country is being carried out with assistance of the World Food Programme, UNICEF and other international donor organizations. Food Security Program of the Kyrgyz Republic (2015-2017) was developed. However, food supply of the population remains insufficient.

In this regard and considering that the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), being a regional organization gives priority to food security and development of agriculture in the region, the Kyrgyz Republic expresses its willingness to actively participate and support this program in upcoming events.

Kyrgyzstan is also actively participating in development of transport and communications sector as one of the priority directions of cooperation. Currently, intense negotiations on implementation of the construction project of “China – Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Iran” Railway are being held.

Pentalateral Senior officials meeting of these countries on connecting “China – Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Iran” Railway was held on 8-9 December, 2014 in Dushanbe.

During the meeting, parties defined possible route of railway lines and agreed to finalize feasibility report in their territories till 1 April, 2016.

With a view of effective operationalization of railways, Afghanistan, Iran, China and Tajikistan considered the possibility of using rail gage according to the standard of 1435 mm.

Kyrgyzstan informed participants that in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic the standard of width of rail gage is 1520 mm it will inform about possibility of using rail gage according to the standard of 1435 mm in the next meeting.

The parties also agreed to establish Permanent Working Group of competent officials from relevant authorities and hold the next meeting of this group at the end of first half of 2015 in Bishkek.

Kyrgyzstan participates in operationalization of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) which is one of the most important factors for development of trade in the region. Agreement on accession of Kyrgyzstan to the ECO Trade and Development Bank was signed between Kyrgyz Republic and ETDB on February 13, 2015.

Thus, the Kyrgyz Republic will enhance its activities within ECO.

In conclusion, I would like to note that Kyrgyzstan will increase its ownership in the ECO henceforth.

Thank you for attention!

**Statement by Dr. Ali Bat Khan, Chief of the Ministry of Planning,
Development and Reforms of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Honourable Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to be in the beautiful and historical city of Tehran to attend the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Pakistan Delegation would like to convey sincere thanks and gratitude to the ECO Secretariat for their warm welcome, generous hospitality and excellent arrangements for this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you for being elected as the Chairman of the meeting. I believe that your vast experience will help better strategies for the member countries. The deliberations on the working papers will craft forward looking policies through fruitful discussion. Pakistan delegation extends full support to the objectives of this meeting as we have remained committed to ECO's mandate since its inception.

Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to continue with highlighting the important role of ECO in the development of this region. This organization can contribute to the realization of our common objective to usher prosperity, peace and stability in the region through crafting forward looking policies and activities. ECO provides a platform to the Member State for benefitting from the experience and collective wisdom of Senior Officers on matters of vital importance and general welfare of the people of this region at large. I am confident this meeting will certainly be of great value for future cooperation among all ECO member states.

The establishment of this organization by member states was the right decision for preparing sound policies and targeted follow-up actions to put the projects and activities on the right and accelerating track. This requires that organization be further strengthened to accomplish its decisive role. Pakistan is a founding member of ECO and actively participate in ECO activities but has not utilized the potential in a significant way. Failure to develop infrastructure and protocols for large-scale overland trade and similarities in the trade structure, together with absence of comparative advantage in the capital intensive and high value added products (that are normally imported in the region) are some of the reasons for this lack of success.

Excellencies,

Regional economic cooperation and economic integration are considered as major drivers of economic growth in the world economy. From this perspective every region follows

policy in line with world development, innovation and based on cost benefit analysis which reaps profit in long run. Global experience shows that changes are taking place at institutional and macro level, which have affected the lives of the people at grassroots level, which through increase in growth and employment opportunities.

The regional integration has brought success in terms of regional growth, economic development, investment & trade and more importantly for fostering peace in the region. Therefore, strategic regional initiative helps gaining competitive edge in regional global markets.

Pakistan seeks to achieve sustainable and inclusive yearly growth through sound macro-economic policies, optimum utilization of the country's physical and human resources and full exploitation of the technological potential of its industry, agriculture and services. A key instrument for attaining its objective is to fully exploit the benefits of regional integration. Its vision in this context is to be a regional hub with the economy fully integrated with the region to accelerate economic growth, create job opportunities, expand trade, improve competitiveness and usher prosperity in the region.

Central to achieving the above objective and converting vision into reality is development of projects and initiatives which are: focused in comprehensively and economically integrating the region to its neighbours in the north, south east and west; fast tracked so that the benefits of the projects and initiatives accrue to the region at the earliest; result driven so that the activity is an important input into the delivery of its outputs and outcomes; partnership and network based so that the activity can be delivered in partnership with institutions and private sectors of the collaborating countries.

The key areas of cooperation which would be focus for integrating the economies in the region are; Transport and Communication that would enable increased freer trade in the region, enable easier access for people to people movement both for business and tourism, allow Pakistan to be used to integrate trade with China, Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia; Special Economic Zones and Investment that would allow along major transport and communication networks to fully harness the physical and human resources of the country, contribute to the value chain of finished products in the region, enable relocation of industry to utilize the abundant labor at lower costs and utilize the abundant savings in the region for higher return investment in a capital scarce developing country; Energy where the regional hub could be used for establishing an energy corridor of electricity and transportation of oil and gas from energy surplus areas of the region particularly the Middle East and Central Asia to the energy deficient regions in China and South Asia; Trade Facilitation to address the impediments in the free movement of transport, goods and people for reducing the costs of logistics.

The desired outcome is to provide world-class logistic support and shortest links to the neighboring countries for the speedy movement of goods and people at reduced cost that would enhance international competitiveness of the region and stimulate investment and growth.

Pakistan enjoys immense opportunities to offer for optimal regional cooperation and integration in terms of demographic structure, unique geographical location for transit,

potential of hydel and solar energy resources. The need is to transform these capacities to an acceptable extent, into real functions and outputs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We acknowledge that the regional development is driven by a more intensive and productive use of space and also by increasing the velocity of moving people, goods, and ideas. Our basic goal is to put Pakistan on the path of speedy development. Regional integration helps us in meeting this objective.

Regional integration ties up with Pakistan's Vision 2025 with its deliberative and structured process of mutual consultation, road mapping, and resource mobilization in a wide range of sectors aimed at increasing our mutual interdependence, productivity, connectivity, and prosperity. Vision 2025 aims at the establishment of an efficient and integrated system of communications and transport, in order to both benefit from and contribute to the regional dynamism.

Key related targets are reduction in transportation costs by increasing road density from 32 km/100 km² to 64 km/100 km² and increase in rail share in transport from 4% to 20%. It would help us to achieve target of US \$ 150 billion in 2025. To keep momentum of high economic growth rate, uninterrupted power supply is necessary and therefore efforts would be made to double energy generation by 42000 MW and electricity access would be increased from current 67% to 90%. Cost of energy generation would be reduced by 25% by improving energy mix & reducing distribution losses. Annual FDI target is US \$ 15 billion and current level of FDI is US \$ 600 million

In this way, we are expecting improvement in the economic indicators of the country. Only in the last one year, the GDP has grown by 4.1% against 3.7% growth of last year. This was as a result of the economic policies of the government including focused exchange rate management, disciplined inflationary parameters, effective management of fiscal deficit and investment friendly strategies which also is reflected in a stellar performance of the stock exchange and made it the best performing market of the region breaking all its previous high levels. In fact KSE-100 Index became World's 5th best performing index in 2013 which was up 37% in \$ terms. Per Capita Income also recorded impressive growth of 3.5% from last year in dollar terms and stood at a value of \$1,386 in 2013-14 which reinforces the foundations of consumerism in our society. Foreign exchange reserves which had fallen to \$8 billion at the beginning of this year have been increased to more than \$13 billion. The Total Debt to GDP ratio was 63.3% which is forecasted to come down to 51.5% of GDP by the financial year 2016-17. During this period inflation is also expected to remain within the current range bound levels while the foreign exchange reserves of the country are expected to double. The revenue balance is expected to become positive once again. We feel the stage is now set for a period of high growth and we have targeted GDP growth of 5.1% for the current year, 6.1 % for next year and 7.2% for 2016-17 with ambitious contributions from manufacturing and service sectors of the economy.

We believe that economic integration shall result in yielding economic, social and financial benefits for all the stakeholders including the private investors of both the countries.

I would like to share with you that enhancing trade and connectivity with regional countries is an important cornerstone of Pakistan's Vision-2025 and ECO being a very important organization of Islamic countries figures quite conspicuously in this equation.

In this regard China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is aimed at enhancing economic regional integration in investment, energy, trade and communication. The aim is to create linkages between the Western Region of China and Pakistan by establishing communication links and developing Economic and Trade Corridors that would facilitate economic activity along the corridors.

Pakistan has a very liberal investment policy and its salient features are:

- ✓ Equal treatment for local and foreign investors;
- ✓ All economic sectors open to FDI;
- ✓ Network of Export Processing Zones/ Industrial Estates and Special Economic Zones (SEZs);
- ✓ Foreign investment fully protected under the Foreign Private Investment Promotion and Protection Act, 1976 and Protection of Economic Reform Act, 1992.

Pakistan provided Afghanistan the transit facility under Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) signed in 1965. This has been converted into APTTA since 2012. It is expected that this new agreement will boost not only bilateral trade but also trade with Central Asian States. The ports infrastructure quality is low in ECO region because it includes seven landlocked countries which do not have good land-sea connections. Therefore, Pakistan can offer easy access to land-locked countries of ECO region for trade with the rest of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

I am of the firm belief that under your able guidance the meeting will achieve the desired objectives of accelerating the pace of economic cooperation among the Member States. The technical sessions will draft ECO's agenda for the year. In the end I would once again like to place on record our profound thanks to our hosts, the ECO Secretariat for their generous welcome and excellent arrangements made for the meeting.

Thank You

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran
at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Chairman,
Honorable Secretary General,
Dear participants,**

First of all would like to thank the ECO Secretariat, personally, the Secretary General, H.E. Amb. Shamil Aleskerov for assistance in organizing this meeting and also greet all participants of the 25th Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Today, ECO region is one of the largest macroeconomic zones of the world, situated in the middle of Eurasia subcontinent. The strategic importance of the region serves as a bridge between West and East, Asian and European cultures. Countries of the region cover the territory several times larger than the territory of the European Union and have a powerful natural, economic and employment potential.

Tajikistan is interested in development of a broad regional cooperation and integration in all areas. Among the most important areas of cooperation in the framework of the related issues is development of full-fledged transport and transit system, trade facilitation, development of cross-border trade, the efficient use of water and energy potential and hydrocarbon feedstock, development of unified energy system and the regime of free movement of goods and labor.

Trade cooperation between the ECO Member States, plays a key role in promotion of integration process, guaranteeing the development of a dynamic regional economy. At the present time, the ECO Member States have a leading position in the foreign trade of the Republic of Tajikistan; the share of the ECO region in the foreign trade of the Republic of Tajikistan averaged 36% for 2005-2014.

The most important sphere of regional cooperation *is integrated solution of the problems and efficient use of water and energy resources of the region*. The continuous growth of the scale of irrigation, active development of new lands, growth of population in the region have exacerbated the water problem, and the development of production led to a higher demand for electricity.

As you may know, *the ECO region has a huge hydrocarbon and hydropower resources*. Integrated and effective use of existing capacity will strengthen the role of the region in identifying world market conjuncture and reduce the negative impact of fluctuations in global energy prices and the global economy as a whole.

In this context, the Dushanbe Declaration and a new Action Plan on cooperation in the fields of energy and oil for 2011-2015, adopted by the ECO Ministers of Energy and Petroleum in October 2010, will be an important mechanism for the development and strengthening of cooperation between the countries in the interconnection of power systems.

The efficient use of energy and water resources in the region today should be considered in the context of adaptation to climate change. Environmental and social impacts of climate change causing widespread concern. One of the key points of these destructive processes, undoubtedly, is the intensive melting of glaciers, which will lead to the loss of the bulk of the glacial formations.

In Tajikistan, there are more than 14,000 large and small glaciers, providing about 60% of the flow of the rivers in the region. Only in the last decade, more than a thousand of them have disappeared. This is a dangerous trend. We must not allow the disappearance of glaciers that are the source of life in this region.

On this occasion, 23 December 2012 at the eleventh ECO Summit in Istanbul (Turkey), President of the Republic of Tajikistan called for ECO Member States to support the proposal of Tajikistan, on Establishment of an International Conservation Fund.

It should be noted that in terms of hydropower potential, Tajikistan is one of the leading countries in the world. The total hydropower potential of the country is estimated at 527 billion. Kw./hours of energy per year. Unfortunately, today the country is effectively used only 5% of production capacity of electricity, which is extremely low. At the same time, in the many countries of the region, particularly in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, there is a need for these products.

Tajikistan is interested in projects of regional energy trade between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and in financial support within ECO.

We have to pay particular attention to the development of cooperation in transport and communications, especially given the fact that many of the Member States are landlocked countries.

Enhancement of transport movement, transportation along the existing transport corridors, and the elimination of non-tariff barriers, as well as the gradual reduction of tariffs in the optimum time, will allow ECO member countries to develop efficient transit trade, facilitate trade at border checkpoints, and minimize the cost of transportation and mobility. In the absence of direct access to the seaports, the creation of common transport corridor would be a powerful impetus for strengthening of geopolitical, trade and economic importance of the region as a whole. As an example, the Murghab-Kulma road corridor with the access to the Karakoram Highway.

In this regard, a particular importance is given to the TTFA, as a tool for implementing an effective strategy for expanding trade through the development of a regional transit-transport cooperation designed to greatly facilitate the movement of goods and services in the region of the Organization.

At this stage, one of the strategic goals of Tajikistan is taking the country out of communication deadlock. Tajikistan seeks to achieve this goal by building tunnels, bridges, modern roads and railways, as well as the development of land transport infrastructure and communications.

Measures taken by Tajikistan in recent years, including the implementation of various projects in transport sector were focused on improving of public transport policy with emphasis on transit, the creation and improvement of transport infrastructure of regional importance; enhancement of cooperation with the countries of the region.

Tajikistan is also interested in ECO projects on the practice of implementation of trade in oil and liquefied gas at reduced prices with the Member States, which have limited resources of oil and natural gas.

In view of the stabilization of the political situation in Afghanistan, Tajikistan supports the early implementation of the ECO Plan of Action for the rehabilitation of Afghanistan and is taking steps to make a significant contribution to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan's economy.

Tajikistan has common factors with Afghanistan: a border stretching over 1,300 km, long-term experience of mutually beneficial cooperation and therefore further cooperation in the following areas should be continued:

- Energy supply;
- Contraction material supply, consumer goods and a food product;
- Ensuring qualified personnel;
- Facilitating the road and bridge contraction;
- Training mid-level and high qualified specialties for Afghanistan

It should be also noted that the countries of the region have great potential for cooperation in such areas as industry, agriculture, food industry and processing of agricultural products, construction, transport and communication etc.

It is known that all countries of the region have developed agricultural sector. In this regard, the ensuring the region with the food, increase production and reduce the loss of agricultural production through intensification of production and the introduction of new technologies, the development of industries processing of agricultural products is an urgent for regional cooperation. In this context, it is necessary to work on the establishment of a common market for certain ECO agricultural products.

At present, there is no common program on social-economic development and on integration of the ECO region for linking the regional interests in the long run perspective at a higher and qualitatively new level, also for deepen our mutually beneficial regional cooperation by strengthening and taking measures to improve the activities of ECO Science Foundation, ECO Cultural Institute, Insurance College and ECO Chamber of Commerce, also for taking prompt decision on simplification of visa procedures for businesses, creating a single trade and investment information database and the involvement of the private sector for implementation of the planned projects and plans of the Organization.

Tajikistan supports the efforts made to improve the efficiency and the overall activities of the Organization. Currently, there is the need for the radical reforms aimed at further improvement of the performance of the ECO strengthening its coordinating role, its adaptation to the realities of today and the future challenges, ensuring rational recruitment as well as updating the agenda of the Organization.

Consolidating role of the ECO should be strengthened and its updated structure must be efficient, able to quickly and adequately respond to events in the region.

I thank you for your kind attention!

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Yilmaz Tuna, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Development
of the Republic of Turkey at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)**

**His Excellency Chairman,
His Excellency Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, the Secretary General of ECO,
Excellencies,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me and my delegation to be here in our brotherly country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the 25th Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization. First of all, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting and for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation.

For the RPC, being able to hold 25 regular meetings is in itself a great success, I hope we can crown this achievement further with concrete outcomes in our present meeting.

I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to H.E. Secretary General Shamil Aleskerov and his able staff for the excellent preparations made for the meeting, As this would be last RPC Meeting that H.E. Aleskerov would be participating as the Secretary General, I think we all owe him our thanks and appreciations for his efforts and contributions to ECO projects and activities in various fields of cooperation.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Participants,**

ECO has a unique geo-strategic location, linking the East and the West. Our region, with its significant economic power, vast natural resources, and dynamic work force, has a huge development potential which we should harness in the interest of all our nations. By pursuing regional cooperation, enhancing existing relations and strengthening economic ties among the member countries, we are today much more hopeful that this organization will unearth this potential and achieve its noble objective of strengthening cooperation among us.

Distinguished Participants,

As you are well aware, trade constitutes the backbone of any regional economic cooperation. Enhancing trade through deeper economic cooperation benefits all the parties involved. It does so by fostering competition, enabling access to wider markets, providing larger and diversified investment and production opportunities. It offers countries stronger bargaining power in global fora. It lays the ground for mutual benefit in the form of accelerated growth and development.

Removing trade barriers in the ECO region and expansion of intra-ECO trade have always had a central place within our organization. Nevertheless, despite various commitments, the level of intra-ECO trade continues to remain modest. In 2013, intra-region

exports constituted approximately 11% of all ECO exports while this figure was 45% for Euro Area and 26% for ASEAN. Similarly Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) to ECO Region is relatively smaller compared to the performance realized for similar economic blocs and cooperation organizations.

In this regard, I am very glad to say that, with a meaningful growth in last five years, Turkey's total trade with ECO countries increased to 25 billion USD in 2014, while it was 12 billion USD in 2009. I would like to stress that Turkey would continue to support all ECO trade-related activities, such as trade facilitation, promotion and customs matters for achieving 20 percent intra-ECO trade target mentioned in the ECO Vision.

As we all know, ECOTA bears great importance and has huge potential for increasing trade flows among our countries. Unfortunately, in the last few years, we lost valuable time with discussions on different legal interpretations of the already settled provisions of the Agreement. Turkey, on its part, showed sustained commitment to enable the ECOTA entering into force since 2008. Turkey will maintain its positive and constructive approach and exert every effort to effectuate the Agreement which will benefit all parties. We believe that the upcoming ECOTA Cooperation Council Meeting to be held in Turkey will provide us with an opportunity to evaluate our performance and identify impediments to fulfill our commitments.

I believe we are all aware of the ECO Bank's crucial role for furthering our cooperation efforts. I am glad to note that the number of signing countries of the Agreement of ECO Bank has increased with the advent of Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. We also learned the good news that Kyrgyz Republic has also signed the ECO Bank agreement last month. The Bank is an important asset for our economies, especially our SMEs in terms of project and trade financing. It is heartening to see that the total financing provided by the Bank, since its establishment, has reached to more than 850 million USD. 200 million dollars of this total financing was realized in 2014. The Bank has also taken crucial steps to be a stronger financial institution and with the accession of the new members the Bank would attract more resources to support larger scale projects.

Dear Delegates,

Today's successful stories of some regional integration projects hold valuable lessons for ECO region as well. Regional integration can be a powerful multi-dimensional process when pursued effectively. Here it should be emphasized that regional integrated transport systems and thus operative transport corridors remain one of the most important premise of promoting deeper regional integration and grater intra-regional and inter-regional trade in the ECO Region. In this framework, the operationalization of the road and rail corridor projects as well as the implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) under ECO umbrella is of utmost importance for deeper regional integration. Therefore, we are of view that special emphasis should be put on the efforts towards enhancing regional integrated transport systems including rail and road routes projects in ECO region.

Distinguished Representatives,

Agriculture is an important means of broad-based income generation and it remains as one of the most significant sources of income in our Region. I firmly believe that this sector is one of the backbones of the ECO cooperation. In addition, food security is one of the most important challenges to be overcome both regionally and globally.

In this respect, many programmes and projects have been carried out under this cooperation area. The ECO Regional Program for Food Security, which entered into force in June 2013, is one of the efforts undertaken in this agenda. The ECO Regional Coordination Centre (RCC) established for the implementation of the Program has commenced its activities. I would like to call our brotherly countries to actively participate in the activities of the center. Moreover, Development of the seed sector is crucial for improving the productivity of the agricultural sector. In that sense, ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) has been organizing International Seed Trade Conferences and Seed Trade Fairs regularly with the active participation of relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the implementation of the ECO/FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the region is currently under progress. I would like to invite all Member Countries to benefit from all these programs and to produce concrete projects for furthering activities of the Center and the Association.

Honorable Delegates,

Energy is an important sector as well, conducting our brotherly countries to the further cooperation. Our region is not only an energy supplier, but is an energy corridor as well to submit it to heavily consuming well developed countries. We should concentrate our efforts to improve our cooperation in this field in order to sustain our energy demand as well as providing trade bridges among the Member Countries.

Honorable Delegates,

Availability of reliable and accurate data at national, regional and also global levels bears utmost importance for developing sound policies to address the development challenges of our countries. Policy makers can only make right policy choices and establish appropriate implementation mechanisms based on correct, reliable, up to date and sound statistics. Similarly statistics are crucial for setting realistic, achievable targets and measuring the progress. Given this fact, we have to exert the necessary efforts for strengthening statistical infrastructure in our member countries to produce reliable and updated statistics.

I would also like to touch upon the importance of the ECO Research Centre in Baku, which will serve as the ECO think-tank and work out development strategies for the region. I believe this Centre will play a crucial role in advancing economic research in our region which will then pave the ground for sound economic cooperation programs and projects.

Dear colleagues,

After expressing my delegation's views on our cooperation efforts in various sectors, now, I would like to touch upon another crucial issue and put on record my earnest views on our cooperation methodology. As it stands, ECO seems to load too much to its agenda without proper focus. Given the constraints in allocation of resources, this over-ambitious approach

would definitely mean a call for delays, if not total failures in our programmes and eventually loss of confidence in our cooperation. We need to adopt a more focused, a more efficient and a more realistic cooperation methodology which can really deliver outcomes for our people. After succeeding in selected areas and projects that we will choose in line with our available resources, we can move then to other areas where we can realize new success stories based on our success and experiences in these selected projects. As the planners in our respective Member Countries, we have to be mindful of our priorities and scarce resources, and act accordingly.

In this respect, recommendations of EPG provides some clues towards a more efficient ECO. Especially, increasing the budget share of ECO FGPF and Special Fund, a sharper focus in our programmes, capacity building of the Secretariat, a more efficient decision making process are important issues we need to dwell on. Given the fact that EPG recommendations have been submitted to COM and Summit in Baku in 2012, almost three years ago, we believe that we need to expedite the process of implementing EPG's recommendations, at least some of them. Taking into account the importance of the issue, I would like to propose that "Implementation of the EPG recommendations" be a separate and permanent agenda item of RPC till we reach substantial progress on the matter. We should also think these points within the framework of new ECO Vision 2016-2025 for a more dynamic, efficient and visible Organization.

Dear Participants,

As I conclude my remarks, I wish a great success to this Council during 4 days of comprehensive working sessions.

Thank you.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ilhom Akramov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the
Islamic Republic of Iran at the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Honourable heads and members of delegations,
Ladies and gentlemen!**

It's a great honour for me to express profound gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization for hospitality and high level of the organization of the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council.

Let me on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan welcome heads and members of delegations of our event and wish successful and fruitful work to the forum.

Distinguished meeting participants,

Today, summing up the outcomes of the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization, we have to objectively evaluate the work of our Organization which became an immense contribution in further development of regional cooperation, achievement of economic prosperity on the basis of mutual collaboration.

I would like to emphasize great contribution of the ECO management and staff who fulfill responsible task in increasing efficiency of Organization's activity.

Uzbekistan considers it necessary to continue reforms for improvement of efficiency of ECO which will help our region to become an important center of economic activity.

In our opinion, main goal of ECO at current stage is creating favorable conditions for full development of our countries.

From the point of view of effective regional economic cooperation, it is necessary to focus on most priority issues of trade and economic cooperation and development of transport and energy communications, environment and investments.

In this regard, we consider next meeting of Regional Planning Council as another opportunity to discuss problems of interaction between countries of our region, in particular, crucial issues of regional economic cooperation.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Reformations in Uzbekistan avails our country to speedily develop, aiming efforts at diversification and modernization of economy, increase of competitiveness of local production, growth of export capital and ensuring new quality of life of people.

The evident of this is high GDP growth rate which has not been less than 8 percent for last 10 years. Industrial production, investments and real income of population are dynamically increasing.

Uzbekistan has all opportunities for increase in volumes of mutual trade, cooperation in investments, implementation of mutually beneficial projects in various fields of economy, production of a wide range of hi-tech and competitive products in world markets.

The leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan makes all efforts to attract investments. An example of this is the Decrees of H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On additional measures in stimulation of attraction of foreign direct investments* and *On establishing free industrial and economic zone and special industrial zones* in Navoiy, Tashkent, Jizzakh and Syr-Darya districts.

It should be noted that H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan declared 2015 *a Year of care and tendance of the older generation*. In this regard, active implementation of activities directed at strengthening of the older generation, improving their welfare is going on.

Now an active work on preparation for an important social and political event in the life of the country – Presidential elections – is being done in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Legislative frameworks of the organization and elections promote their transparency, publicity and high organizational level.

Distinguished colleagues!

Concluding my statement, I would like to express my hope that results of our today's work will promote successful realization of joint efforts on the way of expansion of multilateral economic cooperation.

Thank you for attention!
