

**Statement by Mr. Mustafa Lakadamyali, Ambassador/Director for Political Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus  
at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour and privilege for me and my delegation to participate at the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). I extend to you all the hearth-felt greetings of the Turkish Cypriot people.

At the outset, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to H.E. Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization and the able staff of ECO Secretariat for their tireless efforts in organizing this important meeting.

**Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

The Turkish Cypriot State, which shares common history and culture with the member states, is also committed to the objectives of ECO. Northern Cyprus which has been participating in the Organization's activities and events since 1992, gives utmost importance to cooperation among the member states and development of the region. In 2012, we were granted observer member status which gave us the chance to further our economic relations with ECO member countries. Since the commencement of our observer status our aim has been to contribute to and benefit from our strengthening relations with the member countries.

Currently, while total export of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to ECO member countries, except for Turkey, is over 730 thousand US Dollars, the total import from ECO member countries, except for Turkey, amounts to 2.5 million Dollars. Our main aim is to increase the trade volume between the ECO member states and the TRNC.

We believe that there is great potential for cooperation amongst ECO member states, especially in the fields of trade, tourism and education. I am proud to share with you our achievements and what my country has to offer in these fields.

I would like to provide you a brief information about the current economic situation prevailing in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). In conformity with the objectives of ECO, liberal economic system is being implemented in our country. Under this system, the promotion of the private sector, the rational use of natural resources, the encouragement of foreign investment receive priority as a matter of government policy. Over the years, we have succeeded to establish trade relations with more than 70 countries all over the world.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a fast developing country with higher education and tourism as two main economic sectors. Our country is emerging as a center of higher education and a prominent holiday destination in Eastern Mediterranean.

Higher education constitutes an important sector of the economy of the TRNC. Today, there are 12 universities and nearly 76,000 students in our country. There are about 42,000 Turkish students from Turkey, 14,000 local Turkish Cypriot students, and 21,000 international students. We have students from 112 countries and teaching staff from 65 countries. This depicts the international and diverse character of higher education in our country. As a major contributor to this diversity, I am pleased to announce that about 6,000 of our students are from ECO member countries, mostly from Pakistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. It is our primary objective to increase even further the number of students from ECO countries studying at our universities in the period ahead.

In this context, we would welcome a decision by the member states, to include our universities in the available options for the higher education of their youth.

Another sector contributing significantly to the economy of our country is the tourism sector which offers a lot with its natural beauty, cultural and historical heritage. There are 133 holiday establishments with an overall bed capacity of nearly 20 thousand. In addition to a wide range of accommodation from five star luxury hotels and holiday villages, North Cyprus offers many special interest tourism, including golfing, diving, historical site visits, trekking and cycling and eco-tourism.

In line with the policy of ECO which evaluates tourism as another important area of cooperation to be explored and developed for the benefit of member states, we strongly believe that our country is an ideal holiday destination for our brothers and sisters from ECO member countries.

According to statistics in 2014, nearly 1.5 million tourists came to our country, including from Turkey, via air and sea ports of Northern Cyprus. Also in 2014, 800 thousand tourists accommodated in the Hotels in our country.

We are actively encouraging foreign investment to North Cyprus and therefore I would like to take this opportunity to invite investors from ECO member countries to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to learn more about the investment opportunities in our country and the incentives offered by our government.

Investment opportunities exist especially in the tourism sector. Hotels and conference tourism, special interest tourism like yacht tourism and marina construction are just a few of the investment opportunities that await foreign businessmen in our country. In addition to above-mentioned fields, newly developing areas such as health tourism and agri-industry are considered as attractive fields of investment for the private sector and foreign investors.

Consequently, those wishing to invest in the Turkish Cypriot State can be sure of a positive government attitude. The relevant Ministries and our State Planning Organization and the Cyprus Turkish Investment Promotion Agency could be at the disposal of potential

investors and businessmen who would like to learn more about the extensive opportunities and incentives that exist in our country.

**Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Participants,**

As you may all be aware, the first ECO University Sports Games was co-organized with the Republic of Turkey in our country between 15-20 April 2013. I would like to hereby take this opportunity to thank all the participants. It should be recalled that our country organized two important ECO events, back in 1998 and 2004 respectively on “Air and Water Pollution Control” and “Waste Water Management and Treatment Technology” which both enjoyed a great deal of success and the member states enormously benefited from these events.

I have the pleasure to announce here that “Workshop on Tourism” will be organized in our country between 28-30 April 2015. Some member countries already confirmed their participation. I would like to call on the other states to respond positively to our invitation and participate in the said workshop. We will be honoured to welcome and host you all in our country.

I also would like to reiterate that our country is committed to furthering the relations between member countries in mutually beneficial fields, which will contribute to the general objective of cooperation among member states that ECO is striving to achieve.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank once again to Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for their efforts in making this meeting a great success.

I thank you all for your most kind attention.

**Statement by Mr. Yedil Myrzakhanov, Project Director of the Cooperation Council of  
Turkic Speaking State at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr Chairman,**

I would like to thank you for giving me the floor to address the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) as the representative of Turkic Council, observer to (Economic Cooperation Organization) ECO.

**Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellences,  
Distinguished delegates,**

First of all I would like to elaborate a little about developments within our organisation which took place since last year.

The main emphasis of cooperation between our member states is directed towards economic cooperation. Besides regular meetings of experts and heads of customs, transport and economy ministries which have been held to utilize and activate economic potential of its members to the full, activities in the field of culture, sports and education, as well as collaboration among Diasporas and universities demonstrate strong commitment of our Member States to closer and vibrant cooperation.

Turkic Council doesn't only promote partnership relations among its members but also strongly encourages dialogue and good neighbourly relations with other countries in the region. At the same time, establishing and developing relations with other regional and international organizations very important for us. Consequently, necessary steps have been taken for a closer cooperation with the UN, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Organization for security and cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other specialized international institutions.

Although Turkic Council and ECO differ in size and complexity we share common goals and objectives and there are still many areas where the two organisations may complement each other. For this reason exchange of new ideas and cooperation in various spheres between the two organisations can provide new opportunities for our member states.

In order to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region, joint endeavours are essential. Therefore, in order to consolidate and deepen cooperation between our organisations "Memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat of the Cooperation Council of Turkic speaking states and the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization" has been signed in September 2014 in New York.

Finally, participating in the events such as ECO Regional Planning Council as observer will surely help us to learn from the enriched experience of the ECO which has been accumulated throughout years.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my thanks to the ECO for excellent organisation of this event and wish all the success to the Meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.

\*\*\*\*\*