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13th ECO Summit

1st March 2017 - Islamabad





ECI outgoing President presented the Gift of "Common Heritage of the ECO Region" to ECO Secretary General



Foreword



This issue of ECO Chronicle is published at the eve of the 13th ECO Summit, scheduled for 1st March 2017 in Islamabad. This is a noteworthy coincidence.

Since last issue of the ECO Chronicle, our Organization has been involved in a range of activities. Within the ECO family, we were involved in intra-regional policy dialogues on diverse issues at different levels as well as many regional

capacity building and assistance programmes.

In external relations, ECO continued its interactions with its partners from within and outside UN system, resulted in more acknowledgement of ECO credibility in implementing global agenda in this part of the world.

One of the main achievements realized in this period was the development of the "ECO Vision 2025" through extensive discussions among the Member States. The Vision, to be formally approved by the 22nd meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM), to be held on 28th February 2017 in Islamabad, will be the roadmap for the Organization in the years to come, envisioned to put ECO in a better position to respond to the new and emerging regional and global realities and challenges. This is why I believe the upcoming Summit and COM meetings will mark another milestone in the history of the Organization when they endorse the Vision and its implementing mechanisms.

I am very much honoured and grateful to Minister Javad Zarif, the honorable Chairman of the 21st Council of Ministers, for his kind contribution to this issue of the ECO Chronicle. I am sure that our readers will very much benefit from visionary approach and noble ideas presented by Dr. Zarif in his article.

*Ambassador
Halil Ibrahim Akca
ECO Secretary General*



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In The Name Of God

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Halil Ibrahim Akca
ECO Secretary General

Address

No.1, Golbou Alley,
Kamranieh St., Tehran-Iran
P.O.Box \ 14155- 6176
Tehran(I.R. Iran)

Tel \ (+98-21) 22831733-4
22292066

Fax \ (+98-21) 22831732
<http://www.eco.int>

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Saadatmand
0939 321 0 716



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An "ECO Community"

By: Mohammad Javad Zarif

*Iranian Foreign Minister and Chairman of 21st
ECO Council of Ministers*

Since 1964 when Iran, Pakistan and Turkey created a platform for regional cooperation, the so-called "Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD)" and its revival as "Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)" in 1985, the Organization has come a long way by identifying areas for regional cooperation, coordination and harmonization. The imminent 13th ECO Summit next month in Islamabad will mark the 25th anniversary of ECO enlargement to a 10-country organization, which took place in 1992 resulting in a unique regional intergovernmental organization in this part of the world.

ECO Region, with a territory of 8 million square kilometers and more than 450 million inhabitants, is a neighboring region to Europe, China, Russia and Persian Gulf region, embracing countries from South and West Asia as well as Caucasus and Central Asia. The membership is diversified in terms of population and size of markets (ranging from countries with less than 6 million to more than 200 million peoples); size of economy (from less than 0.05% to more than 45% regional GDP share); GDP per capita (from less than 700 USD to more than 12000

USD); human development index (from global rankings of 56th to 171st), etc. Equally and regionally important, ECO Region enjoys vast potential for ensuring sustained economic growth and sustainable development. This includes, among others, huge and complementary markets, exquisite geographical location, globally-known transit capacities, abundant energy resources, and rich and knowledgeable human capital.

However, and despite all regional cooperative frameworks and networks formed over the three decades, ECO has not yet realized regional integration and institutionalization. This attests to both the imperative of continued intra-regional cooperation and interactions, and to the need for a carefully designed architecture for regional integration. The envisaged architecture shall be based on an optimal development paradigm supported by tailor-made economic growth models for our Region.

Enhanced integration through regionalism is believed to offer, among its other benefits, a plausible path towards development, peace



and stability in the regions. This is against the fact that "regionalism" does not imply that a single recipe can be pursued in all regions. Regional structures and architecture need to be designed to project for, and ensure, increased economic integration and enhanced political and security relations among the Member States, building a regional identity, hence a prospective "ECO Community".

In the 21st meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers in November 2013 in Tehran, when I assumed the ECO chairmanship, I stated that ECO is the first best option for our countries' collective attempts for economic growth and sustainable development. This is, by far, still the case despite the fact that three decades of regional cooperation within ECO's schemes has demonstrated structural limitations and institutional inertia stunting genuine regionalism. While ECO continues to retain its critical advantages over similar regional arrangements at hand, reforms are needed to re-confirm that ECO's benefits for Member States are incomparably superior to those offered by other competing regional arrangements. The complementary nature of the ECO contributions to the national policies and measures should be strongly felt by our individual Member States enhancing a broader sense of ownership among the membership.


The ongoing reform process in the ECO, as mandated by 21st Council of Ministers meeting, is an opportunity to forge a broad-based consensus on a new architecture for cooperation in the ECO in a way that would improve, inter alia, the prospects for long-term growth and prosperity for ECO countries and Region as a whole. Three-decade evolution of

ECO offers practical experiences and empirical evidence to be used in making any shifts in paradigm and reforms as required for the new architecture. Due consideration shall also be given to the global trending issues of direct and indirect bearing on our region, including the UN post 2015 development agenda and climate change mitigation and adaptation arrangements.

Given the multi-dimensional nature of the envisaged architecture and the multi-speed follow-up mechanisms it may require, we have to ensure that *first*, all ECO Member States are involved actively and responsively; and *second*, the current reform exercise in the ECO is not left to diplomats only, rather to engage economists and development scholars and practitioners as well. I will discuss with my fellow Foreign Ministers the ECO future prospects when we meet in Islamabad prior to the upcoming Summit, where we will also decide on the new ECO Vision 2025.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its unwavering support to the ECO in the years to come, as has been the case since Organization's inception. In the 25th anniversary of ECO enlargement, I would like to pay homage to the late President Rafsanjani, the Chairman of the first ECO Summit, and recall his remarks in the Summit upon the accession of the new members to ECO in 1992, where he expressed confidence that ECO's expansion would further strengthen the Organization provided that the extensive collaboration of all regional countries and mobilization of all regional resources were warranted. This contention holds true in today's context.

ECO Secretariat paid an Official Visit to Afghanistan

 ECO Secretary General, Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca and his delegation visited Kabul from 6 to 7 September 2016, in response to invitation made by the honourable Minister of Economy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Abdul Sattar Murad. During the visit, Secretary General and his delegation had bilateral talks with high level Afghan authorities on the ECO-Afghanistan relationship as well as ongoing agendas and activities of the Organization.

H.E. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani received the ECO delegation headed by the Secretary General on 7 September 2016. Secretary General briefed President on the state of affairs of ECO, including the two upcoming important meetings in Kabul, namely, ECO Ministerial Meeting on ECO Vision

2025 and ECO Special Conference on Afghanistan. He also highlighted the importance of Afghanistan for ECO and sought guidance from the President on ECO and its prospects for the future.

President Ashraf Ghani highlighted the importance of regional cooperation for this region and referred to some development-related initiatives in Afghanistan in the areas of connectivity within the country and with the neighbouring countries, electricity, agriculture, etc.

The President also gave some guidelines for ECO Vision for the future, including in the areas of trade, transport, energy and tourism. He further highlighted on the needs for gap/complementary analysis for ECO.

The President also emphasized on the need





for further cooperation within ECO in areas such as water management and air connectivity.

The Secretary General was also received by Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan who underscored that Afghanistan has given importance to ECO from the early days of its membership. He emphasized that ECO should work in the areas of common interests of the Member States.

He also requested update on the ECO countries' cooperation on tariff reductions. Secretary General in return briefed the Chief Executive on the state of affairs of ECO, including the trade and tariff arrangements within ECOTA context and informed him on the upcoming important events in Kabul on ECO new Vision and ECO Special Conference on Afghanistan

In a Meeting with Mr. Abdul Sattar Murad, the honourable Minister of Economy of Afghanistan, both sides reviewed the preparatory process for the two upcoming ECO ministerial events, namely, the "Ministerial Meeting on ECO Vision 2025" and the "ECO Special Conference on Afghanistan".

Secretary General and his delegation also held a working meeting with the Deputies Minister of Economy, Public Health, Education, Transport and Commerce and Industries where the latest developments of the projects under the ECO Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan were reviewed.

At the end of the visit, the ECO Secretary General met with Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, the honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and discussed the areas of common interests, including the

upcoming ministerial meetings in Kabul and the Extraordinary session of the ECO Council of Ministers in New York.

In two formal dinner receptions hosted by the Minister of Economy and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, ECO Secretary General also held discussions with Mr. Eklil Ahmad

Hakimi, the honourable Minister of Finance, and Mr. Humayoon Rasaw, the honourable Minister of Commerce and Industries of Afghanistan as well as with some Ambassadors of the ECO Member States in Kabul.



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The Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on 5-8 December 2016 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

The Meeting was attended by the delegations from all Member States, namely, 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. Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States in their capacities as observers, and officials and representatives of ECO specialized

agencies, regional institutions and affiliated bodies also participated in the Meeting.

In the opening session, held in the Tehran Espinas Palace Hotel, the ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça welcomed the participating delegations and presented a comprehensive overview of the main activities of the Organization during 2016. He further inform the participants of the prospects for ECO in the future, including the emerging ECO Vision 2025. The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Nasrollah



ECO Secretariat hosted Regional Planning Council





Jahangard, Head of Information Technology Organization of Iran, who welcomed the distinguished delegates and shared his views on ECO performance in the last year and the projection for years to come. He further proposed ideas for specific regional cooperation in information and communication

plenary session, the heads of delegation (Member States, observers and affiliated bodies) made statements on their relevant activities and policies.

In the sectoral committees, namely, Trade and Investment; Transport and Communications; Energy, Minerals and

programmes/calendar of events for 2017.

On the sidelines of the RPC Meeting, the ECO Secretary General convened a special session on ECO Vision 2025 where RPC heads of delegation as well as resident ambassadors and representatives of the Member States

technology, particularly the application of the Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) in the ECO Region.

Ambassador Majid Bizmark from the Islamic Republic of Iran chaired the 27th RPC Meeting. Individual officials from interested Member States also chaired 8 RPC sectoral committees. In the first

Environment; Agriculture, Industry and Tourism; Projects, Economic Research and Statistics; Human Resources and Sustainable Developments; Drugs and Organized Crime; and External Relations and Affiliated Bodies, Member States deliberated on the areas of activities in 2017 and developed sectoral work pro-

reflected on the draft ECO Vision 2025. The final draft of the Vision will be submitted to the upcoming ECO COM/Summit meetings in Islamabad.

At the end of 4- day hard work, the participating delegations attended a cultural event, organized by the ECO Cultural Institute.



Premises of the Central Secretariat of ECO- RISCAM was formally inaugurated



The opening ceremony of the premises of the Central Secretariat of ECO-RISCAM (ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology) and its Technical Management Board of Conformity Assessment was held on 14 December 2016. High ranking officials from host country and ECO Secretariat as well as ambassadors and representatives of the Member States participated in the ceremony.

The programme was hosted by H.E. Dr. Nayereh Pirouzbakht, Head of National Standard Organization of Iran. The event was jointly opened by statements made by H.E. Dr. Abbas Araqchi, Deputy



Foreign Minister of Iran and H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General.

During his inaugural statement, ECO Secretary General highlighted the activities of the Secretariat for preparation of the groundwork for operationalization of the ECO-RISCAM. He also seized the opportunity to request remaining Member States to sign and ratify the Statute of ECO-RISCAM which will greatly help early activation of the Institute.

After the statements, the participants attended a formal lunch hosted by Dr. Pirouzbakht. The second part of the programme was the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the RISCAM premises, attended by the high level officials of the host country, some Member States and ECO Secretariat.

Further to note that the Institute and its Technical Management Boards will, among others, promote the development of quality infrastructure and help remove the technical barriers to trade by harmonization of standards, as well as accreditation, conformity assessment and metrology practices through cooperation with national bodies and international organizations. The ECO-RISCAM will be affiliated to ECO as one of its regional institutions.

ECO
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Newly appointed Ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Iran H.E. Mr. Bunyad Huseynov met with the ECO Secretary General H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca and presented his credentials as the Permanent Representative of Republic of Azerbaijan in ECO.

During the meeting, took place on 28 September 2016, the Secretary General expressed his gratitude to Ambassador Huseynov for Republic of Azerbaijan's active and important role in ECO and extended his sincere hope that cooperative relations between ECO Secretariat and the Embassy will be further

Azeri New Ambassador to the ECO

enhanced during his tenure.

Ambassador Huseynov in return expressed his commitment to

actively contribute to ECO agenda and continue to expand relations with the ECO Secretariat.

Both sides also exchanged views on the state of affairs of ECO, priority areas of Organization and enhancement of the ECO's role in the Region.



New Kyrgyz Permanent Representative to ECO

ECO
CHRONICLE

H.E. Mr. Avazbek Abdurazakov, the newly appointed Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic to the Islamic Republic of Iran, paid a visit to the ECO Secretariat on 16th January 2017 and met with the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca and presented his credentials to the Secretary General as the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyz Republic to the Economic Cooperation Organization. The Secretary General congratulated the Ambassador on his new assign-

ment and wished him a successful tenure. Secretary General also highlighted that Kyrgyz Republic is an important member of the ECO and has always played an active and constructive role on all ECO platforms. He ensured Ambassador of his full support.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues of interest to Kyrgyz Republic and exchanged views on how to enhance the ECO's role in the near future.





Heads of Customs Administration of the **ECO Countries** met in Tehran

ECO CHRONICLE The "7th Meeting of the Council of ECO Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA)" was held on 19 October 2016 in Tehran. It was preceded by the 3rd Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Customs Experts (SCOEs) on 17-18 October 2016. High level delegations from nine Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan, as well as delegations from the International Road Union (IRU) and ECO Secretariat participated in these important event.

The Council Meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Ali Tayyebnia, Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance of the Islamic Republic of Iran who underscored that due to geographical contiguity,

ECO Member States have a high capacity to improve trade ties among themselves through improving infrastructure in transportation, easing customs regulations and making their domestic regulations transparent. He expressed hope that the preparation of a new ECO Vision for the period 2016-2025 would ease reaching the Organization's targets. H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça, the ECO Secretary General in his inaugural statement, while welcoming the delegates highlighted the importance and the need for regional cooperation in the field of customs. He deeply appreciated the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly Iran IRICA for their sincere efforts for holding this vital meeting to revive cooperation among ECO Member States and to strengthen their commit-

ment for more integration in the ECO Region.

H.E. Sergio Mujica, the Deputy Director General of World Customs Organization (WCO) delivered a comprehensive and insightful statement highlighting the objectives, working and modes of customs facilitation. He urged the Member States to avail the system developed by WCO and enhance trade through standardization, harmonization and modernization. Mr. Kazem Asayesh, Senior Advisor on TIR and Trade Facilitation of IRU, also made remarks in the opening session and underscored the benefits of e-TIR especially for the landlocked states of the ECO Region.

The Heads of Delegation of nine Member States in their statements emphasized on the need of customs cooperation, especially in the field of simplification/harmonization of customs procedures, digitization of documentation and trade facilitative measures for boosting intra-regional trade. They shared their experiences, especially the measures taken in the recent years for creating favorable conditions required for expansion in volume of trade. The significance of TIR was underscored for efficient handling of exports and imports of goods among the Member States. The Member States further highlighted legal frameworks/arrangements, institutional reforms in the area of customs, capacity building initiatives that they have undertaken with the aim to meet the challenges being faced in the changed global scenario.



Cooperation with the international organizations especially with WCO, WTO, IRU, etc., was appreciated in modernization of the border control systems and prevention of contraband trade/smuggling. The delegates also highlighted the significance of two agreements which are considered pivotal for increasing cooperation to curb smuggling in the ECO Region. The participants expressed their desire to

move forward for establishing Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) mechanisms among the ECO Member States. They emphasized on the need for both bilateral and multilateral EDI arrangements within the ECO Countries. They also underlined that training courses for customs officials of the ECO Member States are imperative for enhancing capacity of the national institutions and officials performing such duties. Some Member States indicated that their countries have experience of holding trainings for the customs officials.

The Meeting also deliberated on the Report adopted by the Sub-Committee of the Customs Experts (SCOEs) which included two important agreements, namely, "The Agreement on Establishment and Operations of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank" and "The Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters". The 8th meeting of Council of Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) will be held in Pakistan in 2017.





On the sidelines of the Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Cancun, Mexico (UNCBD COP13), an ECO coordination meeting was organized on 12th December 2016 with the participation of representatives of ECO Member States, namely, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan, as well as President of the ECO Institute for Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) and officials from Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). ECO Directorate for Energy, Minerals and Environment organized the Meeting.

The Meeting, themed as "ECO contribution to the CBD Agenda: Implementation of the Work Plan on Biodiversity in the ECO Region 2016-2020" reviewed the Biodiversity situation in the ECO Region and discussed the ongoing implementation of the ECO Work Plan on

ECO Member States discussed biodiversity in Cancun



biodiversity. They exchanged views on the priorities for actions within the context of the Work Plan, taking into account the recent mandates given by 27th RPC Meeting (Tehran, 5-8

December 2016).

It was acknowledged by the Meeting that the ECO Work Plan 2016-2020 is in line with the long-term strategies, programmes and priorities of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD). During the Meeting, CBD Secretariat expressed readiness to cooperate with ECO in implementation of the Work Plan through knowledge-sharing and capacity building programmes.

It is to be recalled that biodiversity officials/experts from ECO Member States in their meetings during the "ECO Biodiversity Week in Antalya" (March 2016), had agreed to meet on the sidelines of the COP13 to better grasp spirit of cooperation and opportunities exist in international community for the interests of the ECO Member States.

Representative of Republic of Turkey, the ECO leading country for Biodiversity Work Plan, informed the Meeting that his country will host the next ECO meeting on Work Plan by September 2017.



First Meeting of ECO Heads of Investment Promotion Agencies in Islamabad



The First Meeting of ECO Heads of Investment Promotion Agencies (ECO-IPA) was held on December 26, 2016 in Islamabad, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Turkey and the ECO Secretariat participated in the Meeting.

H.E. Mr. Azher Ali Choudhry, Secretary of the Board of Investment of Pakistan inaugurated the meeting. In his inaugural speech,

and while welcoming the delegates, he highlighted the importance of ECO initiatives, activities and projects for strengthening investment cooperation within the region.

During the Meeting, the Heads of Delegation of the Member States delivered their respective country statements on the initiatives for strengthening investment in their countries.

The participants discussed the progress on various ECO initiatives for investment including the ECO Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI), and emphasized the importance of its early ratification. The Meeting further deliberated and agreed on the ways and means of strengthening investment cooperation in the ECO Region; developing a roadmap for investment related component of the Multi-Dimensional Regional Trade and Investment Strategy Procedures; and harmonization of procedure and requirements to accelerate Portfolio and Foreign Direct Investment in Member States.

The Meeting also discussed the importance of capacity building of the officials of The Investment Promotion Agencies.

The Meeting decided to designate National Focal Points (NFP) for investment related issues. It was also decided to change the title of the Meeting to "ECO Investment Promotion Agencies (ECO-IPAs) Forum".



ECO Workshop on Ferrous & Base Metal Minerals in Karaj-Iran



The 3rd ECO
Workshop on Ferrous &
Base Metal Mineral

Processing and the 1st International Mineral Processing Activists Symposium, hosted by the Iran Minerals Processing Research Center (IMPRC) were held on 25-26 October 2016 in Karaj, Iran. The events were attended by the ECO Member States, including the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran (host), Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and the ECO Secretariat. Public and private experts from Iran, Turkey, Finland, Australia, Canada, China, South Africa and Germany also participated in the events.

H.E. Dr. Mahdi Karbasian, Deputy Minister and the Chairman of the Board of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), while inaugurating the symposium and workshop, warmly welcomed all participants and underlined the extensive role of mining sector in the world economy adding that economies of most of the world countries are totally dependent on optimizing mining industry and resources through research and innovative technologies for extraction of raw materials and metals. The Deputy Minister

in his briefing gave an overview on huge deposits of mining in Iran and IMPRC's crucial role in successful mining processing industry and research. In his opening remarks, Mr. Fuad Farzalibayov, ECO Director for EME, while appreciating the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly IMPRC for consecutively hosting the 3rd ECO Workshop on Ferrous & Base Metal Mineral Processing, briefed the Meeting about ECO's overall profile and policy priorities concerning the minerals, recent progress made, activities carried out and future plans by ECO Secretariat in collaboration with Member States in this important sphere.

During the 2-day intensive sessions, the speakers from public and private companies, organizations and academia made presentations on different segments of minerals, inter alia, using technologies and new equipments in mineral processing, flotation of associated feldspar minerals from various sources and their separation mechanisms, gold processing solutions, titanomagnetic processing, environmental application in mineral processing, nano-bubbles application in flotation of fine particles, pyrometallurgy tests in mineral processing, integrated process simulation, future of modeling in mineral processing, iron ore processing, role of analysis in mineral processing, visualization of element zoning in mineral using BSE images and X-rays mapping by EPMA, tailings filtration solutions, flotation mechanisms of morphologically different mineral particles, and removing impurities from iron ore through methods and industrial cases.

On 26 October, the participants visited various laboratories for mineral processing, including environment and chemistry labs and got acquainted with various facilities and capacities of the IMPRC. At the end of the Workshop and Symposium, the participants from ECO Member States and ECO Secretariat were awarded with "Certificate of Participation".



ECO Minerals Experts in Sungun Mine Complex in Tabriz



The 6th ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting, hosted by the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI), was held on 17-18 October 2016 in Sungun Mine Complex in Varzeghan Area, Tabriz - East Azerbaijan Province, Iran. The Meeting was actively participated by the delegations from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran (host), Pakistan and Tajikistan, as well as the ECO Secretariat. The Meeting was jointly inaugurated by Dr. Mohammad Faridi, Director of the Northwestern Regional Office (Tabriz Centre) of GSI and Mr. Fuad Farzalibayov, ECO Director for Energy, Minerals & Environment (EME).

During the Meeting, delegations from ECO Member States delivered their country presentations/statements highlighting national mineral policies and geological profiles, including minerals exploitation, production data and maps, metallogenic zones, investment opportunities in mineral sector, tectonic zones, best practices, recent developments, challenges and future roadmaps in the field of minerals. They also emphasized on the collective efforts for enhancing and strengthening ECO

regional synergy to harness maximum benefits from complementarities and commonalities for proper utilization of mineral resources in the ECO Region.

During the active deliberation session, the delegates also discussed in length different areas of cooperation in the field of minerals in the ECO Region and put forward key outcome recommendations and proposals for future actions, inter alia, Assessment of Sedimentary Copper Ore Deposits in the ECO Region; Regional Cooperation on Spiral Tectonic; Identification of Geological Risk Factors of Cardiovascular Diseases Incidence in ECO Member States; Preparation of Geodynamic and present-day Crustal Stress Map of the ECO Member States; and proposal on tectonic map and mineralogical map between Republic of Azerbaijan and Iran with possible participation of other ECO Member States to meet the existing border gaps among the geographical countries. In this backdrop, the Meeting called upon concerned Member States to provide with comprehensive Concept Papers on earlier and new proposals to ECO Secretariat by end of February 2017 for further circulation among the ECO Member States with a view to embarking on the proposed feasible projects.

The Meeting also received information on the ECO-SHARP Project which had been discussed in the Workshop preceding the 6th Expert Meeting on 15-16 October 2016.

On 18 October, participants visited to Sungun Copper Mine, where they got opportunity to see the main facilities, infrastructure and operating capacities, and learned how technologies are employed in various applications. They expressed key interest for future synergic cooperation among ECO Member States in copper mine segment as well.



ECO Transit Transport Coordination Council met in Tehran

ECO
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The 8th Meeting of the ECO Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC), the 8th Meeting of the Road Committee of TTCC, and the 5th Meeting of the Customs Transit Committee of TTCC were held on 14-16 November 2016 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The meetings were attended by the delegations from nine ECO Member States, namely, 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 and Turkmenistan. Representatives of IRU and ECO Secretariat also attended the meetings.

The Road Committee of TTCC reviewed the implementation of decisions of its 7th Meeting (Ankara, 11th November 2015) as well as the implementation of road-related provisions of the TTFA. The representative of the

ECO Secretariat briefed the Meeting on the progress with implementation of decisions of the previous Meeting of the Road Committee and also on "ECO Visa Exemption Sticker Scheme", negotiated in a recent meeting of ECO Consular Officials held in the Secretariat on 4th October 2016. The Secretariat informed the Committee that the Consular Officials meeting agreed to work on the basis of the text introduced by the Secretariat.

The Member States informed and reviewed progress on accession to/implementation of the relevant international instruments, including CMR of 1956 and ADR of 1957. Updates on ECO's ongoing activities/measures with regard to establishing road transit corridors, notably between Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and between Kyrgyz Republic-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) and other initiatives taken to identify major non-physical obstacles, including visa related issues,

were also provided by the ECO Secretariat.

The 5th Meeting of the Customs Transit Committee of TTCC was opened by the Statement made by the Secretary General of ECO, in which he welcomed all participants and expressed satisfaction that the collective efforts of ECO Member States have reached fruition and the long awaited customs study, the missing link of the TTFA joint project of ECO and IDB, has been completed.

The Secretary General subsequently encouraged all delegates to brainstorm on the modality of following up the results of the Study and providing the guidance and a mandate to the Secretariat on a roadmap, including on a mechanism to follow up the implementation of the recommendations of the report. Subsequently, the representative of the ECO Secretariat made a detailed presentation about ECO-IDB Feasibility Study on Customs in which she deliberated on the



sources and the methodology utilized, customs procedures of ECO Member States, issues being faced, remedial measures and requirements to meet the international conventions/agreements and recommendations/Plan of Action for modernization of customs border crossing points.

The Meeting Mandated the Secretariat to regularly assess and provide progress report to the Customs Committee of TTCC. The Meeting also reviewed the Implementation of Customs related provisions of the TTFA and considered the latest developments of the ECO Member States on accession/implementation of the related necessary conventions. The 8th Meeting of the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) considered and unanimously approved the Reports of the technical committees of the TTCC, namely, Report of the 8th Meeting of the Road Committee, Report of the 5th Meeting of the Customs Transit Committee, and Report of the 1st Senior Consular Officials' Meeting on Facilitation of Visa for Drivers. The 8th TTCC Meeting also approved the recommendations and Plan of Action contained in the feasibility Study and the mandate provided to the Secretariat on their follow-up. The Meeting also approved the Programme of the TTFA Fund for 2017.



2nd Workshop on ECO-SHARP in Tabriz



The 2nd Workshop on ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Programme (ECO-SHARP) hosted by the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) was held on 15-16 October 2016 in Sungun Mine Complex in Varzeghan Area, Tabriz - East Azerbaijan Province, Iran. The participants from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran (host), Pakistan and Tajikistan participated in the Workshop. The workshop were jointly inaugurated by Dr. Jalil Ghalamghash, Deputy Director of GSI and Mr. Fuad Farzalibayov, ECO Director for Energy, Minerals & Environment (EME).

The ECO-SHARP Project team made presentations on various topics, including summary report of the ECO-SHARP Project, concept of geodatabase with an approach to the seismotectonic map of the ECO Region, active tectonics and remote sensing, seismotectonics of ECO Region, and final map of earthquake vulnerability in ECO Region.

During the deliberations, the participants expressed satisfaction over smooth implementation of the ECO-SHARP and the Project Manager (GSI) was requested to provide Final Report of the Project by end of January 2017, based on the overall feedbacks of Member States. Site visits were arranged for the participants to the geologic features around Tabriz, including Bilverdi Village and Ahar-Tabriz Y junction fault-lines, as well as Paleoseismological Seyyedabad Trench site on North Tabriz Fault.

ECO
CHRONICLE

The First ECO Senior Consular Officials Meeting on Facilitation of Visa for Drivers was held on 4th October 2016 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Meeting was attended by delegations of 8 ECO Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan. During the one day discussion, the participating officials informed the Meeting on their status of the issuance of visa for drivers and persons involved in the international transit, and provided clarification to the queries raised concerning problems faced by some Member States in visa acquisition process.

The ECO Secretariat also presented updates on ECO's ongoing activities/measures

ECO Consular Officials discussed Visa Arrangements for Drivers

with regard to establishing road transit corridors, notably between Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and between Kyrgyz Republic-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI), as well as other initiatives taken to

identify major non-physical obstacles, including visa. A major issue on the agenda of the Meeting was "ECO Visa Exemption Sticker Scheme" which was discussed in detail. The Scheme, already prepared and circulated by ECO Secretariat, aims at easing up the

visa issuance for drivers and persons engaged in transport operations. The Meeting decided to accept the draft provided by the Secretariat as basis for further consideration. It was decided

that ECO Secretariat will provide a modified version of the draft along with an explanatory note and will expect feedbacks from the Member States in three months. The Secretariat will then convene the 2nd ECO Senior Consular Officials Meeting for finalization of the draft and starting its implementation.



Second International ECO-Silk Road Food Festival in Zanzan



The Second International ECO- Silk Road Food Festival was held in Zanzan (Iran) on 26-29 September 2016, commemorating the World Tourism Day. The Second Festival, hosted by Zanzan Provincial Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization and organized in cooperation with ECO Secretariat was attended by the ECO Member States and Silk Road members. The number of participants in this Festival has tripled from five to 15 delegations since the first such Festival in 2015.

The Festival was inaugurated by statements made by H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, Secretary General of ECO; Deputy President of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism (ICHTO); and the Governor of Zanzan. Some Tehran based ambassadors and diplomats also attended the opening ceremony.

Secretary General of ECO in his statement praised the Festival and said that revival of the Ancient Silk Road would contribute to the development of tourism industry in the ECO Region. He further made reference to the ECO Vision 2025 which envisages establishment of the ECO Region as a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality services,

while ensuring responsible and sustainable tourism development and upgrading quality of life of the people through effective involvement of all stakeholders. Ambassador Akca also highlighted the coincidence of this year's Food Festival with the World Tourism Day, a real translation into action of the theme of this year's celebrations as "Tourism for All-Promoting Universal Accessibility".

During the Festival held in the ancient city of Zanzan, various foods and cuisines of the ECO and Silk Road Region from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, China, Tajikistan, Turkey, Yemen, Bulgaria, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine were served to the visitors.

An exhibition of Iranian handicrafts was

also organized on the sidelines of the Festival which showcased a good variety of handicrafts industry.

The closing ceremony of the Festival was attended by local and invited officials. Mr. Memduh Unal Director for Agriculture, Industry and Tourism of ECO also addressed the closing ceremony where participants of the Festival were also awarded certificates of participation.

Zanzan is home to Soltaniyeh Dome which along with Turykey's Hagia Sophia mosque and Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral in Italy, are the largest brick structure in the world, recognized as World Heritage Site by UNCESCO. It is a complex constructed in 1302-12 AC in the city of Soltaniyeh, then capital of Ilkhanid dynasty, and was used as a mausoleum when the king Mohammad Khodabande, who ordered its construction, passed away.



Experts Group Meeting on ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction



The "Experts
Group

Meeting for ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction" was held on 26-28 October 2016 in ECO Secretariat. It was attended by high level officials and experts from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan (Embassy), Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan (Embassy) and Turkey as well as officials from regional and international organizations, including UNDP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNHABITAT, UNOCHA, International Institute for Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES) and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The Meeting was co-financed by the ECO Secretariat and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

At the beginning of the Meeting, ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, made opening remarks. He welcomed the participants to ECO and highlighted the importance of the Meeting for ECO Region. He further presented a comprehensive policy picture on ECO state of affairs and the prospects for the future in the context of the ECO Member States' immediate needs and concerns, including the cooperation to reduce disaster risk in the ECO Region while taking into account the global contexts such as Sendai Framework for DRR, SDGs and climate change agreement.

Mr. Gary Lewis, the UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of UNDP in Iran also made opening remarks. He provided the Meeting with comprehensive picture of the UN relevant agenda devel-



oped in Sendai (disaster risk reduction), Paris (climate change), New York (post 2015 development agenda and SDGs) and Istanbul (humanitarian affairs). He also highlighted the role ECO can play in promoting above agenda and expressed UNDP interest to revisit the ECO-UNDP existing MoU and to focus more on disaster-related cooperation.

During 3 day Meeting, chaired by Mr. Ali Bakhtiyari from Iran and facilitated by Mr. Puji Pujiono, the Regional Advisor of ESCAP, presentations were made by participants on national capacities, achievements and challenges as regard disaster risk reduction. Resource persons from UNESCAP, UNESCO (through Skype), UNISDR (through Skype), IFRC and IIEES also made presentations on different aspects of an optimal ECO regional framework on DRR taking into account the different platforms as well as contexts presented by Sendai Framework 2030. All presentations stimulated interactive discussions among the participants. The participants agreed on some priority areas for regional cooperation by 2020 and elaborated on potential projects and programmes. They agreed to establish a task group to continue working on the draft regional framework in parallel with ongoing UN exercise on developing indicators for implementation of Sendai Framework. The outcome of task group work will be discussed in the second ECO Expert Group Meeting to be hosted by Turkey in January/February 2017.

The final draft framework is expected to be endorsed by the "8th ECO Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction", scheduled for May 2017 in Turkey.





Pakistani Ambassador presented his Credentials to the ECO Secretary General

ECO CHRONICLE In a meeting with the ECO Secretary General on 1 September 2016, new Pakistani ambassador, H.E. Mr. Asif Durrani presented his credentials as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in ECO. While expressing his gratitude to Ambassador Durrani for Pakistan's active and important role in

ECO, Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca expressed his sincere hope that relations between ECO Secretariat and Embassy will be further enhanced during his tenure.

Ambassador Durrani in return expressed his commitment to actively contribute to ECO agenda and continue to expand good relations with the ECO Secretariat. Both sides also exchanged views on the state of affairs of ECO and the important upcoming activities and events.

ECO CHRONICLE The Extraordinary Session of the ECO Council of Ministers was held on September 23, 2016 in New York. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Foreign Ministers/high level officials from the

Extra-ordinary Session of ECO Foreign Ministers in New York

During the Meeting, the Ministers and high level officials of the Member States discussed the different issues of the ECO agenda and made some important decisions. The Meeting also agreed on the need for early organization of the next ECO Summit and regular Council of Ministers Meeting.



Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey attended the Meeting. A delegation from Turkish Cypriot State also participated in the Meeting as observer.

The Ministerial Meeting was briefed by the ECO Secretary General on the latest state of affairs of the Organization at the time when ECO is developing its new Vision for the next ten years.





ECO Secretariat attended the ECO Science Foundation Board of Trustees

The Deputy Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Mr. Kanan Nazarov, represented the ECO Secretariat in the third meeting of the ECO Science Foundation Board of Trustees on 18th of August 2016 in Islamabad. The Meeting was preceded by the Executive Committee/High Level Experts Group Meeting on 17th of August 2016.

In his statement delivered during the Meeting, the Deputy Secretary General commended the ECOSF President and appreciated the initiatives pursued by the Foundation for promotion of science and technology in the ECO Region.

He mentioned that the ECOSF has achieved a number of accomplishments in the past years and has contributed valuably to the promotion of scientific cooperation in the Region. With the diversification of its activities in various areas, and development of institutional linkages with relevant regional and international organizations, ECOSF has emerged as an important body of the ECO capable of achieving progress in the areas identified in its Charter. The Deputy Secretary General also met with Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, the President of ECOSF and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. The participating delegates also visited the new premises of the ECOSF where explanation was given by the President of ECOSF. The Meeting adopted the "Islamabad Communiqué" at the end of its work.

High Level Meeting on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Road Corridor in Islamabad

The 4th High Level Working Group Meeting on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Road Corridor was held on 17- 18 August 2016 in Islamabad.

The Meeting, hosted by the Ministry of Communications of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was attended by the delegations from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkey, ECO Secretariat, Islamic Development Bank's country office and the International Road Transport Union (IRU). Senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Interior, Federal Board of Revenue, National Highway Authority, Customs Collectorate as well as representatives from the private sector of Pakistan also attended the Meeting.

The Meeting discussed at length the technical issues pertaining to operationalization of the ITI Road Corridor, inter alia, measures being taken by the Government of Pakistan to finalize formalities to start TIR operations; facilitation of visa for professional drivers; finding solutions to resolve insurance issue; practical measures being taken by the enroute countries with regard to security and safety for drivers and trucks, etc. The Meeting agreed to launch a test run of trucks as soon as all formalities with TIR are finished. The Meeting also took note of the status of the field study on ITI Road Corridor.



President of TOBB visited the ECO Secretariat



A delegation of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) headed by its president H.E. Mr. M. Rifat Hisarciklioglu, paid a courtesy call on the

ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca, on August 16, 2016. During the meeting, the President of TOBB, Mr. M. Rifat Hisarciklioglu, expressed TOBB readiness for supporting the ECO Secretariat's works; and informed that the TOBB think-tank institution, TEPAV, is also ready to make technical studies for the ECO Region. Also present during the meeting were TOBB Board Member Memis Kütükcü, Bayburt CCI Chair Ibrahim Yumak and Marmas Chamber of Commerce Chair Mehmet Baysal. The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) is the highest legal entity in Turkey representing the private sector.



Meeting on the ECO Center for Efficient Water Utilization for Agriculture



The 2nd Working Group Meeting on the Establishment of ECO Center of Excellence for Efficient Water Utilization for Agriculture (ECO-CEEWUA) was held in Islamabad, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 25-26 July 2016. The Meeting was attended by the delegates from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Pakistan (Host), Republic of Tajikistan, as well as delegations from the ECO Secretariat, FAO and IDB.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Mr. Muhammad Abid Javed, Federal Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security & Research of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan who, while expressing his gratitude to the ECO Member States and ECO Secretariat for attending the 2nd WGM, underscored the importance of water in the Region

and called upon Member States to strengthen their efforts for close collaboration in implementation of joint projects and initiatives.

During the Meeting, representatives of the ECO Member States and IDB also delivered speeches/statements on the state of agriculture water affairs in their respective countries/organizations.

The Meeting also reviewed and, with some amendments, finalized the Statute of the ECO Center of

Excellence for Efficient Water Utilization for Agriculture (ECO-CEEWUA). It also discussed Draft Plan of Action for Feasibility Study of the Establishment of ECO-CEEWUA, Project Proposal for conducting a Feasibility Study for Establishment of the ECO-CEEWUA, and emphasized the need for updating national focal points/Institutions for expediting the process of Establishment of the Center.



ECO Public-Private Sector

Energy Consortiums meeting

ECO CHRONICLE The 1st Meeting of the ECO Public and Private Sector Energy/Petroleum Consortiums/Companies was held on 16-17 August 2016 in Tehran. It was attended by the delegates from public and private sectors from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey, as well as delegations from the ECO-CCI, ECO-TDB, IDB and ECO Secretariat.

The Meeting was opened in an inauguration ceremony jointly held with the 21st Executive Committee Meeting of the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ECO-CCI). Dr. Mohammad Nahavandian, Chief Executive of the Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, Mr. Abdul Rauf Alam, President of ECO-CCI and Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mr. M. Rifat Hisarciklioglu, President of the Unions of the Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Mr. Gholamhosein Shafeiee, Vice President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), and Mr. Azarakhsh Hafizi, Vice President of ECO-CCI made their statements in the inaugural ceremony.

Dr. Mohammad Nahavandian, while welcoming all delegations to these important ECO Meetings, highlighted tremendous potentialities that ECO countries possess in human and natural resources and urged the need for enhanced economic cooperation among Member States and their respective



Chambers of Commerce through establishing active private sector networks. Moreover, he acknowledged the timely convening of 1st Meeting of the ECO Public and Private Sector Energy/Petroleum Consortiums/Companies for enhancing energy cooperation. He further called for increased trade among Member States through expanding activities of ECO banks for commercial and investment purposes; boosting financial insurance for projects; preferential joint venture projects; vigorous follow up for active implementation of ECOTA; normalization of visa regimes for businessmen and truck drivers; issuance of ECO sticker visa, more customs facilities; establishment of arbitration center; and speeding up work on ECO corridors and regional connectivity.

In his statement, Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General deeply appreciated the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and ECO-CCI for holding the ECO-CCI Meetings as well as the 1st Meeting of the ECO Public and Private Sector Energy/Petroleum Consortiums/Companies and for their sincere efforts for enhancing

private sector cooperation among ECO Member States and their commitment for more integration in the ECO Region. The ECO Secretary General also briefed the Meeting about the ECO's overall policies in different areas of cooperation and future plans, including ECO Vision-2025, recent progress made in advancing regional economic development agenda, as well as implementation of ECOTA.

The 1st Meeting of the ECO Public and Private Sector Energy/Petroleum Consortiums/Companies was structured in 5 panel discussions involving representatives of the public/private energy entities of the participating countries who made extensive discussions on various features of cooperation in energy sector. During the 2-day active programme, the Meeting agreed on establishment of ECO Energy Consortium(s), covering cooperation and projects on oil and gas, electricity, petrochemical and renewable energy sectors. A roadmap for the establishment of the ECO Energy Consortium will be prepared and circulated among the Member States shortly.

During the Meeting, the delegates from financial institutions, namely, ECO Trade and Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank also briefed the Meeting about their activities on completed, ongoing and future projects in the ECO Member States. ECO-TDB expressed its readiness to finance ECO energy projects with special focus on clean energy projects, including, hydro, solar, wind and other renewable sources of energy.

CountrySTAT System Training for ECO Region



The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) jointly organized a five-day Refresher Training of Focal Points on the CountrySTAT System for ECO countries from 24 to 28 July 2016 in the ECO Secretariat, Tehran.

H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, the ECO Secretary General inaugurated the Workshop and underlined the need for such training programs for better and potent economic policies through capacity building programs of individuals and thereby national and regional institutions.

Two senior trainers, namely, Mr. Fabio Grita, Coordinator of the "FENIX Platform", Information Technology Division and Ms. Stefania Bacci, Statistician of FAO in Rome, delivered the trainings to participants from Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Iran.

CountrySTAT is a web-based information system on food and agriculture which provides easy access to statistical data of good quality that can aid decision-makers in better, evidence-based policy-making and greater efficiency in development politics. It serves as a one stop centre that enables the collection and harmonization of timely and reliable official data from different sources and their integration in a common location. Data provided through CountrySTAT is useful for researchers, policy-



makers, development organizations, and the private sector to design and implement better policy and investments in agriculture sector. The System is based on state-of-the-art technologies and is currently being used by several international organizations such as UNECA, IFDC, WTO and has been implemented in many countries in Africa and in other areas of the world. H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, the ECO Secretary General awarded the "Certificates" to the participants. He urged the participants to utilize the knowledge gained in their respective countries and expressed hope to continue the same in future for sustainability of the benefits of such programs.



ECO Trade Meeting and Training were held in Islamabad

ECO CHRONICLE As a part of implementation of the 3rd Phase of ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project, the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) and Training were held on July 18-20, 2016 in Islamabad. Representatives from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, ECO Secretariat and UNIDO participated in the Meeting and Training.

The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain, the Minister of Science and Technology, Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Dr. Mohammad Adnan, Director for Trade and Investment of ECO



Secretariat also made the welcome statement during the inaugural session of the Meeting.

As per the programme of the Meeting and in the first day, the representatives of Ministry of Science and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the ECO Secretariat and UNIDO made presentations relevant to the theme of the Project. The participants also visited in the first day the National Physical and Standards Laboratory in Islamabad.

In the following two days, the Meeting formulated and finalized the draft guidelines for developing National Quality Policies in standardization and conformity assessment and technical regulations, with technical support of UNIDO's international consultant of the Project.

The Meeting also agreed that as the implementation of third phase of the Project will be completed this year, there is a need for the fourth phase of the Project and made its recommendations in this regard. In the closing remarks, Mr. Mohammad Siddiq, Director General, Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), thanked the representatives for their participation as well as for their valuable recommendations and suggestions during the Meeting. He also appreciated the ECO Secretariat and UNIDO for the contributions and the support made to hold the Meeting and Training.

ECO Training Course on "Unification of Height Datums" in Tehran

The First ECO Geomatics Committee Training Course on "Unification of Height Datums" was hosted and organized by the National Cartographic Center (NCC) of Iran on 16-21 July 2016 in Tehran. The Training Course was attended by representatives from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran (host), Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as ECO Secretariat. The Training Course was jointly inaugurated by Professor Dr. Alireza A. Ardalan, Director General of the National Cartographic Center of Iran and Secretary of the ECO Geomatics Committee and the ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari. In his opening statement, NCC Director General, while expressing his profound gratitude to the ECO Member States and ECO Secretariat for contribution to and participation in the Training Course underscored the importance of training, pertinent capacity building, enhancing synergy and coherence among key concerned stakeholders in the ECO Region on mapping and geometry, including the unification of height datums, and highlighted the dividends of regional cooperation in this sphere. He also called upon Member States to strengthen their efforts for further enhancing the collaboration under the established mechanism of "ECO Geomatics Committee".

In his inaugural statement and while emphasizing on the importance of training, capacity building and knowledge sharing among Member States, the ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi briefed the participants on ECO's overall profile and current state of play, including the emerging ECO Vision for the next 10 years. He also highlight-

ed the importance of geometry, mapping and surveying cooperation for the success of ECO regional collaboration in other areas including in environment and disaster risk reduction.

At the beginning of the course, the participants visited different departments of National Cartographic Center of Iran and became well-versed with the main activities, functions and the capacities of the NCC, including the land registry services, cadastre services, map and atlas services, GPS, archive services, human resources management and land registry and cadastre modernization projects.



During the 5-day intensive schedule, the participants actively engaged in different training sessions on various topics, including tide gauges and related calibrations, analysis of the tide gauge observations (Fourier analysis, least squares analysis, wavelet analysis), tide gauges calibration computations, satellite altimetry observations & corrections, satellite altimetry computations, geoid, sea surface topography and mean sea level computation, concept of heights, and height datums and unifications of height datums and their computations. They also learned various concerned topics from chief instructor and other instructors from Iran and exercised extensive technical formula and test data for solving the equations through online software.

At the conclusion of the fruitful training course, all participants were awarded with "Certificate of Completion".

A Tehran City Tour for participants was also planned by National Cartographic Center of Iran on 21st July 2016.

ECO Secretary General met with Iran's Vice President



ECO
CHRONICLE

ECO Secretary
General

Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca met on 22 June 2016 with H.E. Dr. Mohammad Bagher Nobakht, the Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Head of Management and Planning Organization.

At the beginning of the Meeting, Dr. Nobakht welcomed Secretary General and his delegation and highlighted two important developments in Iran which have direct bearing on ECO, namely, end of sanction era and the emerging 5-year national development plan of the Country.

He underscored that in both developments, there is strong desire to engage in higher level of cooperation with the neighbouring countries.

This is why Iran is increasingly giving prominence to ECO in our external relations and we are very interested to learn about ECO capacities and roles in this regard.

Ambassador Akca in return briefed Dr. Nobakht about the planning structure of ECO, including through ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) which includes the heads of planning organizations of the Member States.

He further referred to the ongoing planning exercise within ECO, the so called "ECO Vision 2025", and the process towards its finalization.

He highlighted the importance of the intervention of the ministers of planning and development of the Member States at this stage to finalize the draft Vision.

ECO Secretariat hosted Iftar Reception.



ECO
CHRONICLE

In honour of the Holy Month of Ramadan, an Iftar dinner was hosted by Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, the ECO Secretary General on 22 June 2016 at the ECO Secretariat.

The Iftar dinner was attended by the ambassadors and representatives of the ECO Member States as well as staff members of the Secretariat.

During the reception, Secretary General also bid farewell to H.E. Noor Muhammad Jadmani, the outgoing ambassador of Pakistan to ECO and welcomed the new ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan to ECO, H.E. Bunyad Huseinov.

He also handed over "Certificate of Appreciation" to two directors of the Secretariat, Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov and Mr. Gaffar Erbek, at the end of their tenure in the ECO Secretariat.

Study and website on Nanotechnology in ECO Region

ECO CHRONICLE The Study on "Nanotechnology Progress in ECO Region" conducted by the Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council was formally released at a ceremony on 22 January 2017 in Tehran attended by high ranking officials and ambassadors from Member States and ECO Secretary General.

The website of the ECO Nanotechnology Network (<http://www.econano.org>) was also launched at the same event.

The programme was hosted by Dr. Saeed Sarkar, Secretary General of the Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council of Iran. The event was jointly opened by statements made by Dr. Sarkar and H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General. ECO Secretary General in



his opening remarks emphasized that nanotechnology is one of the highest technologies of today's world that is transforming the world by inventing and producing new materials which are non-existent naturally. He also overviewed the history of the ECO Nanotechnology Network and admired the release of the Study as an important step towards implementation of the Project. He

described the ECO Nanotechnology Network (ECONAN) as a great capacity in ECO Region for development and promotion of high technologies which ultimately will benefit the people of Member States and help improve the quality of life. He expressed hope that all Member States will join the Project.

It is to be reminded that the project of establishment of ECO

Nanotechnology Network was proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2007 which includes as first steps, conducting the above study and launching the website.

The participants in the ceremony also visited the exhibition of Iran Nanotechnology Achievements which showcased numerous number of nanotech products and applications.



ECO-UNESCO-Habitat Workshop on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis was held in Tehran

ECO
CHRONICLE

The "Induction Capacity Building Workshop of Sub-regional Project on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis" was organized from 30th May to 1st June 2016 in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Workshop was participated by government's representatives, scientists and experts from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Turkey as well as officials from UNESCO, UN-Habitat, International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES) and ECO Secretariat.

In the opening session; Mr. Siamak Moghadam, Chief of UN-Habitat, Ms. Esther Kuisch-Laroche, Director of UNESCO Tehran office, Mr. Seyed Jaleedin Alavi, Deputy Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Dr. Mehdi Zare from IIEES made their opening remarks addressing the importance of this sub-regional project for the enhanced cooperation on disaster risk reduction. ECO Deputy Secretary General also informed the participants about the ongoing attempt within ECO to create a regional platform for



implementation of the Sendai framework in the ECO Region. He further acknowledged the importance of such sub-regional project by UN for four ECO Member States (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan) and expressed hope that this project and projects as such be expanded to cover other interested ECO Member States.



During the 3-day workshop; the instructors from Iran and Turkey, namely, Dr. Oveisi, Dr. Zare, Dr. Can Zulfikar, Dr. Babak Mansouri, Dr. Anoushiravan Ansari, Dr. Masoud Mojarab, Eng. Nazi Norouzi, Dr. Zafarani, and Dr. Farnaz Kamranzad conducted technical exchanges on the topics of the Workshop. Participating representatives and scientists from

Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan also presented their scientific papers and researches.

This induction workshop was planned to familiarize the relevant governmental and academic representatives of the participating countries with the sub-regional project on seismic hazard and risk analysis initiated by UN-Habitat and UNESCO and supported by Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and some other international organizations. The Project is planned to be finished in 3 years.

During the Workshop, some technical visits were also organized by the Iranian authorities. At the end of the Workshop, the participants received "Certificate of Participation" jointly awarded by ECO, UNESCO, Habitat and IIEES.

ECO
CHRONICLE

On 2 June 2016 and on the sidelines of the 6th ECO

Working Group Meeting on Environment held in Islamabad, the participating delegations called on H.E. Mr. Zahid Hamid, Minister for Climate Change of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. At the outset, the Minister congratulated the ECO Secretariat for convening important 6th ECO WGM on Environment in Islamabad and deeply appreciated ECO's efforts to stimulate regional dialogue on environmental concerns. H.E. Minister Hamid also briefed the visiting ECO delegates in detail about Pakistan's achieved goals, ongoing and future activities in various areas of environment, including organizational structure, constitutional amendments being carried out by the Government of Pakistan in climate change policy, biodiversity conservation and sustainable



forest management at provincial and federal levels, as well as on actions aimed to increase the current level of 5% forest coverage ratio in the Country. He stated that the Government of Pakistan is giving utmost priority to forestry and numerous tree planting activities has been launched in all provinces of Pakistan.

The Minister recalled devastating havoc of floods of 2010 and 2011 in Pakistan, which triggered displacement of 20 million people as well as nearly 10 billion USD economic losses, and highlighted that Pakistan is located in one of the most dangerous climate affected zones of the

ECO Environment Delegates met with Minister for Climate Change of Pakistan

world and has been declared as world's 8th most affected county. The Minister said these changes have not only dire effects on Pakistan, but on its neighbors as well.

Speaking on behalf of the ECO Secretariat and all delegates, Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment (EME) thanked the Government of Pakistan, particularly the Ministry of Climate Change for hosting this important and timely ECO meeting in Islamabad and praised Pakistan's invaluable contributions within ECO's environmental umbrella, as well as for voicing regional concerns within global environmental fora. He highlighted the important role Pakistan could play in ECO Region via championing capacity building and knowledge sharing in core areas, inter alia, combating adverse impacts of climate change, deforestation and sustainable forest management, sand storms, droughts, floods, etc.

At the end of the Meeting, the honourable Minister called for robust cooperation among ECO Member States and requested the ECO Secretariat to put efforts in formulating regional policy frameworks for climate resilient pathways, with particular emphasis on coping with desertification problem in ECO Region. He assured the Secretariat and Member States of Government of Pakistan's full cooperation in environmental domain. He also graciously honored the delegates with memorable souvenirs.



University students visited ECO Secretariat

ECO CHRONICLE As per past practice, two groups of master students from the University of Tehran and PhD students from University of Tarbiat Modarress visited the ECO Secretariat on 29 December 2016 and became familiar with the functions and structure of the ECO Secretariat. Headed by Professor Nasrin Mosafa, a well-known political science scholar, the students were also briefed by the officials and officers of the Secretariat about the legal and operational aspects of the organization as well as projects and programmes in trade, energy and transport.

ECO Secretary General met with new ECI President



ECO CHRONICLE The new President of ECO Cultural Institute, Dr. Mohammad Mehdi Mazaheri, visited the ECO Secretariat on 23 October 2016 and met with the ECO Secretary General, H.E. ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça.

During the meeting, ECO Secretary General congratulated Dr. Mazaheri on his new assignment and assured him of continued support of the Secretariat to the ECI.

Both sides reviewed the possible areas for enhancing cultural activities of the Organization.

President of ECO Cultural Institute also underlined the importance of the cooperation among ECO bodies and emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation and exchange of experiences between ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Institute as three specialized agencies of ECO.

ECO- ESCAP joint DRR Mission to Kabul

ECO CHRONICLE At the request of the DRR authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, a joint mission by ECO and UNESCAP visited Kabul from 20 to 22 February 2017.

The purpose of the mission was to make assessment of the needs of the Country in its national attempts to reduce disaster risk and to define working mechanisms for a regional inter-agency support to Afghanistan.

The programme of the joint mission included, among others, discussions with relevant Afghani DRR authorities and stakeholders, and meetings with the representatives of the UN agencies and other relevant international organizations based in Kabul. A national workshop was also held where representatives and experts from ECO Secretariat,



ESCAP Secretariat and UNESCO Tehran Office as well as representatives of some ECO Member States and relevant local experts and officials engaged in a round of interactive discussions.

The members of the joint mission also met with H.E Wais Ahmad Barmak, honourable State Minister for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs of Afghanistan.

The outcome of the mission is expected to contribute to the ongoing ECO undertaking for developing a regional framework for DRR, taking into account the special needs of the Member States and the region as a whole; and to the overall ECO advocacy programmes for Afghanistan which are expected to be revisited during an ECO special conference on Afghanistan, scheduled for May 2017 in Kabul.



6th ECO Working Group Meeting on Environment in Islamabad



The 6th ECO Working Group Meeting on Environment, hosted by the Ministry of Climate Change of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in collaboration with ECO Science Foundation, was held on 1-2 June 2016 in Islamabad. The Meeting was attended by the Senior Environmental Officials from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan (host), Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkish Cypriot State (ECO Observer), as well as UNESCO, ECO-IEST, ECO Science Foundation and the ECO Secretariat.

Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, Federal Secretary for Ministry of Climate Change of Pakistan while inaugurating the Meeting expressed his profound gratitude to all delegations for participating in the Meeting and underscored the importance of enhancing synergy and coherence among ECO Member States in order to seriously cope with environmental issues, including climate change, trans-boundary biodiversity threats, deforestation, land degradation and desertification, especially in the context of Paris Agreement on Climate Change and within the ECO policy frame-

works.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment (EME) expressed his appreciation to the Ministry of Climate Change of Pakistan for hosting the Meeting in Islamabad and briefed on ECO's overall environment profile, including recent progress made in advancing regional dialogue on climate change, sustainable forest management and biodiversity agendas, as well as ongoing projects and future engagements. ECO Director also briefed on the key elements of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN Summit on Sustainable Development held in New York in September 2015, which also adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and emphasized on the desirability of crafting ECO policies in line with the 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai global framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Professor Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President of ECO Science Foundation, Mr. Sasan Rabieh, Coordinator of ECO-IEST and Mr. Syed Muhammad Raza Shah, National Progression Officer of the UNESCO to Pakistan also delivered their opening policy statements/presentations.

The Senior Environmental Representatives from ECO



Member States also highlighted their national environmental policies and strategies and best practices in the context of global agendas in order to deal seriously with major threats emanating from the adverse impacts of climate change and other environmental issues.

After extensive deliberations, the Meeting generated key outcome decisions on, among others, the Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2016-2020); establishment of Ad Hoc Group/Task Force to formulate and develop "ECO Regional Adaptation Programme"; reflection of common environmental concerns in the new ECO Vision 2025; concerted actions in the context of Nairobi Resolution on dust haze and sand storms adopted in May 2016 during UNEA-2; implementation of the key action points agreed during the 2nd ECO Consultative Meeting held on 27 May 2016 on the sidelines of the 2nd UNEA in Nairobi; timely submission of the NPRs; publication of ECO Bulletin on Environment; ECO regional policies on addressing grave impacts of air pollution and waste management and trans-boundary water issues; preparation of ECO State of Environment (SOE) Report; implementation of the SDGs and access to funding from GCF and GEF; organizing training workshops on capacity building for the optimal ECO regional approach to green economy; "ECO Technical Workshop on Combating Desertification with a Special Emphasis on Dust Haze and Sand Storm in the ECO Region" in 2016/2017; and participation of Member States in UNESCAP Regional Conference in September 2016, as well as hosting the International Green Film Festival (IGFF) tour in ECO Member States.

Moreover, the Meeting also recommended to organize ECO Ministerial/Senior Officials Meetings on the sidelines of the UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD, UNEA, including the UNFCCC COP-22 (November 2016 in Morocco) and UNCBD COP-13 scheduled for December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico. The Meeting also expressed its support for the Turkish candidacy for hosting the UNFCCC COP-26 in 2020, as well as for CBD COP-14 in 2018.

ECO Secretary General attended the Annual Meeting of the ECO Bank



ECO
CHRONICLE

The 15th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) was held on May 31, 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. On invitation of the Bank, H.E ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca participated in the plenary session of the Meeting and delivered a statement.

In his statement to the Plenary, the ECO Secretary General congratulated the Bank for expanding its membership to six ECO Member States and appreciated various development initiatives the Bank is formulating and implementing to contribute towards the medium and long-term financing needs of the Region. He also deliberated upon ECO-UNIDO's Trade Capacity Building Project initiative and the preparation of ECO Vision 2025 by the Secretariat. He further touched upon ECO's efforts regarding energy and environment-related issues such as the proposed ECO Regional Electricity Market, the ECO Plan of Action on Environmental Cooperation and Global Warming (2015-2020) and steps for combating desertification. He also discussed the proposed Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Road Corridor for improving connectivity and transport of goods and people across the Region.

The Secretary General called on the Bank and the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) to find better ways and means of cooperation to promote sustainable development and regional integration in both public and private sectors. He thanked the President of the Bank, H.E. Mr. Javaid Aslam for this opportunity to address the 15th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors.

The ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECO-TDB) was established on August 3, 2005 and started its operation in December 2008.

Secretary General attended UN Sustainable Transport Conference in Ashgabat

An ECO high level delegation headed by His Excellency Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca participated in the UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference, hosted by the Government of Turkmenistan on 26-27 November 2016 in Ashgabat.

In his inaugural statement, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Honourable President of Turkmenistan referred to the latest developments in the transport sector in Turkmenistan where a number of ambitious projects on construction and upgrading of existing infrastructure in road, railway, aviation and the sea transport are being realized and planned.

ECO Secretary General in his statement in the Conference pointed out that ECO has a proven record in facilitating regional and international transport and removal of unsustainable transport practices where sustainable transport is of prime importance and high relevance to ECO. He further referred to the corridor-based arrangements of ECO to promote development of its member countries through smooth and seamless road and railway transit system in the Region.

On the sidelines of the

Conference, ECO Secretary General had bilateral meetings with Foreign Minister and Minister of Railway Transport of Turkmenistan. H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, while stressing the importance of cooperation of Turkmenistan under the auspices of ECO, informed about the readiness of Turkmen Government to host the 9th

the project to be funded by IDB, notably regarding support on the part of Kazakh and Iranian Railways. Turkmen side articulated its support towards this ECO's initiative. Possibility of initiating a feasibility study to examine inter-modal operation opportunities (Ro-RO) for ECO Members of the Caspian region was also discussed with Turkmenistan's showing inclination to this end.

ECO delegation also participated and contributed to the agenda of UNECE's side event on "border crossing facilitation" via presenting its latest activities on the subject and met with the counterparts from the UN commissions, notably, ECE and ESCAP. Ms. Eva Molnar from UNECE's Transport Division encouraged ECO to move on with legal arrangements for possibility of acting "as a dialogue partner" under



Ministerial Meeting on Transport in 2017. The two sides also exchanged views on further joint actions with active participation of Turkmen counterparts.

In meeting with the Minister of Railways of Turkmenistan, the issue of commercialization of the railway connecting Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran (KTI) was discussed where Turkmen side was briefed on the latest status on

UNECE's TIR related bodies to promote the interests of its Member States and expressed readiness to provide guidance in this regard. Mr. Li Yuwei, from UNESCAP Transport Division also assured support to help ECO in finding a qualified lead consultant for ITI and KTAI road corridors studies and expressed readiness to cooperate on other projects of mutual interest.

ECO Secretariat attended the Heart of Asia Conference in India

The 6th Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process was held on 4 December 2016 in Amritsar, Republic of India.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and high-level representatives of the participating and supporting countries, as well as high level representatives of the international and regional organizations attended the Conference, co-chaired by Mr. Shri Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister of the Republic of India and Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

At the joint invitation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and India, ECO Secretariat attended this important event.

The Conference, themed as "Addressing challenges, achieving prosperity", was jointly inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India and H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

In his statement at the Ministerial Conference, ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kanan Nazarov highlighted that Ministerial Conferences are the most important mechanism to take stock of achievements and work together in charting the future course of action in realizing the collective objective of a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

He added that Afghanistan's accession to the WTO is a very important milestone helping its integration with the global trade system and it will put Afghanistan in a favourable environment to take benefit from the economic advantages of interna-



tional trade.

He encouraged Afghanistan to take benefit of the trade finance and infrastructure development schemes offered by the ECO Bank. He also referred to Afghanistan's active participation in ECO's programmes and projects interconnecting the region and removing existing obstacles on the way of transit, and highlighted the project on development of the road corridor between Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) and ECO Container Train Network Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul. He further added that ECO in cooperation with Government of Afghanistan will soon organize "ECO Special Conference on Afghanistan" with the participation of the ministers/high level officials of the Member States as well as representatives of the relevant regional and international stake-holders to agree on an optimal ECO advocacy policy for Afghanistan for the years to come.

The Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference agreed to continue cooperation in the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the areas of disaster management; trade commercial and investment opportunities; regional infrastructure; counter-narcotics, etc. The Conference unanimously adopted "Amritsar Declaration", reaffirming commitment of the Heart of Asia countries for long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan.



ECO Secretariat participated in COP22 in Marrakech



The 22nd Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC) was held from 7 to 18 November 2016 in Marrakesh, Morocco. The High Level Segment of the Conference, 15-17 November 2016, was attended by Heads of State/Government, Ministers and high level officials from UNFCCC state parties, as well as representatives of the UN System, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders. An ECO delegation also attended the High level Segment. During the Conference, ECO was officially granted Observer Status in the COP process of the UNFCCC which is the fifth observership recently granted to ECO by global environmental entities. In 2015 and 2016, ECO was granted Observer Status in the UNEP for UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary bodies; UNCCD; IPCC and UNCBD.

On the margins of the Marrakech Conference, the ECO delegation participated in the Side Event on Sand and Dust Storms, co-organized by Iran and UNDP on 15 November 2016. The Event, moderated by Mr. Gary Lewis, UN Resident Coordinator in Iran, was held with participation of Mrs. Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice-President and Head of Department of Environment (DoE)

of Iran, Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Mr. Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) as keynote speakers. The aim of the Side Event was to both raise awareness and serve as a call to action for the countries of the region to find a way to tackle the trans-boundary human development challenges such as sand and dust storms (SDS). On the margins of the Side Event, ECO delegation had a brief discussion with Mr. Erik Solheim, UNEP Executive Director and exchanged views on future ECO-UNEP cooperation, particularly on preparation of SoE for the ECO Region and ECO project on dust haze and sand storms. The UNEP Executive Director acknowledged the importance of projects in the sub-

ject areas which are in line with the UNEP's policy to enhance partnerships with international and regional organizations and expressed his hope to work closer with ECO in implementation of these projects. The delegation had also detailed discussions with some other UNEP officials on the future bilateral cooperation.

On 14th of November 2016, ECO delegation conducted a full-day showcase on ECO activities for visibility and networking purposes. The showcase provided an ample opportunity for ECO delegation to introduce Organization's activities specifically in the environmental area and gain publicity among delegates and visitors representing world environment community through organization of open dialogues, networking with NGOs and IGOs, and presenting ECO projects.



ECO Secretariat attended the UN Global South-South Development EXPO 2016

The Global South-South Development EXPO 2016 was held from October 31 to November 3, 2016 in Dubai. "South-South Cooperation: Enhancing innovation towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" was the overall theme of the annual event, which hosted the UN Representatives and UNDP Resident Coordinators in different countries; UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes; intergovernmental organizations; think tanks; and other partner organizations showcasing their best practices. The EXPO also included a series of "Solution Forums" where key stakeholders from throughout the Global South engaged with their counterparts to exchange knowledge and experiences on a wide range of issues, including economic growth, food security, public-private partnership, green technology transfer, industrial innovation, global health, youth empowerment and peace-building.

At the invitation of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), ECO Secretariat attended this important Global South-South Development event for the first time. Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kanan Nazarov participated in the Plenary Sessions on "Cross-regional South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Promoting Sustainable Development" and "Research on South-South Cooperation in the Context of the SDGs", and "High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation".

On 4th of November ECO Deputy Secretary General also attended the "First Regional Networking Forum on the role of South-South/East-East cooperation in advancing the achievement of national development priorities in implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda". The Forum was an opportunity for national focal points on South-South Cooperation and for representatives of various relevant regional groupings as well as other key global and regional multilateral institutions to exchange approaches to formulating national South-South Cooperation strategies as a means to further improve the national level coordination of South-South and Triangular Cooperation activi-



ties; to establish new partnerships; as well as to agree on joint projects and innovative practical solutions; so as to best contribute towards the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. ECO Deputy Secretary General in his remarks briefed the Forum about the Organization and ECO Region. He pointed out that regional groupings can serve as a practical platform to promote South-South and Triangular Cooperation and to implement

Global South strategies towards the achievement of SDGs, and ECO can play role and contribute in this regard. As the outcome of the First Regional Networking Forum, Joint Statement on South-South Cooperation was adopted.

On the sidelines of GSSD EXPO 2016, ECO Deputy Secretary General also met with Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for South-South Cooperation and Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). The two sides exchanged views on finalizing the draft MoU between ECO and UNOSSC and discussed the ways of working on a strategic framework for the projects and activities to be jointly implemented in the areas of interest.



ECO Secretariat attended the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

The "Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction" was held from 3 to 5 November 2016 in New Delhi. The Conference was inaugurated by the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi and Special Representative of UN Secretary General and the Head of UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Over 4,000 delegates, including high level representatives from 50 countries as well as senior officials from UN relevant agencies and other international and regional organizations participated in the Conference. An ECO Delegation headed by Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari also attended the Event.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Robert Glasser, the Head of UNISDR, gave an overview on the way gone since UN Conference in Sendai in March 2015 and highlighted the importance of the Asian Ministerial Conference which

re-affirm the region's leadership on disaster risk management and provide important input to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be hosted by the Government of Mexico in May 2017.

During the Conference and its thematic and featured panels, representatives of the participating countries and organizations deliberated on ways and means to upgrade regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction and on the components of the regional plan for disaster risk reduction in Asia. All Governments and other parties expressed commitment and support to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which is helping countries to institutionalize DRR into long-term development planning and climate change adaptation

strategies of the countries. The coherence and interlinkage between disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change was underlined as a critical thread in most statements.

ECO Deputy Secretary General in his statement in the plenary session of the Conference briefed the ministerial meeting about disaster situation in the ECO Region and referred to ECO emerging regional approach to disaster risk reduction in the post Sendai era.

The Asian Ministerial Conference was concluded with adoption of the "Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030" and

"New Delhi Declaration". The Regional Plan urged on boosting national and local efforts to reduce disaster losses and increase regional cooperation on disaster risk management in Asia. The Plan has also emphasized on the need to



strengthen the capacity of main inter-governmental regional organizations (IGO) including ECO to foster the implementation of the Sendai Framework from a regional perspective.

The New Delhi Declaration called on enhancing regional cooperation including strengthening the role of intergovernmental organizations for coherent implementation of the Sendai Framework and the 2030 sustainable development agenda, fostering innovative partnerships, and North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation in all areas related to disaster risk reduction.

This year's Ministerial Meeting also included a panel on "Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Sendai Framework Implementation in Asia" held on 4 November. The Panel was chaired by H.E. Mr. Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State of Home Affairs of India. Panelists from inter-governmental regional organizations (IGO) in Asia including Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar; Secretary General of SAARC, Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa; Secretary General of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Ambassador Sumith Nakandala; ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Alavi Sabzevari; Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN, Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee; and Deputy

Secretary General of Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) Dr. UMEZAVA Akima participated in the discussions on the imperative of the regional cooperation in fostering DRR efforts at national, regional and global levels.



Panelists also presented capacities exist in their respective regions and sub-regions for promotion of DRR agendas. The Panel also included questions from the audience which stimulated further contributions from the panelists. In informal



exchange of views between ECO delegation and some participating regional organizations on the sidelines of the Panel, it was generally agreed that this kind of inter-regional dialogue will cer-

tainly help synergy and coherence in the approaches adopted by different regions and sub-regions.

On the sidelines of the Asian Ministerial Conference, the ECO Delegation met with Mr. Robert Glasser, the Special Representative of UN Secretary General and the Head of UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) on 4 November. At the beginning of the Meeting, Mr. Alavi gave a report on the ECO activities since last bilateral discussions in Dushanbe. He particularly focused on the

outcome of the Expert Group Meeting on ECO Regional Framework for DRR, recently convened in Tehran. He thanked UNISDR for its contribution into the meeting. Mr. Glasser also informed the ECO delegation on the future course of actions on DRR including the global indicators to be finalized by the end of this year which defines benchmarks for implantation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework at different levels. He also expressed hope that in his future visit to Iran, ECO-UNISDR relationship can be further strengthened.

ECO delegation also attended a side event chaired by Tajikistan on DRR regional framework for Central Asia and Caucasus, and a meeting on DRR information management jointly organized by Iran and ESCAP.

ECO-ECT Energy Roundtable on the Margins of the World Energy Congress



The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization in cooperation with the Energy Charter Secretariat jointly organized a roundtable on 12 October 2016 in Istanbul on the sidelines of the 23rd World Energy Congress. The roundtable comprised of two panels: (1) The International Energy Charter as a driver for energy investment flows and promotion of sustainability and (2) ECO Regional Electricity Market: Realities and Requirements.

The panelists and speakers from Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (TAVANIR), Turkish Electricity Transmission Company (TEIAS), Energy Market Regulatory Authority of Turkey (EMRA), World Bank Group, Iran Chamber of Commerce (ICCIMA), University of Tehran and University

College London as well as ECO and ECT Secretariats participated in the Roundtable.

In his opening remarks in the roundtable, Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça, ECO Secretary General deeply appreciated the Government of Republic of Turkey for convening the World Energy Congress, as well as the co-organizer, Energy Charter Secretariat for excellent coordination and preparation of this side event. He briefed the audience on ECO's overall policies, recent progress made in advancing regional economic development agenda, as well as implementation of ECO projects in energy sector and enhancing collaborative partnerships with relevant international organizations.

Secretary General underscored the importance of energy as one of the priority areas of cooperation within ECO and called for enhancement of synergies and coherence on energy among key ECO stakeholders in line with 2013-2022 "ECO Decade for enhanced Energy Cooperation", proclaimed by the ECO Energy Ministers, which also conforms to the UN Secretary General's initiative of "United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All". ECO Secretary General also referred to



the trends in the global investment in energy sector and highlighted the features of the ongoing ECO relevant projects, notably ECO Regional Electricity Market.

During the second panel, chaired by the ECO Secretary General, speakers and panelists brainstormed on the current state of play and future course of actions as relates to promoting the energy profile within the Region and exchanged views on the ways and means to realize the imperative of energy trade and connectivity in this part of the world.

They agreed on the need for continued synergic dialogue among the relevant stakeholders to implement the ECO Regional Electricity Market project in practical way. They also valued the utilization of experiences



and best practices of the existing success stories in electricity markets in the world.

The panelists from private companies and institutes also delivered presentations and proposed for establishment of Smart Markets, such as ECO/Caspian Energy Grid with active involvement of concerned and interested ECO institutions with a view to contributing to such projects through providing their research and capacity building services.



ECO Secretary General meetings in New York



A delegation of the ECO Secretariat led by H.E. Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General attended the General Debate segment of the 71st UN General Assembly where heads of State and Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UN member states, including ECO Member States, addressed the Assembly.

The ECO Secretary General also held a bilateral meeting with Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary General for South-South Cooperation and Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSS) on September 23, 2016. The two sides exchanged views on the status of the ongoing process of signing an MoU between ECO and UNOSS and discussed ways and means to establish workable arrangements for bilateral cooperation in the areas of interest for their common member states. UNOSS Director also invited ECO Secretary General to the Global South-South Cooperation Expo scheduled for late October in Dubai.

An Informal Coordination Meeting (ICM) was also held between the representatives of the Secretariats of ASEAN and ECO in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The Meeting was co-chaired by the Philippines and Iran. ECO was represented by the Deputy Secretary General Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi and ASEAN was represented by the Deputy Secretary General Mr. Hirubalan V P. During the Meeting, the status of cooperation between two organizations were reviewed and future plans for enhanced cooperation were discussed.

ECO Secretariat attended OIC Council of Foreign Ministers

The 43rd Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of the Islamic Cooperation was held on 18-19 October 2016 in Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan. At the invitation by the Government of Republic of Uzbekistan and OIC Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kanan NAZAROV represented the ECO in the Session.

The Session was opened by the Chairman of the previous session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, H.E. Mr. Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The President of Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev delivered the inaugural statement and expressed the profound significance of the theme of the Session and stressed upon the need to consider the spiritual aspects in education, and to strengthen cooperation among

the youth.

The Minister of Education of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Rostom Kassimov in his remarks introduced the theme of this session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, namely, "Education and Enlightenment - Path to Peace and Creativity".

The Session was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov. Ministers of Foreign Affairs and high level representatives of the OIC Member States, as well as senior representatives from UN relevant agencies and other international and regional organizations participated in the Session.

At the end of the Session deliberations, "Tashkent Declaration on Education and Enlightenment - Path to Peace and Creativity" was adopted. The Deputy Secretary General also joined Brainstorming Meeting on Youth Empowerment in OIC Member States.



ECO Secretariat attended the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The Forty-Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC-44) was convened on 17-20 October 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand.

During deliberations and discussions, the Panel agreed on the outlines of two new reports that will help governments implement the Paris Climate Change

Agreement. Notably, the Panel approved the Outlines of Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways in the context of strengthening the global response to the threats of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty, to be delivered in 2018, and the Outline of Methodology Report to Refine the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National GHG Inventories, to be finalized in 2019. The Special Report on 1.5°C was requested by the 21st UNFCCC Conference of Parties



in Paris in December 2015, which set a target of limiting global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels while pursuing efforts to hold it



to 1.5°C.
Mr. Abolfazl Azizipanah,
Programme Officer of

Environment of the ECO Secretariat participated in the Session and in his remarks expressed, on behalf of the ECO Secretariat, appreciation to IPCC Secretariat for granting Observer Membership to ECO and hoped that both Secretariats cooperate closely with a view to addressing the climate change phenomenon in the ECO Region. He

briefed the participants on the ECO projects and activities in terms of climate change and highlighted that ECO Member States are already experiencing the adverse impacts of climate change, which threaten their endeavors to achieve sustainable development, eradicate poverty and ensure food security. The representative of ECO Secretariat also pointed out that ECO can play role in regional coordination and coherence on climate resiliency in post-Paris era and share its capacities with IPCC for enhancement of participation of its Member States in IPCC activities.

ECO Secretariat hosted meeting of regional and sub-regional organizations

The Secretariats of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) jointly organized the "Expert Meeting on Enhancing Regional and Sub-Regional Involvement in the Work of the International Arrangement on Forests" (IAF) on 26-28 September 2016 in the ECO Secretariat, Tehran.

The Meeting was actively participated by the delegates from regional and sub-regional organizations and processes, including UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), African Forest Forum (AFF), African Union Commission (AUC), Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFnet), Forest Europe-Liaison Unit Bratislava (FE-LUB), Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific

(RECOFTC), Tehran Process Secretariat for Low Forest Cover Countries (TPS for LFCCs), UNFF and ECO. The Meeting was jointly inaugurated by Dr. Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UNFF Secretariat and Mr. Seyed Jaleedin Alavi Sabzevari, ECO Deputy Secretary General. Director of UNFF Secretariat in his remarks informed the Meeting on UNFF's overall activities and agenda, including major developments on forests; UN 2030 Development Agenda, key outcomes of the UNFF11 resolution, Paris Agreement, future IAF Strategic Plan, UNFF organizational functions, Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) and Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

In his opening remarks, the ECO Deputy Secretary General warmly welcomed the participants from regional and sub-regional organizations and processes from different regions across the globe and expressed his profound apprecia-



tion to UNFF for excellent preparatory coordination of this event with ECO Secretariat. While underscoring the importance of ECO's partnership with UNFF for advancing regional environmental agenda of the ECO Region through promoting sustainable forest management, he expressed ECO's readiness to continue collaborative partnership with UNFF and welcomed such relationship with other interested regional and sub-regional organizations. In this regard, he also pointed out that the international community has widely acknowledged ECO as a partner to implement global agenda in this part of the world.

During the 3-day proceedings of the Meeting, which was facilitated by the ECO Deputy Secretary General, the participants engaged in detailed interactive discussions and deliberations on various key issues, inter alia, enhancing collaboration and engagement of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the International Arrangement on Forest, the emerging Strategic Plan for implementation of United Nations Forests Instrument (UNFI), and forest-related SDGs; ways and means to enhance cooperation with UNFF; more effective contribution to High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and modalities for submitting inputs through UNFF; and utilization of available financial mechanisms such as GFFFN, GCF and GEF for overall promotion of sustainable forest management.

After extensive discussions, the Meeting identified 13 priority actions for enhancing involvement of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in the UNFF and IAF Strategic Plan for 2017-2030, which included, among others, initiatives to enhance visibility of regional and sub regional organizations in forest-related for establishment of an inter-regional coordination mechanism for forest-related exchanges; organization of capacity building activities/events for regional and sub-regional organizations enabling their more effective contributions into the implementation of forest related arrangements; etc.

The Expert Meeting was the first such inter-agency event on sustainable forest management co-organized and hosted by ECO Secretariat involving UN System, and regional and sub-regional organizations and processes.

ECO Secretariat attended International Nanotechnology Exhibition in Tehran



The 9th annual nanotechnology festival and exhibition was held on 5-8 October in Tehran, Iran. On the second day of the Exhibition, a special event was held with the participation of some Tehran-based ambassadors and representatives of the regional and international organizations in Iran.

The Director of Agriculture, tourism and Industry of ECO Secretariat, Mr. Memduh Unal, also attended the Event.

Dr. Sorena Sattari, the Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for Science and Technology, Dr. Majid Takhteravanchi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Saeid Sarkar, the Secretary of Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council (INIC) addressed the audience of the Event.

As per information provided in the Event, there has been great performance in recent years in the nanotechnology development in Iran where, among others, academic publication and patent applications in nanotechnology have been increased tremendously.

ECO Secretary General co-chaired a High level panel on Water Cooperation Mechanisms



In the context of the UN-sponsored "High-level Symposium on SDG 6 and Targets: Ensuring that No One is Left Behind in Access to Water and Sanitation" held on 9-11 August 2016 in Dushanbe, ECO Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca and Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal jointly co-chaired on 10 August 2016 one important thematic session of the Symposium on "New and Innovative Water Cooperation Mechanisms for Sustainable Development". First Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan and high-level officials from Morocco, Zambia, UNESCAP, UNESCO and OSCE attended the Session as the panelists. The Panel was moderated by a senior UNESCO official.

The Session was opened by Co-chair Senegalese Minister who presented an introduction to the topics for discussions. After a series of presentations by the panelists followed by questions and answers, the Co-chair ECO Secretary General concluded the discussions and highlighted that (i) all beneficiaries of water (governments, local authorities, NGO's and public) should be involved in the water diplomacy process, (ii) as in all thematic sessions suggested, parties should know and share data and information about water issues, (iii) capacity building is important, (iv) water policies should be based on technical information rather than political aspects, (v) local, regional, national and international projects should be integrated and harmonized, (vi) all policies and projects should be based on sustainability concerns.



ECO attended ACD Ministerial Meeting on Tourism

The first Ministerial Meeting on Tourism of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) was held on 29-30 August 2016 in Tabriz, Iran. The Meeting was attended by the delegates from Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Bhutan, South Korea, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Thailand, and the Philippines, as well as delegations from the ECO Secretariat and ACD.

The Senior Officials' Meeting of the ACD Ministerial meeting took place on the 29th August 2016 in Tabriz. The Ministerial Meeting commenced its work with the opening remarks by the ACD Secretary General, Mr. Bundit Limschoon, who expressed gratitude to the I.R. of Iran and welcomed all the delegations to the City of Tabriz. The Meeting, chaired by Mr. Morteza Rahmani Movahed, the Deputy Head of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization, agreed to establish an ACD Working Group on Tourism to draft a plan of action on tourism, taking into account the sustainable development related goals and targets, and welcomed the initiative made by Iran to establish the "Joint Tourism Network" to provide a platform for ACD Member States to share information of tourism destinations, experiences and best practices among tourism stakeholders in the region. It also discussed the ways and means to promote less-known and emerging destinations of the Member States.

ECO Secretariat attended the UN Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Dushanbe

The "Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia and South Caucasus" was held on 12 July 2016 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. At the joint invitation by Government of Republic of Tajikistan and UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), an ECO Delegation headed by Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari attended the Event.

The Meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Zokizoda Mahmadoir, Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan and chaired by H.E. Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda, Chairman of the Committee of Emergency Situations of Tajikistan. Mr. Robert Glasser, the Special Representative of UN Secretary General and the Head of UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) also attended the Meeting. High level representatives of the disaster management organizations from Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as senior officials from UN relevant agencies and other international and regional organizations also participated in the Meeting. In his introductory remarks, Mr. Glasser, the Head of UNISDR, gave an overview on the way gone since UN Conference in Sendai in March 2015 and elaborated on the importance of the regional platform for implementation of the Sendai Framework. He referred to the 2020 target within Sendai Framework for approval and implementation of national

strategies for disaster risk reduction and highlighted the need for incorporating disaster risk policies in the core economic planning of the countries.

During the Meeting, representatives of the participating countries and organizations discussed the optimal arrangement for the regional platform for disaster risk reduction in Central Asia and South Caucasus (CASC Region) and agreed on the principles and approaches to be followed. ECO Deputy Secretary General also briefed the Meeting about ECO and its emerging regional approach to disaster risk reduction in the post Sendai era. He particularly

reminded that 6 countries of CASC Region are ECO Member States which justifies the merit for UNISDR-ECO potential cooperation within the Region.

On the sidelines of the Platform meeting, the ECO Delegation met with H.E. Mr. Rustam Nazarzoda, the Chairman of the Committee of Emergency Situations of Tajikistan. Mr. Nazarzoda expressed interest for concrete cooperation within ECO context, especially in the areas of training and capacity building for risk management related experts and officials of the Member States. He particularly referred to the already existing center for such purpose in Tajikistan where trainings have been conducted for Afghan relevant experts and officials. Mr. Alavi in return emphasized that the ECO Secretariat will seriously examine the possibility of such cooperation exploring all available supports and facilities.



ECO Secretary General attended the UN High-level Symposium on Water and Sanitation in Dushanbe

On the invitation of the Government of Republic of Tajikistan, the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca and his delegation participated in the "High-level Symposium on SDG 6 and Targets: Ensuring that No One is Left Behind in Access to Water and Sanitation" held on 9-11 August 2016 in Dushanbe. The Symposium was chaired by the Prime Minister of Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda.

President of Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon formally opened the Symposium with his address to the high level participants.

Highlighting the significance of new and important initiatives of Tajikistan related to water issues, including the announcement of a new International Decade under the motto "Water for Sustainable Development", put forward in April 2015, President Rahmon expressed hope that such an initiative, if supported by the international community, would help attract more comprehensive attention to the implementation of the SDG 6 and its targets.

The President also said that the "High-Level Panel on Water" was established at the beginning of this year by the initiative of the UN Secretary General with involvement of the Heads of ten UN member states, including Tajikistan, as well as the President of the World Bank. In this regard, it was hoped that the Panel would play a significant role as a platform for discussion and consideration of the key global issues on water. President Emomali Rahmon suggested that during the review of SDG 6, constant attention should be given to the negative impacts of climate





change on water resources that may impede our efforts in achieving SDGs; and to the growth of the world population and increasing demand in water resources; gender aspect in water resources management; and transnational water cooperation that is one of the key factors to ensure peace, stability, and development.

ECO Secretary General also made a statement at the opening ceremony of the Symposium and commended the Government of Republic of Tajikistan, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and other Organizers of the Event and underscored that in 2015, UN Member States reached historic agreement and set 2030 Agenda, covering all dimensions of sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal 6 is the centre of this new development agenda. He highlighted that ECO is committed to the Sustainable Development Goal 6, as this specific agenda is especially relevant for our ECO Member States because our region is home to approximately 7% of the total world's population with an annual expected increase rate of 2 percent. Hence, it is of paramount importance that water, sanitation and hygiene are integrated into governmental policies and plans in the Region. Our shared prosperity and future growth depends very directly on water availability and equitable access to water, and as indicated in the Water Development Report of 2016, access to clean and affordable water supports health, livelihoods and the economy, while also creating decent jobs.

The Symposium was attended by over 700 high-level representatives from ninety (90) countries from across the world, as well as representatives from 47 international and regional organizations.

The Symposium discussed issues such as capacity-building of national governments and local authorities in the promotion of integrated water resources man-

agement; exchange of knowledge and experience in innovative practices to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene; improving water use efficiency; reducing water pollution; protection of watersheds and ecosystems; and promoting international cooperation and partnership, development of regional and multilateral cooperation, and the promotion of specific partnerships to implement SDG 6 and its targets.

At the Closing Session, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Tajikistan and UN Assistant Secretary General, an outcome document "Dushanbe Call for Action" was adopted by acclamation.

During the visit to Dushanbe, the ECO delegation had a series of bilateral talks and contacts with representatives of different international and regional organizations and institutions, including UNESCAP, SCO and FAO, as well as International Network of Basin Organization (NGO). During the talks the issue of providing technical support for establishment of ECO Water Centre in Islamabad was discussed where the willingness were expressed for providing support to the Centre.

ECO and UNISDR discussions on future cooperation



During his visit to Dushanbe to attend the "Central Asia and South Caucasus Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction", the ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari held on 11 July 2016 bilateral talks with Mr. Robert Glasser, the Special Representative of UN Secretary General and the Head of UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). At the beginning of the Meeting, Mr. Alavi gave an overview about ECO and its range of activities. He further referred to the mandate given by ECO Member States to have regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction, including in the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the ECO Region. He shared with the UN Official some areas of possible cooperation where ECO -UNISDR partnership may be explored.

Mr. Glasser in return highlighted the core mission of the UNISDR, particularly in the post Sendai era which focuses mainly on coordinating the pragmatic implementation of the Sendai Framework 2015 - 2030 in line with national and international agendas, including SDGs. He further acknowledged ECO as a supporting leverage for UNISDR in fulfilling its agenda in this region. He also emphasized on the need to make coherence between SDGs and Sendai Framework as well as the need to incorporate disaster risk reduction in the core economic planning at the national and regional levels within ECO. Both sides further exchanged views and information with a view to identifying areas of bilateral cooperation in the years to come. They also discussed the need for revisiting the existing MoU in line with the new regional and global trends and requirements.

ECO- IDB-FAO Trilateral Consultative Meeting in Islamabad



A trilateral consultative meeting between ECO, IDB and FAO was convened on 26 July 2016 on the sidelines of the 2nd Working Group Meeting on the Establishment of ECO Center of Excellence for Efficient Water Utilization for Agriculture (ECO-CEEWUA) in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The IDB and FAO delegations were represented by IDB Filed Representative Mr. Inamullah Khan, and Deputy FAO Representative Dr. Francisco Gamarro, respectively. Mr. Memduh Unal, Director for Agriculture, Industry and Tourism led the ECO delegation.

During the Meeting, three sides discussed extensively issues of

common interest and future partnership among the respective organizations in the area of agriculture and water conservation in the ECO Region.

ECO Director, while briefing on ECO's state of play in agriculture and water spheres, profoundly thanked the FAO and IDB for their consistent support to ECO in different areas of cooperation and sought both organizations' technical and financial support to ECO for further enhancing capacity building in the ECO Member States.

It was also decided to circulate the amended "Project Proposal for conducting a Feasibility Study for Establishment of the ECO-CEEWUA" to the ECO Member States with three week deadline to get their views as well as countries' background information.

The background information was suggested to contain (i) water and agriculture status of the countries; (ii) a clear policy and strategy statement of the individual countries, and (iii) specific recommendations and suggestions.

Both FAO and IDB delegations assured ECO of their continued support to ECO's regional initiatives and projects in water and agriculture as well as to enhance partnership and further strength institutional linkages in future.



ECO attended the Asia Partnership Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction

The Asia Partnership Meeting (IAP) was organized by UNISDR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on 21-22 June in Bangkok, Thailand. At the invitation of the UNISDR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction), ECO Secretariat attended the Meeting, where participants from national governments; Asian regional intergovernmental organizations including ASEAN, SAARC and ECO; United Nations bodies; NGOs and civil society organizations; private sector; scientific and academic community and media also participated.

The IAP is a multi-stakeholder forum with the role of facilitating the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Asia region. During the two-day discussions and exchanges, the participants discussed the revised version of the Asia Regional Plan for disaster risk reduction. In his statement as well as interventions in the deliberations of the Meeting, Mr. Javad Heidari from the ECO Secretariat shared with the participants information about the disaster-related situations in the ECO Region and briefed them on the ongoing process of developing a framework for regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction, including the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the ECO Region. Representative of the ECO Secretariat also had informal discussions with representatives from some ECO Member States, UN bodies and international and regional organizations on possible technical and capacity building cooperation on the disaster risk reduction matters. ECO Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction is scheduled to be held in Turkey later this year to adopt ECO regional framework on disaster risk reduction.



The Chinese Think-Tank Visited the ECO Secretariat

A delegation from the "Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences" (SASS) paid a visit to the ECO Secretariat in Tehran on 13 June 2016. During the visit, the delegation led by the SASS President Professor WANG zhan, had talks with ECO Secretary General Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca and other ECO Officials. At the beginning of the meeting, Professor WANG presented a brief introduction about the "Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences" (SASS), its structure and activities. He informed that SASS is one of the biggest think-tank in China with 17 research institutes, including three economic research institutes ("Institute of Economics", "Institute of National Economy", and "Institute of World Economy"). SASS has working relations with more than 40 like institutes worldwide. Outputs and findings of the SASS works and projects are normally submitted to the government.

The ECO Secretary General in return presented an overview about the ECO and its activities. He mentioned that Organization is focusing on economic cooperation among its 10 Member States with priority areas of trade, transport and energy. Given the geographical location of ECO, China has always been important for our Region. In transport and transit, ECO corridors are facilitating China



access to Europe and other global markets. ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Mangi also presented a general overview about the different ECO transport corridors which may be of interest to China. Referring to studies conducted so far on these corridors, he particularly highlighted the need for some studies on the commercial viability of the corridors.

The SASS President acknowledged the existing bases for bilateral cooperation and referred to overlapping membership of ECO countries in other regional arrangements, such as Eurasian Economic Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc., as an opportuni-

ty to establish ECO-China cooperation. He also referred to China's interest in Afghanistan development which also offers basis for cooperation.

Secretary General briefed about ECO involvement in some reconstruction projects as well as a drug-trafficking related project in Afghanistan. Referring to SASS nature of activities, Secretary General underlined that there has been no research relation between ECO and China yet and ECO is interested to engage in such cooperation. He also referred to recent contacts between ECO and Chinese authorities on possible operational cooperation in connectivity areas.

SASS President highlighted the importance of transport for economic development and recalled that research and investment in transport sector in some Chinese provinces resulted in GDP increase of the province. He then referred to the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative (one belt, one road initiative) and underlined that cooperation with ECO can be realized under

this context. He also informed about an existing project on "one belt, one road database" were cooperation with ECO on statistics can be established.

At the end of the visit, both sides agreed to continue exchanges with a view to identifying areas for real cooperation.



ECO and Energy Charter Secretariats

Exchange Observership

Following a series of interactions and joint initiatives, ECO Secretariat and Energy Charter Secretariat reached the point of institutionalization of their relationship, as Energy Charter Conference granted observership to the ECO and the upcoming ECO Council of Ministers will formally grant ECO observership to Energy Charter Secretariat. Eight ECO Member States are Members of the Energy Charter Conference while Pakistan and Iran are observers.

Energy Charter Secretariat has already engaged with some ECO Member States in various initiatives which can be extended to other ECO Member States. The ongoing ECO initiative to establish regional electricity market also provides promising area for ECO-ECT bilateral cooperation.

European Energy Charter (1991), Energy Charter Treaty (1994) and International Energy Charter (2015) are part of Energy Charter Process providing an international framework for cross-border cooperation in the energy sector based on the principles of open, competi-



tive markets and sustainable development.

The Energy Charter Conference enjoys the status of inter-governmental organization which comprises the representatives of the Energy Charter Contracting Parties and serves as the governing and decision-making body for the Energy Charter process. The Energy Charter Conference has 54 members and 34 observers. 12 international organizations are also observers to the Conference. Turkmenistan, an ECO Member State, is the Chairman of the Energy Charter Conference in 2017.

Established ECO-ECT relationship on the basis of reciprocal observership could facilitate exchange of information and experiences on issues of common interest in the energy sector, which is one of the priorities of the ECO. It could also offer immense opportunities in capacity building and promoting energy/electricity trade, investment and transit.

The Energy Charter is the first international organization granted observership in the ECO.

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Ambassador of the Philippines visited the ECO Secretariat

H.E. Mr. Eduardo Martin R. Meñez, Ambassador of the Philippines in the Islamic Republic of Iran paid a visit to the ECO Secretariat on 18th July 2016 and met with the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca. During the Meeting the two sides reviewed ECO-ASEAN relationship.

The Philippine Ambassador also raised the possibility of a joint ASEAN-ECO Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly in New York. The Philippines serves as the relevant ASEAN country coordinator.

ECO Secretariat attended UIC Regional Assembly for Middle East Railways



The "17th UIC Regional Assembly for Middle East (RAME) Railways" was held on 3rd June 2016 in Istanbul. The Assembly was attended by Mr. Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of the International Union of Railways (UIC); Mr. Mohsen Pour Seyed Aghaei, President of the Iranian Railways (RAI), Mr. Isa Apaydin, President of Board and Director General of Turkish Railways (TCDD), and Ms. Zukhra Abisheva from the ECO Secretariat. The Assembly was briefed by representative of the ECO Secretariat on ECO's railway corridor-oriented activities and plans supplementing and correlating with the objectives of the MoU between ECO and UIC.

The "UIC Regional Assembly Middle-East" is covering one of the regions with the most ambitious rail development plans and the most promising perspectives for rail. Examples supporting the above, according to UIC Director General, are the high speed rail developments in Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia; the improvement of freight lines and multimodal services in the entire region; as well as projects of long distance corridors, e.g. along the new Silk Road. On the other hand, the region is marked more than ever by divisions, crisis, international tensions and instability.

Through the implementation of its RAME Action Plan, UIC intends to support all members in their efforts to improve their effectiveness and competitiveness and successfully cope with current and future challenges of efficiency, safety and security, digitalization, sustainability, standardization and interoperability, particularly in view of international corridors.

It is to be reminded that the railway entities of six ECO Member States are considered as active/associate Members to UIC and Iran and Turkey are the most active members of the UIC Middle East Office.

ECO Certificates presented in the Khwarizmi International Award



The 30th Khwarizmi International Award ceremony was held on 13 February 2014 in Tehran. As practice in the previous Award ceremonies, ECO certificates were presented to 4 winners in the fields of "Applied Science" and "Research and Development".

The Award is named after prominent Iranian mathematician and astronomer of the 7th century Mohammad-Ibn- Musa Khwarizmi.

ECO will sign MoU with WIPO

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) have finalized a text of Memorandum of Understanding which elaborates their working relationship in future. The text, developed through bilateral exchanges, was reviewed by the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) in its 219th session on 20 February 2017, where authorization was given by the Member States to ECO Secretariat to enter into signing stage of the Document.

WIPO is one of the UN agencies with 189 member states established in 1967 to develop and support an effective international intellectual property system which promotes innovation and creativity in a balance manner. WIPO headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland.





Interview with H.E. Mr. Riza Hakan Tekin

Permanent Representative of Turkey in ECO

Ambassador Riza Hakan Tekin is Turkish Ambassador in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He is also serving as his country Permanent Representative in the Economic Cooperation Organization. He was so kind to accept our invitation for this interview.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** In 1964, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan created

a cooperation framework called "Regional Cooperation for Development" (RCD). In 20 years, these three countries decided to promote RCD to ECO in 1985. What was driving, and still is driving, Turkey to maintain interest in regional economic cooperation within ECO frameworks?

■ **Ambassador:** We are living in an era of rapid changes and taking necessary steps in

keeping up with the pace of these changes and developments is an important task for all of us. With this understanding, Turkey pursues a dynamic, visionary and multidimensional economic policy and joining/establishing international institutions constitutes an important part of this approach. Furthermore, ECO Region has a huge potential for trade thanks to its productive and promising

geography and the only way to realize our capacity is to enhance our intra-regional trade. With this belief and with the aim of providing the ground for a sustainable economic development by functionalizing the resources and potentials in the Region, we became one of the founding members of the ECO along with Pakistan and Iran.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO Vision 2025 will be soon adopted by ECO leaders in Islamabad. Expansion of intra-regional trade and enhancing transport and energy connectivity seem to maintain their values and relevance for regional cooperation within the context of the new Vision. As one of the leading ECO countries in trade and connectivity cooperation, how do you see Turkey's contribution to and impact on these areas of regional cooperation in the Vision's time span?

■ **Ambassador:** Considering the rapid socio-economic developments with both the opportunities and challenges in the world, it is very crucial to have a vision document which will be a sign of our will to continue cooperation in many different fields. We attach utmost importance to the ECO Vision 2025, because we believe it will effectively guide our cooperation efforts in the near future. As you mentioned, enhancing the cooperation of regional trade, transport and energy matters will continue to be an important part of the Vision 2025. In this context, new Vision will give a fresh impetus to very important projects including the realization of ECOTA,

strengthening ECO-BANK and effective implementation of Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and as Turkey, we will continue our efforts to boost cooperation in all these fields, just like we have been doing so far.

Considering the strategic location of the ECO Region, having integrated transport systems and effective transport corridors, building an electricity market within the ECO Region, enhancing intra-regional trade and energy corridors are among urgent necessities. That's why we have been actively taking part in all the relevant gatherings under the ECO framework and hosted several meetings and will continue doing so. I also want to highlight



that Turkey is financing % 22 of the ECO budget along with Iran and Pakistan and in the last decade, our total trade with the ECO Member States has increased from 7 billion US Dollars to 18 billion US Dollars, which is a concrete sign of our contribution and impact on the ECO Region. With the implementation of the above-mentioned projects, we believe our trading volume will even be higher and it will contribute to the well-being of all peoples of the ECO member countries.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Heads of State and Government of the Member States will meet in "13th ECO Summit" in early March

2017 in Islamabad. This will be an important gathering, the first one since 2012 when they met in Baku Summit. What is Turkey's expectation from the Summit?

■ **Ambassador:** We should work much harder to deepen our cooperation through strengthening our economic and commercial ties for sustained economic developments and we have to further strengthen our present achievements. For this purpose, ECO needs to be transformed into a more focused Organisation. In this context, high level meetings like ECO Summit and the Meeting of Council of Ministers are important in terms of increasing ECO's functionality. We expect and also believe that the 13th ECO Summit will be a platform which will create a synergy and dynamism within the Organisation and a platform that all Member Countries will show their willingness to continue cooperation within the Region.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Thank you for your time. As final words, we would be happy to hear if you wish to share with our readers any other relevant issue.

■ **Ambassador:** The region we live in is a special attraction centre endowed with plenty of resources and potentials and it is in our hands to benefit adequately from these opportunities by enhancing effective intra-regional cooperation and ECO is a great entity for this end. So, hereby, I want to convey my sincere thanks to every person and institution who actively makes effort in this regard.



Interview with Mr. Gary Lewis

UN Resident Coordinator in Tehran

Mr. Gary Lewis is the head of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Tehran. He also serves as the United Nations resident Coordinator in Iran. He kindly accepted invitation by the ECO Chronicle for an interview.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** The United Nations is the leading international organization with clear mandate in

fostering human development in countries across the planet. Four UN international decades for development were introduced for that purpose, followed by a series of new concepts and trends such as "Sustainable Development", "Millennium Development Goals" and now "Sustainable Development Goals".

As the UN top representative in Iran, would you elaborate more on the "development paradigm" which UN is currently pushing for? What role does UN envisage for regional organizations in this regard?

■ **Mr. Gary Lewis:** You're right. The global understanding of how to secure human development has changed over the years. Countries now agree that sustainable development offers the best path forward for improving the lives of people everywhere. As you know, on 25 September 2015 at the UN Sustainable Development Summit, in New York, the countries of the world adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda.

Development is one of the four UN Charter priorities. It sits alongside peace, justice, and human rights. But among all these goals, a great deal of the UN's efforts and a huge slice of its funding is devoted to the Charter's pledge to "promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development". Which means "development". A large number of UN Agencies and programmes undertake work for development in the region in partnership with governments, regional organisations and NGOs. Here in Iran, we have 18 UN agencies most of which are working to promote human development.

The UN works both with national governments and through organizations. In fact, our Charter - in Chapter VIII - Regional Arrangements - pushes us to try to find solutions also at the regional level. This is really important as we are trying to solve problems which easily go beyond borders. Problems like environmental threats, climate change, the spread of diseases like tuberculosis and malaria. Problems like refugee movement and drug trafficking.

This is the reason why regional organizations, like ECO, have played and will continue to play essential roles in the region, particularly in the area of development. I am pleased to say that over the years, cooperation between the UN and regional organizations has intensified and I look forward to strengthening such collaboration, including the one we have with ECO.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO is among the largest regional arrangements in the world. A territory of 8 million square kilometres and with more than 440 million inhabitants, the ECO region connects China with Europe and Russia with Persian Gulf. It possesses abundant natural and human resources as well as huge untapped investment and business opportunities for the outside world. ECO countries are striving individually and regionally for a higher

level economic development and prosperity. Iran is among the largest economies in the ECO region. UNDP has recently concluded UNDAF 2017-2021 with Iran. Are there any particular activities/sectors in the UNDAF with direct and indirect regional implications?

■ **Mr. Gary Lewis:** I'm glad you have referred to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. We call it our UNDAF. It's a joint agreement between the UN agencies and the Government of Iran. The UNDAF covers the key priorities which the UN - as a whole - will undertake in the coming 5 years with Iran. The period between 2017 and 2021. So it isn't really a UNDP document as such. But UNDP is certainly one of the many UN agencies in Iran who have signed up to the UNDAF. The UNDAF brings coherence to the UN's development work in Iran, because there are so many agencies involved. And because it has been agreed with the government. As a result, UNDP itself has built the key elements of its own Country Programme with Iran directly from the UNDAF. That's how the UNDAF works.

Within this new framework, there are actually a few areas which hold the prospect of regional cooperation. The two main examples are the environment and drug control.

Let's focus first on environment. Many of the key environmental challenges which Iran faces need to be solved with regional cooperation. Take the problem of sand and dust storms. The only way this can be solved is through cooperation with the countries which are producing the sand and dust storms.

Countries like Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia. But Iran is itself also a source country for sand and dust storms which affect parts within its own borders and then which blow into Afghanistan and Pakistan. Such regional problems need to be

addressed at a regional level.

Iran has been a strong and valuable partner - for years and years - in the fight against the trafficking of narcotics and precursor chemicals which are used to make the drugs. I know this from personal experience when I used to work for the UN drug control agency many years ago in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The UN system in Iran will offer continued support to the Government efforts in relation to regional and international drug control cooperation efforts.

In the new era of cooperation which has been brought on by the Nuclear Deal, the UN in Iran will continue to serve as a bridge between the regional community and the international community - and Iran. The problems Iran faces - and the mega problems which the region faces - are simply too huge to be dealt with anything less than full regional cooperation - and South-South Cooperation efforts. We look to ECO and other regional institutions to play their part as well.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** UNDP is the important UN development network helping countries to realize their development aspirations, including through developing the needed policies and capacities. You are the Chief UNDP officer in charge of Iran. You have extensive knowledge and experience about Iran's economy as well as its development policies. There is an opinion that the post sanctions era will not only bring more opportunities and choices for Iran's own development but also will benefit the international community. Do you see any possible impacts on the neighbouring countries?

■ **Mr. Gary Lewis:** I believe that the post-sanctions era will certainly bring about significant opportunities to Iran. We are already starting to see the glimmerings of this. But the

speed of this progress is taking too long to materialize. But it will come. And when it comes it will focus, I believe, on foreign investment, opportunity for Iran to compete in the international market, access to development finance, and so on.

Iran has a lot of advantages. It has a vast natural resource endowment - talking mainly of oil and natural gas. It can draw heavily upon its large, young, tech-savvy and growing population. The diversified Iranian economy will, I believe, benefit increasingly from the Government's reform agenda. Post-sanctions, the projected rising incomes and improved purchasing power will strengthen the already large urban middle class. Sure there are economic barriers, but the overall trend I see is towards greater openness. Trade and investment will benefit from sectoral reform packages.

So, an optimistic scenario would foresee a rapid recovery in oil export volumes, drawing - as I said - on the country's large and underexploited oil and gas reserves. This will prompt a resurgence in consumer spending and officially-backed trade. And these, in turn, would, following current trends, allow the Islamic Republic of Iran to become one of the fastest growing economies in the Middle East. If not the fastest.

In all this, Iran will present opportunities for collaboration on pressing issues within the region. Many of these include trade and investment. But many go beyond such things. For in a region where there many countries in conflict, Iran represents a zone of stability - good infrastructure - good health care - good education - and a place where things work.

This will give Iran the opportunity to enhance diplomacy and find common ground. Iran now has opportunity to cooperate with countries within the region with the aim of bringing stability to the Middle East.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO and UN system have established relations since long. There are several cooperation arrangements and MoUs in place between ECO and UN agencies. UN General Assembly adopts every two years a resolution on UN and ECO cooperation which specifies the areas of cooperation.

In the post 2015 and SDGs era, how in your opinion ECO and UN can revisit their established relations with a view to making necessary streamlining and fine-tuning?

■ **Mr. Gary Lewis:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are built on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). And enormous progress was made under the MDGs. The number of people lifted up out of poverty. Great gains in education and life expectancy, for example. Including here in Iran. This shows the value of a global development agenda. The new SDGs, and the broader sustainability agenda, go much further than the MDGs, addressing the root causes of poverty, the uni-

versal need for development the way in which we must partner to address challenges that transcend borders.

supporting the global effort towards the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

To do so, regional organizations can prioritize sustainable development through implementation of regional agreements, and exchange of information, best practices, and lessons learnt.

The United Nations and regional organizations in many ways have unique and complimentary capacities that when properly coordinated, can produce good results.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Thank you very much for your time.



In all this, I believe that there is a key role for regional organisations - organizations like ECO - to play in



Preparatory work for 13th ECO summit



In run-up to the 13th ECO Summit on 1st March 2017 in Islamabad, the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) established an open-ended Preparatory Committee (prepcom) chaired by the

Islamic Republic of Iran (current ECO Chairman) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (upcoming ECO Chairman).

The prepcom was assigned to make all substantive preparations for the Summit and the 22nd meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM), to be convened on 28th February in Islamabad. The prepcom addressed wide range of issues, including draft agenda of the meetings, draft Islamabad Declaration, reform in the Organization, new scale of assessments, new ECO Vision 2025 and its implementation frameworks, etc.

The prepcom convened 10 meetings in the course of January and February 2017 in the ECO Secretariat. The prepcom progress reports were regularly submitted to the CPR meetings convened to facilitate preparatory process for the 13th



Summit/22nd COM meetings. Some areas of critical nature were also left to be finalized during the Senior Officials meeting, scheduled for 26-27 February in Islamabad.

The CPR also reached the agreement to recommend to the COM meeting granting observer status to Energy Charter Secretariat (ECT), the first international organization assuming ECO observership.

The prepcom also convened two meetings in the capacity of the Selection Committee for ECO Awards 2017 where winners were selected from among the candidates nominated by the Member States in the fields of "History, Culture, Literature

and Fine Arts", "Science and Technology", "Education", and "Agriculture and Environment". Following formal designation of the winners by the Council of Ministers, the awards would be granted to the winners during an official ceremony on the sidelines of the Summit.

The 12th ECO Summit was held in October 2012 in Baku. The 21st COM meeting was held in November 2013 in Tehran.



On-Grid Solar Power Plant in the premises of ECO Secretariat

Mr. Djalynbek Turgumbaev

The share of renewable energy sources in total power generation is growing steadily both in developed and developing countries. Numerous countries all over the world have ambitious targets to transform their power sector towards renewables.

Renewable energy technologies are usually classified into two categories: dispatchable (i.e. biomass, concentrated solar power with storage, geothermal power and hydro) and non-dispatchable, also known as Variable Renewable Energy or VRE (i.e. ocean power,

solar photovoltaics and wind). From a technical perspective, VRE generation can be ideally combined with smart grid technologies, energy storage and more flexible generation technologies.

Progressive clean energy and innovative policies and programmes drive up adoption of renewable energy technologies, creating markets for solar and other clean technologies. These technologies across the globe have matured from new, pilot stage projects to well-established commercial products. The Bloomberg 2030 Market Outlook states that by



2030, the world's power mix will have transformed - from today's system with two-thirds fossil fuels to one with over half from zero-emission energy sources.

ECO Region enjoys huge potential of renewable energy sources, notably hydro, solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. Growing interest of ECO Member States in renewables is in line with particular complementary role of the renewable energy in ECO's overall energy mandate. Given the ever increasing share and dynamics of renewable energy sources in the global energy mix, ECO continues to add more weight to its profile on renewables and alternative energy sources.

In the light of aforementioned and in view of the importance of pilot projects utilizing good practices and existing technologies, ECO Secretariat strives to underline the special and increasing role of renewable energy resources in complementing conventional energy sources in order to support sustainable energy development. Taking into account the growing efforts by the Islamic Republic of Iran for an accelerated deployment of renewable energy sources, the Directorate of Energy, Minerals and Environment of the ECO Secretariat, in cooperation with Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (TAVANIR) and Renewable Energy Organization of Iran (SUNA) initiated a pilot proposal for possible installation of solar rooftop panels in the Secretariat's premises in Tehran. This pilot project was generously financed by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and implemented by TAVANIR, SUNA, Power Distribution Company of Tehran, as well as Solar Baad Energy Company.

Why Solar Energy?

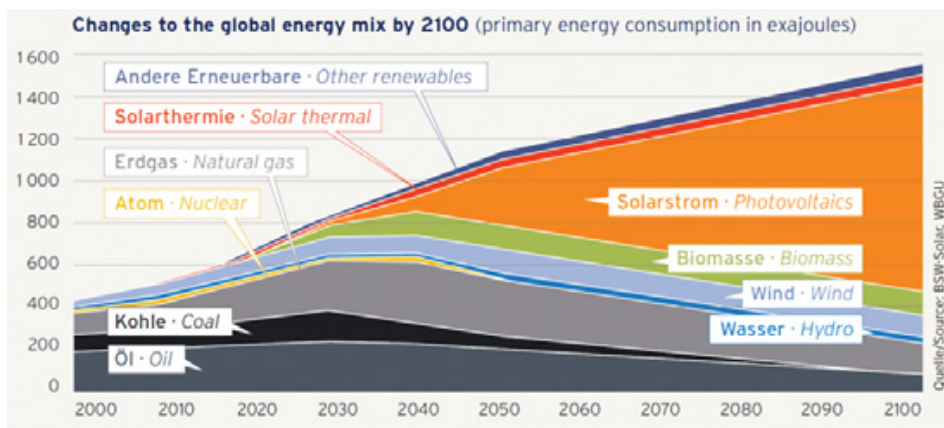
Every hour the sun beams onto Earth more than enough energy to satisfy global energy needs for an entire year. The vast majority of scientists assume that continuing to depend on fossil fuels could cause grave environmental consequences in the future.

There are many justifications in using solar energy, in particular:

- It is a clean, reliable, indigenous, affordable, sustainable and embraced



source of energy that can be used to power homes, buildings and businesses globally;



- It is getting cheaper and cheaper;
- It meets the Paris Agreement goals and forestalls the worst effects of climate change;
- It secures investment and return;
- It is a potential solution to the environmental problems being caused by fossil fuels;
- It is noise free;
- It contains a versatile technology catching the next technological boom as it is about reducing greenhouse gases, helping and saving the environment;
- It sustains a long lifetime (over 20 years).

ECO solar power plant: Features

- Solar panel:

58 (pieces)

■ Grid Connected Inverter:
1(piece),10kW, three phases SMA
1 (piece), 5kW, three phases SMA

■ Annual Electricity production:
24000 (kWh)

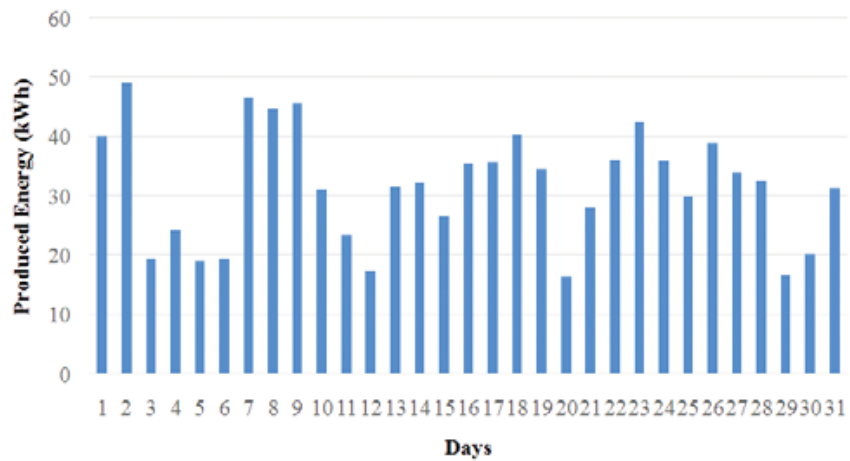
■ CO2 reduced:
16.6 (Ton)

■ Oil reserved:
6100 (Liter)

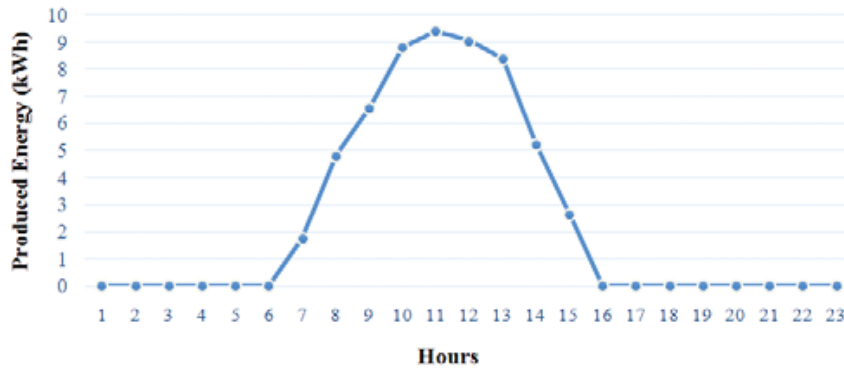
■ Equivalent to the trees which need to absorb the CO2:
420 (pieces)

The installation of On-Grid Solar Power Plant with 58 Solar Panels, 2 inverters with total capacity of 15kW in the premises of ECO Secretariat has been completed and the Plant became operational in December 2016, which contributes to generating green electricity and saves Secretariat's power consumption.

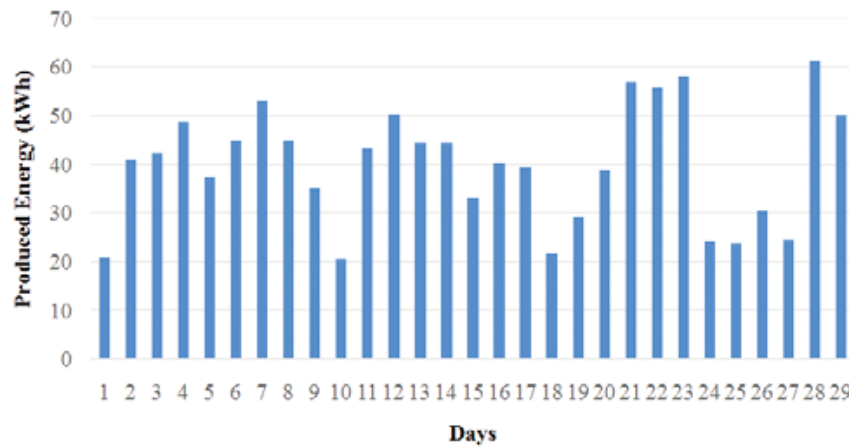
Daily Energy Production in the ECO Secretariat in December 2016



Average hourly Energy Production Curve in January 2017



Daily Energy Production in the ECO Secretariat in January 2017



Conclusion

This showcase project, which symbolizes the very objective of ECO in promoting renewable/energy efficiency, will lead to better design the replicable and/or scalable projects for improvement of energy access; shape ECO’s relevant activities to identify potential partnerships with public and private actors to facilitate renewable energy investment; as

well as attract additional finance for future renewable projects in ECO Member States.

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 About the author: Mr. Djalyzbek Turgumbaev is the & programme officer in the Directorate for Energy, Minerals and Environment in the ECO Secretariat



Fifteen Years of Cooperation and Development (2000-2015)

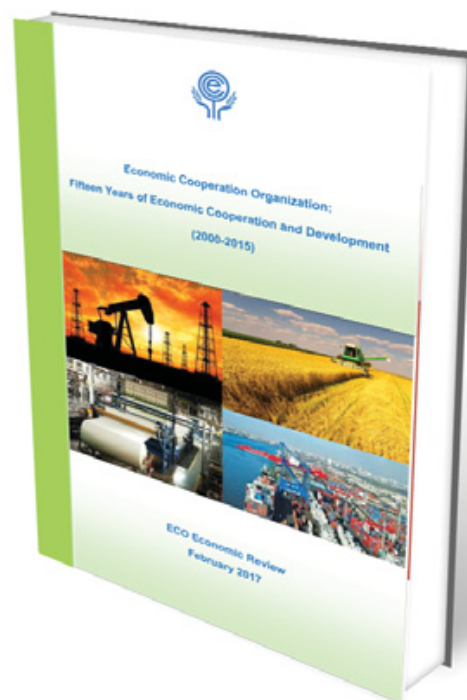
ECO Economic Review

Review by:
Mr. Muhammad Safdar

The "Economic Cooperation Organization: Fifteen Years of Cooperation and Development (2000-2015), Economic Review 2017", which is launched at the eve of the 13th ECO Summit, reviews the economic performance of the region in the expanded period of 2000-2015 and Region's achievements made through cooperation amongst the Member States. Annual Economic Report 2015, the premier regular publication of the Organization, is the other part of the publication. The publication is the first ever document in the Organization's annals detailing performance and progress through economic review covering fifteen years period of collaboration of the Member States to achieve its primary objectives. This report is will help the governments of the ECO Member Countries to make informed decisions on the basis of present realities and performance made in last fifteen years.

Apart from standard economic indicators/variables, three additional indicators have been added to the analysis; factor of oil prices, exchange rate and dependence on natural resources due to particular importance of these variables for the resource rich-region. The progress of Member States in some international indices has also been added to complement the analysis. Recognizing the fact that the regionalism has gained prominence in recent times, comparison of the ECO Region has been made with other comparable economic blocs to assess the ECO performance vis-a-vis these blocs for benchmarking and contextualizing.

The over-arching result of the Review is that the Region has made significant advances in combined GDP by attaining about US\$2 trillion in 2015 from US\$ 1 trillion in 2000, mainly on the back of substantial real growth rate



of 4.49 per cent per annum during the period. The performance is commendable in relation to the world's average of 2.78 percent per annum, considering the fact that the Region faced economic and political challenges during the reference period. On account of per capita income, the Region has advanced by 2.61 percent which is appreciative considering the population increase of the Region was by 1.8 percent per annum.

Performance is notable in increase in total trade and FDI inflows to the Region which edged up by 9.54 percent and 17.84 percent respectively, accelerating the economic activity in the Region. As a result of this performance, the Region increased its share in the

world GDP from 2.06 percent in 2000 to 2.63 percent in 2015 along with Region's trade share to the total world trade increasing to 2.10 percent in 2015 compared with 1.41 percent in 2000. The document further reveals that the paths of individual countries were marked by fluctuations and 'diverse trends and patterns', resulting in sectoral changes in the economies. All these developments need to be evaluated considering the fact that the Region faced economic and political challenges during the reference period. Some further highlights are outlined as under:

i. The ECO Region's average real GDP growth rate 4.49 percent exceeded the world average of 2.78 percent in most of the years and followed the similar pattern with an exception in 2012 when sanctions on Iran resulted in huge decline in the economic growth of the Country and effected the growth rate of ECO Region signifying that the Region's economy is synchronized and integrated with the world economy, benefiting from surge in global growth and, at the same time, vulnerable to shocks from it. The healthy growth rates resulted in an increase in the share of ECO GDP to the world GDP reflecting the strength of fundamentals of the ECO economies.

ii. The growth trajectories of natural resource rich economies were marked by wide fluctuations (minus 6.61 percent for Iran in 2012 to envious 34.50 percent for Republic of Azerbaijan in 2006), mainly due to dependence on revenues from oil and gas which has seen its peak price (US\$109.49/barrel) in 2012 and floor price (US\$49.49/barrel) in 2015. Though there have been striking similarities in growth patterns of natural resource rich economies, growth trajectories have unique features as well. Average growth rate of other economies turned out to be moderate and relatively stable in most of the period.

iii. By and large, production structure of the Region underwent transformation manifesting appreciable expansion in services sector from increasing its share from 53.58 percent to 58.31 percent, during the period, thus gaining on other sectors (agriculture and industry) of economy, invariably in all economies. Conversely, percentage share of agriculture sector came down by 2.45 percent (from 13.92 to 11.47 percent) while industry's share declined by 2.28 percent (from 32.49 percent to 30.22 percent). The pronounced change was greater in resource based economies.

iv. Per capita GDP (real) recorded an average growth of 2.61 percent while per capita GDP PPP terms showed almost the same average of 2.99 percent along with improvement in ranking of some Member States particularly resource rich economies.

v. Though economic growth rates have signs of improvements after the global economic slowdown but high unemployment especially of female labour force persists despite heavy investment inflows and economic activity in the Region. Labour force growth rate exceeds population growth rate in all Member States. The unemployment rates, coupled with low labour participation and absorption rates, though differing widely among economies, have not seen any appreciable improvement over the period.

vi. Natural resources, human resources, exports, manufacturing and agriculture sectors have been major drivers of economic growth in the Region through FDI inflows (from US\$3.2 billion to 37.7 billion, an 11 times increase) during the reference period. Most countries have liberalized their foreign direct investment (FDI) regimes and pursued investment-friendly economic policies and provided enabling environment to attract investment which to large extent remained successful. As a result, there have also been turn around in individual economies.

vii. Economic activity and government revenues in natural resource-rich economies, namely, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan depend substantively on oil, gas and minerals' revenues and therefore remain volatile which is evident from trend of major economic indicators such as economic growth rates, composition of GDP/production structure, FDI inflows, international reserves.

viii. During 2000-2015, volume of trade expanded from US\$175 billion to US\$688 billion and share in the global trade increased from 1.7 percent to 2.10 percent. Exports rose from US\$83 billion to US\$319 billion while imports registered growth from US\$92 billion to US\$368 billion (both increased almost three times). Trade deficit persisted during 2000-2015 and increased steadily up to US\$49 billion in 2015. Intra- regional trade reached 8.7 percent which is low vis-à-vis growth in exports and imports.

ix. The composition of exports as well as imports to the

Region and to the world and the trading partners has seen little change. The only major change is the increased share of China in the imports and exports of the ECO countries largely replacing the EU, USA, Russia and Japan products. ECO Region exports remain dependent on natural resource products, its by-products and agriculture products such as petroleum, gas, coal, minerals, etc. as well as cotton and cereals. In case of imports, the Region's major imports include energy as well as vehicles and machinery.

x. Intra-regional trade is below the potential at 8.7 percent of the total trade even lower than the peer economic blocs, namely, ASEAN, NAFTA, etc. This may have emanated from the non-implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and weak transport and communication linkages among the Member States.

xi. Foreign reserves increased many fold in all economies especially Republic of Azerbaijan (17.16 percent per annum), Kazakhstan (18.82 percent per annum), Pakistan (16.27 percent per annum) and Turkey by (10.86 percent per annum) indicating bright prospects and a climate of optimism. Thus, increase in foreign exchange reserves buffered exchange rate for certain period; remittances registered marked increase whereas the region saw historical heights of FDI impacting positively on all other indicators.

xii. Three Central Asian economies i.e. Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have noticeable dependence on foreign remittances as source of revenues and foreign exchange. Pakistan is also one of the countries which receive substantial remittances, US\$ 20 billion annually, though not substantial in terms of percentage of its GDP.

The Review delineates that ECO Region has recorded decent progress in popular international indices as well. In Ease of Doing Business Index which is prepared and reported on annual basis, seven of the ten ECO Member States have improved their positions substantially. In Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which gives an assessment of competitiveness of the countries, five out of seven ECO economies have increased their competitiveness (GCI index reported on seven out of ten ECO Countries). A comparison of ECO with the two multilateral organizations in Asia, ASEAN and SAARC, over the period 2000-2015 also yields a good performance report card for ECO. All these developments are a good news for the Member States as well as the Region, nonetheless, further improvements in strengthening economies through diversification and decreasing dependence on resource sector, policies for absorption of labor in industry and service sectors can help in strengthening the economies and to make them resistant from economic fluctuations.

Preparation of such a review was a challenging task due to the fact that the Member States have wide differences in terms of sizes of the economies and their structures

leading to distinct trends and patterns of the economic indicators discussed in the document. The other challenge was dearth of key economic data. The review delineates that future performance of the Region tremendously depends upon the macroeconomic stability and certainty at global level, Region's interaction with the world economy, and "strong inter-regional economic collaboration and partnership". Further, it infers that increased intra-regional cooperation among the Member States in priority areas of cooperation will be mutually beneficial for social-economic sustainable development and prosperity of the Member States.

The Review stipulates that the countries, however, need greater and sustained effort to buffer their economies from dwindling/volatile international prices of natural resources and continue the process of diversification of economies already under way. Regional integration needs to be an assigned priority and Member States require not losing sight of long term fundamentals for the sake of short term exigencies. Though the economies are aware of the need for sustained and sustainable development in the Region, they also need to further focus on inclusive development to further improve the people's lives.

The publication has been authored /compiled by Mr. Muhammad Safdar, Research Officer, Directorate of Trade and Investment and reviewed and edited by Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi, Deputy Secretary General. The same is available at ECO Secretariat web-site: www.eco.int.

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Mr. Muhammad Safdar is the responsible officer in the Trade and Investment Directorate of the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

Drug Situation Report in the ECO Region 2012-2015

Review by:
Mr. Raheel Cheema



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Mr. Raheel Cheema is the Programme Officer in the ECO Drug and Organized Crime Unit in Tehran.

To give a better idea and realistic analysis about drug situation of ECO Region, ECO Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (ECO-DOCCU) regularly publishes "Drug Situation Report in the ECO Region". The current issue of the publication covers period of 2012 to 2015 and contains four chapters. Key findings and trend of narcotics seizures among the ECO Member States in a regional basis are discussed in chapter one of the Report.

In chapter two, information on narcotics seizures, volume of different types of drug seized (kg and percentage) for the years 2012-2013 and information on the drug demand and supply reduction for all ten ECO Member States has been provided.

In chapter 3, ECO-DOCCU has analyzed the statistics of drug seizures for 2014 and 2015 for six ECO Member States including the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey. The concluding remarks are enunciated in chapter 4 of the Report, which highlights the importance of ECO Region in fight against trafficking and efforts being made to counter this menace.

This regular series of report of the ECO Secretariat is being published with a view to giving a regional context the national statistics and policies of the Member States whereby additional frameworks would be available to the relevant decision making bodies of the ECO Member States to take into account facts and realities within the Region as well as the policies pursued by other regional countries to tackle the menace of drugs.

ECO Day 2016

was celebrated in Tehran



"ECO Day 2016" was celebrated on 7 December 2016 in Tehran Espinas Palace Hotel. Ambassadors and representatives of the Tehran diplomatic corps, high-ranking authorities from the host country, as well as high level officials and representatives of Member States, who were in Tehran for RPC meeting, attended the commemoration ceremony.

In his welcoming remarks to the large audience, the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca highlighted the importance of the regional cooperation within ECO framework in the last 3 decades and hoped that in future, particularly in the light of the new emerging ECO Vision 2025,

Member States will realize further achievements.

H.E. Dr. Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran also made his statement at the Event.

He recalled the history of ECO since its inception and expansion and assured the audience of the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ECO and its activities.

The Event marked the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), created by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan in 1985 and enlarged to a 10-country organization in 1992.





13th ECO Summit

Connectivity for Regional
Prosperity



ECO Secretariat
Tehran