

2018

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# ECO CHRONICLE



Nowruz  
in ECO Region

## 23<sup>rd</sup> ECO Council of Ministers

16-17 April 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan





## Foreword



I take great pleasure in bringing you this issue of ECO Chronicle for the year 2018. Since the last issue, we have had a rather eventful stretch of time and as the events and activities covered in this issue will demonstrate, ECO is on an upward trajectory which is mainly due to the momentum and drive provided by the ECO Heads of State at the 13th ECO Summit in

Islamabad last year.

We at the ECO are fully aware of the aspirations of our Member-States and, as reflected through our ECO Vision 2025, we are committed to the goal of regional integration and economic prosperity for the ECO Region. To achieve its goals and meet the challenges of present times with respect to the trending global agenda, including the post -2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ECO needs full support from its Member States.

It is both heartening and elevating to note that the Member-States of ECO are showing their full commitment and support to the programs and activities of ECO, as the pages that follow will depict.

ECO is also striving to expand its external relations through seeking new partnerships and strengthening existing cooperative arrangements with the regional and international organizations. The time period covered in this issue saw new MoUs signed and channels established with International Organizations such as WIPO. It is important that we should bring to our Member-States the benefits through effectively implementing the MoUs that we have signed with our global partners.

Let me conclude with prayers for this region's prosperity and a very bright future for its people. I hope you enjoy this issue of the ECO Chronicle; please also keep an eye on the ECO's website for the latest information.

*Ambassador  
Halil Ibrahim Akca  
ECO Secretary General*



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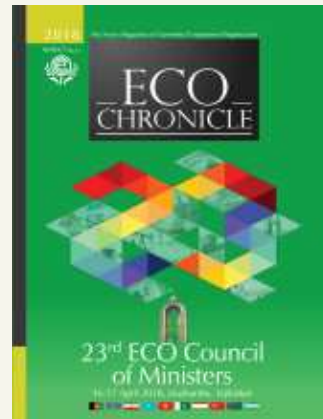
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In The Name Of God

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# The 23rd Council of Ministers (COM)

Dushanbe,  
Tajikistan  
April, 2018

 The Council of Ministers is the highest decision making body of the Organization. The Council shall meet at least once a year by rotation, in the territories of the Member States. The year 1991 saw the first meeting of the Council of Ministers within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization. So far, the Council has held 21 regular meetings and three

extraordinarily sessions. The 23rd Meeting of the Council of Ministers planned to be hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan constitutes another step for broadening regional cooperation among the Member States for the socio-economic development and prosperity in the ECO Region, as well as further enhancing the cultural affinities. The Council at its 23rd meeting on April 17, 2018 in Dushanbe will, inter alia, consider the following items as per the agenda of the Meeting:

The Council will consider the Reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives, Regional Planning Council, and the Secretariat of the Organization, Sectoral Ministerial Meetings, Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions. The Council may adopt the reports of these bodies and may make decisions if needed.



As the 22nd Council Meeting in Islamabad adopted the ECO Vision 2025, the upcoming session will consider the progress made with respect to its implementation. The new Scale of Assessment has been on the agenda for consecutive meetings and despite continuous efforts, no consensus has been achieved on the issue. Therefore the agenda also includes the new Scale of Assessment which has been linked to the reform process of the Organization and in this regard is seen as a starting point. Also being considered is the restructuring of the Secretariat. In this context, the staff strength, as well as the recruitment policy may be reviewed and updated.

In recent years concerns have been raised in

terms of implementation and operationalization of the ECO Trade Agreement. The ECO Trade Agreement has provided for a 'Cooperation Council' comprised of the respective representatives of the States parties to ECOTA for the implementation of the said Agreement. The Council of Ministers may consider the drawbacks and obstacles for the proper implementation of the aforementioned Agreement and provide recommendations for further cooperation under ECOTA.

The term of office of the incumbent Secretary General will be completed in August 2018. Since the appointment of the Secretary General must be done by the Council of Ministers;

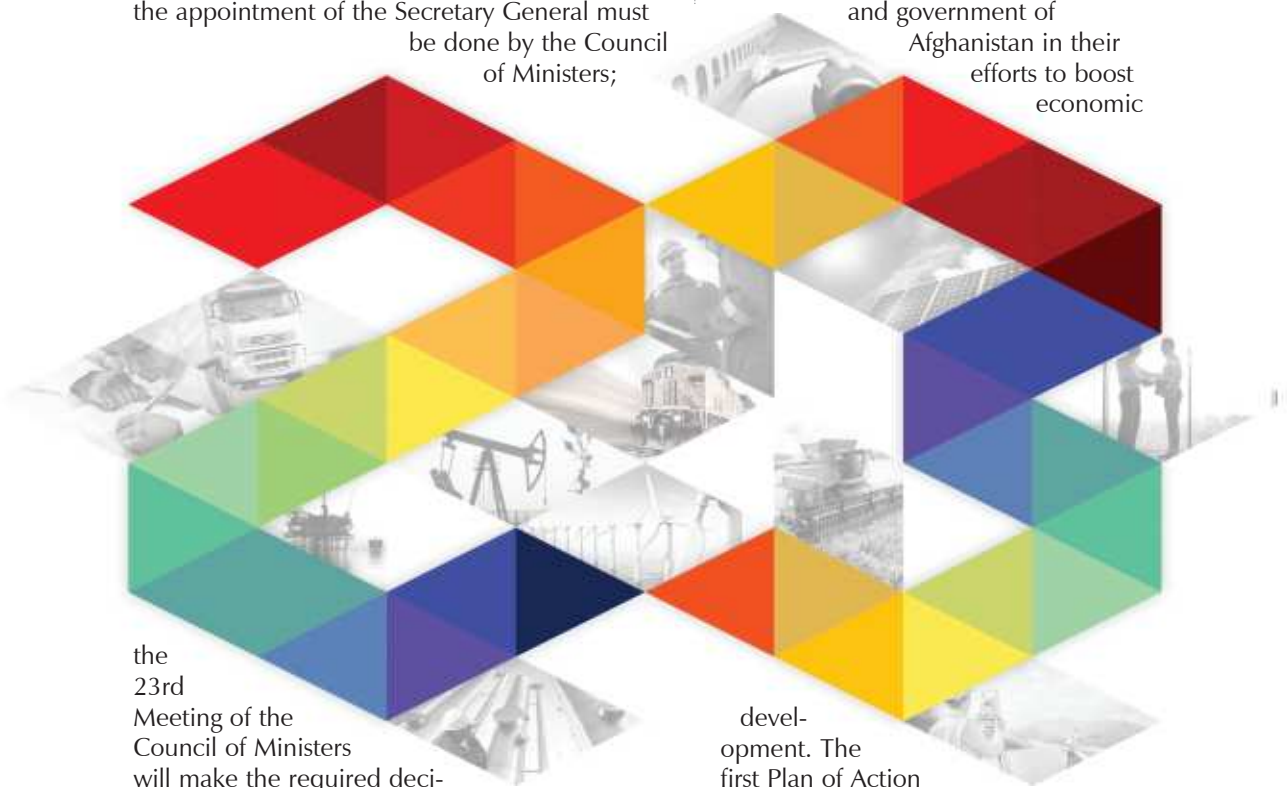
Statute, informed the ECO Secretariat of its intension, to suspend the establishment of metrology Board in Astana. As Pakistan has expressed its willingness to replace Kazakhstan in this regard, the protocol amending the article has been submitted to the Council for adoption.

The Council is also expected to review the ECO Programme for supporting Afghanistan and consider the new Advocacy Programme which was developed to support the people and government of Afghanistan in their efforts to boost economic

the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Ministers will make the required decision, with respect to the nominated candidate for the post of the Secretary General.

The Council may also consider adoption of the Protocol amending Article 5.4.1.10 of the "Statute of the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, conforming Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology" which was adopted by the Council in 2009 in Tehran. Under the said article, the Technical Management Boards provided for under the statute of RISCAM shall be established in Iran, Turkey and Kazakhstan. However, Kazakhstan which remained non-signatory to the

development. The first Plan of Action for supporting reconstruction of Afghanistan within the ECO framework was developed in 2003. After nearly two decades and the completion of three major projects, the Council may make the required decision to support Afghanistan based on the principles and objectives set out in the new advocacy programme and the lessons learned and experience gained during this period.



# ECO ICT Ministers Meet in Baku

 The 2nd Meeting of the Ministers of the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) of the ECO Member States was held on 5th December 2017 in Baku. The Meeting was attended by high-level delegations from the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan. A delegation from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) headed by ITU Secretary General Houlin Zhao, also attended the Meeting. Director General of "Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC)" also participated at the invitation of the Government of Azerbaijan.

At the Inaugural Session, the Meeting was briefed by ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, on major deliberations and recommendations of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), held on 4th December 2017, notably on implementation of two phases of regional studies in line with the mandate provided by the 1st Meeting of ECO Ministers, addressing respectively ICT needs of the ECO Member States, and the assessment of status of ICT application in ECO Member States, including in health, education and agriculture.

The "2025 ECO Regional Strategy for Information Society Development" and proposed



"Plan of Action" was agreed by Ministerial meeting to serve as a framework for future joint activities in the field of ICT under the umbrella of ECO. In order to make proper follow up on concrete activities/projects as highlighted by the "strategy pillars", it was decided to establish a Working Group which will regularly meet and update required data and, if needed, make revisions to respond to new and emerging needs of the Member States.

Baku Declaration was also adopted unanimously by the Meeting to serve as a basic guiding document for strengthening and enhancing the regional cooperation via exploring the latest trends and benefits of ICT in the interest of the ECO Member States.

On the sidelines of the Meeting, ECO Secretary General met with ITU Secretary General, where ITU was informed about ECO's major ongoing projects in various sectors, notably on the tangible developments achieved in the sector of energy and transport. ITU official expressed satisfaction with the level of attachment demonstrated by both ECO Secretariat and the Member States to mandated subjects and indicated readiness to strengthen cooperation with and contribution to further ICT related follow-ups of the ECO Region. Both sides expressed willingness to continue joint cooperation in the field of ICT.

# ECO Day 2017 Commemorated in Islamabad



In a high-level ceremony, the "ECO Day 2017" was celebrated on 14 December 2017 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Event, attended by high ranking officials from the host country, ECO Member States, ECO Secretariat, and agencies, as well as regional and international organizations, was honored by the presence of honorable President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain, who also addressed the audience.

ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca and the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission of Pakistan Sartaj Aziz, made welcoming remarks in the ceremony.

The ECO Day The 28th of November is annually commemorated as by which ECO

Secretariat and the Member States gather at the ECO premises in Tehran, to celebrate the date of the adoption of the "Protocol amending the Treaty of Izmir" signed on 28th November 1992.

The Protocol was meant to

Although the "ECO Day" is celebrated to mark ECO enlargement from a 3-country to a 10-country organization in early 1990s, this tradition dates back to 1985 when the

three founding Members (Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey) of "Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD)" decided to rename their organization as "Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)".

This was later incorporated in the Izmir Treaty through "Protocol amending the Treaty of Izmir" done on 18 June 1990.

The "ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)" had decided to organize the "ECO Day 2017" on

the sidelines of the 28th meeting of the "ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)" in Islamabad.



adjust the relevant "Treaty" provisions in the light of the expansion of the Organization to 7 more countries, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.



# ECO-CCI Holds GA, ExCom in Tehran



**ECO CHRONICLE** The 16th General Assembly and 24th Executive Committee Meetings of the ECO-Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI), hosted by the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) was held on 3-5 March, 2018 in Tehran. Present at the session were Iran's Transport Minister, Abbas Akhoundi, ECO-CCI President, Ghazanfar Bilour, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce Gholamhossein Shafei, Vice President of Turkey's Union of Chamber and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), Mr. Selçuk Öztürk.

In a statement to the session, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, said that various agreements and legal frameworks such as ECOTA, APPI, TTFA, along with developing intuitions such as ECO-TDB, can serve as a tool for increasing regional connectivity and integration to foster economic growth and development in the region. During the 13th ECO Summit Meeting in Islamabad, the Member States approved the ECO Vision-2025 with the priority areas of trade, transportation, energy, tourism, economic growth and social welfare as a means to improving living standards of people of the region who are

endowed with abundant natural and human resources, he added. Mr. Akca concluded by stating that implementation of the ECO Vision-2025 with the support of the Member States and their respective National Chambers has the potential to put the region's economy on a permanently higher growth path within the next decade.

In their statements, the dignitaries and business leaders representing their National Chambers highlighted that in comparison with the peer economic blocs such as EU, ASEAN, NAFTA, etc the volume of trade among ECO Member States is below its preferred potential. They underlined that by stimulating economic growth and development through enhancing investment in regional infrastructure and connectivity, the region can effectively utilize human resources and benefit from its vast natural resources.

The delegations also underscored that the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) as a preferential trading arrangement can play a crucial role in enhancing intra-regional trade among the member countries and usher prosperity in the region. They also encouraged their respective governments to ease the business environment by removal of bottlenecks for reducing the cost of doing business within the region.

ECO  
CHRONICLE

### The First Meeting of the ECO Reinsurance

Company (ERC) was held in on 26th February 2018 in Karachi. The meeting to determine the modalities for the operationalization of the Company was attended by the Board of Directors (BoD) and officials from the Consulate Generals of Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey in Karachi.

The meeting was chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Reinsurance Company Limited, Shakeel Ahmed Mangnejo, who underscored the importance of reinsurance in the region and called upon Member States to strengthen their efforts for close collaboration in implementation of joint projects and initiatives.

The delegates decided that the Meetings of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors of the ECO Reinsurance Company will take place on 2nd May, 2018 in Karachi, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Also, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey nominated officials from their Consulates General in Karachi, while the

# ECO Reinsurance Company Meeting held in Karachi

Islamic Republic of Pakistan nominated official from the Pakistan Reinsurance Company Limited as their respected focal points.

The ERC, which entered into force on December 3, 2017, seeks to supplement the existing reinsurance services in the ECO region, promote growth of the retention capacities, reduce the outflow of foreign exchange and support economic development in the region. Based in Karachi, the company will also provide the region with additional resources for reinsurance services according to international standards.



# 28th ECO Regional Planning Council Concludes in Islamabad

**ECO CHRONICLE** The 28th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), which had started on 11 December 2017, concluded its work in Islamabad when the Ministerial segment of the Council adopted the outcome documents on 14th December 2017.

The Ministerial segment, chaired by Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission of Pakistan, Sartaj Aziz, was attended by high-level delegations from the ECO Member States and observers, as well as heads and officials of the ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions. The Ministerial segment received reports of the 8 sectoral committees on "Trade and Investment", "Transport and Communications", "Energy, Mineral and Environment", "Agriculture, Industry and Tourism", "Projects, Economic Research and Statistics", "Human Resources and Sustainable Development", "Drugs and Organized Crimes", and "External Relations and ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies".

Speaking at the Ministerial segment, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, informed the participants on the state of affairs of ECO as well as the results of the discussions in the Senior Officials segment of the Council, held on 11-13 December 2017.

The Heads of Delegations also made their national statements in the Ministerial segment and shared their views on the future course of actions within ECO, especially in the light of the ECO Vision 20125.

Heads/officials of the ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions also presented their annual reports to the Council.

The Ministerial Council adopted, on the recommendation of the Senior Officials segment, the ECO Work Programme and Calendar of Events for the year 2018.

The ECO Secretary General and Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission of



Pakistan also participated in a press briefing, where after explaining the historical significance of the Economic Cooperation Organization; the two sides informed the Press of the various decisions taken during the RPC.

On the sidelines of the Council and on 13th December, ECO Secretary General held consultations with the heads of delegations of the Member States and ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions on the mandated reform in these ECO bodies.



A bilateral Meeting between ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, and Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Sartaj Aziz, was held on 15 November 2017 on the margins of the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VII) in Ashgabat.

The purpose of the talks was to review the latest status of the preparations for 28th ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) to be attended by the ministers of the ECO Member States. The RPC meeting is scheduled for 11-14 December 2017 in Islamabad.

Ambassador Akca briefed H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz on the preparatory process of 28th Regional Planning Council (RPC). He also informed Pakistani official on his recent bilateral meetings with Turkish Minister of Development in Ankara and Uzbek Development Minister in Tashkent in this regard.

Mr. Sartaj Aziz shared his views on the optimal format and contents of the RPC ministerial meeting and highlighted the view that the role of Planning and

## ECO, Pakistani High Level Officials Meet in Ashgabat

Development ministers needs to be strengthened in the framework of ECO.

Both sides further discussed some substantial and organizational issues related to the organization of the 28th RPC Meeting, including the envisaged "ECO Special Conference on Afghanistan" planned to be held on the sidelines of upcoming RPC Meeting.

They also underscored the importance of this RPC meeting as the first such meeting after the adoption of the "ECO Vision 2025".



# ECO Heads of Customs Administration Council Convened in Islamabad

**ECO CHRONICLE** The 8th Meeting of the Council of ECO Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) was held in Islamabad on November 14, 2017. The session which was inaugurated by the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Revenue and the Minister of State of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Haroon Akhtar Khan, saw delegations from six ECO Member States', namely, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (the host), the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey come together to discuss enhanced customs cooperation in the region.

During his inauguration speech, Mr. Akhtar Khan, described the Economic Cooperation organization as a major geopolitical block with Pakistan holding a very important strategic position on the world map due to its proximity to China, Russia, and India, Turkey bridging the continents of Europe and Asia, while Iran is situated at the crossroads of



Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Similarly, the Central Asian States and Azerbaijan are uniquely located on the Silk Road and Energy Corridor connecting the giant economies of China and Russia to rest of the world. The session was also attended by the Director General of World Customs Organization (WCO), Mikuriya Kunio and the Chairman of Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR), Tariq Mehmood Pasha.

In his statement, ECO Deputy Secretary General, Kanan Nazarov, maintained that the increase in the volume of trade requires efficient facilitation at the border crossings and an efficient transport network as both

are deeply interlinked. He added that as trade and transport are of priority in the ECO Vision-2025, better coordination and cooperation among the Customs Authorities of the ECO and removal of impediments can greatly contribute to regional integration.

He also added that ECO Member States need to move towards automation, standardization, and harmonization of the Customs procedures, as stipulated in the WTO's Agreement on Trade Facilitation. This will ultimately reduce the cost of doing business and accelerate economic growth and development and benefit both the producers and consumers in the ECO Region. Free flow of goods & services, sharing of Customs information and simplifying procedures for expediting movement of trucks and trains are some of the areas where progress is imperative to move on, he added.

Mr. Nazarov continued by saying that the total trade of the ten ECO countries amounted to US\$ 626 billion in 2016 which registered a marginal decline by a decrease of 3.4 percent main-



ly due to the global recessionary trends which resulted in decrease of global trade from US\$ 18 trillion to US\$ 16 trillion which was due to a decrease in oil prices. Despite being home to 6.2 percent of world population, ECO's share in global trade has been stagnating at 2 percent. While referring to the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), Mr. Nazarov expressed hope that the 5th Ministerial Meeting



on Foreign Trade scheduled to be held in January 2018 in Islamabad will further explore ways to enhance trade and effectuate ECOTA. In separate statements Member States also expressed their confidence that the relevant agreements within the region can serve as a means for increasing intra-regional trade.

# ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank

## Meeting held in Ankara



The First Technical Meeting on Establishment and Operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank was held on 20 February 2018 in Ankara. The meeting brought together delegations from the Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey, in a bid to finalize the "Draft Data Fields" and discuss issues pertaining to the Data Bank.

The Contracting Parties agreed on the first of July, 2018 as the commencement date with all parties providing the required information up to the first of January, 2018. It was also decided that a training course for the concerned authorities will also be held by Turkey before the end of June.

The Agreement on the Establishment and Operations of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank" came into force on the 30th December 2016. It has been signed by six Member States i.e. the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey and ratified by four Member states, namely, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey. The Data Bank is considered a landmark achievement with the core objective to help in boosting revenue of the Member States and stopping/reducing pilferages in their national revenue by sharing information on vital data fields.



# ECO SG, ECO Specialized Agencies Meet in Tehran



**ECO CHRONICLE** On the invitation of the Secretary General, ECO, the heads of the ECO Specialized agencies, namely ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Science Foundation, and ECO Educational Institute paid a visit to the ECO Secretariat and met with the Secretary General, ECO, on February 4, 2018 to discuss issues of mutual significance.

Secretary General, ECO, stated that such consultative meetings should be a regular feature to enhance cooperation among the three sisterly agencies of the ECO and between the Agencies and the Secretariat. ECO greatly appreciates the important role that the Specialized Agencies of the Economic Cooperation Organization are performing, and supports their activities in their respective domains and assures its full support.

After the meeting, ECO Secretary General also hosted a lunch in the honor of the three heads of the ECO Specialized Agencies.



**ECO CHRONICLE** The 2nd Meeting of the ECO Heads of National Organizations/Centers for Civil Registration was held on 17 October 2017 in Istanbul. The Meeting was attended by delegations from 9 ECO Member States, namely, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of

Turkish Director General of Population and Citizenship Affairs, Sinan Guner, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, and Deputy Minister of Interior of Turkey, Mehmet Ersoy. In his statement, ECO Secretary General expressed his profound gratitude to the people and the Government of the Republic of Turkey, for their warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements during the meeting. While presenting an overview on ECO activities, including the recently adopted ECO Vision 2025, the ECO Secretary General defined civil registration as an area of cooperation which can yield critical people-related services for human development dividend.

# ECO Civil Registration Organization Heads meet in Istanbul



Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey and Republic of Uzbekistan.

In the opening session, statements were delivered by the

During the day-long meeting, delegations discussed regional cooperation in the areas such as civil status registration and best e-government practices; technological and educational cooperation among ECO civil registration organizations, ID Cards and etc. The Meeting also decided to establish a task group of high-level registration experts to develop necessary frameworks for the realization of regional cooperation on civil registration. ECO Secretariat was requested by the Meeting to develop a programme for implementation of the agreed measures and submit it to the relevant ECO bodies for needed decisions and financial support.



# ECO-CCI's Executive Committee Meeting Held in Ankara

 The 23rd Executive  
Committee Meeting of



the ECO-Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) was held in Ankara on the on 17 November 2017. The meeting inaugurated by the Turkish Minister of Development, Lütfi Elvan, and Minister of Customs and Trade Bülent Tüfenkci, was hosted by the Union of the Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB).

Delegations from seven ECO Member States, namely, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey deliberated the

## ECO Secretariat attends

## ECO-CCI Specialized Com

 The Executive Committee and Specialized Committees (i.e. Tourism, Arbitration, Trade Facilitation, Transport, Women Entrepreneurs Council, Industry and Investment Meetings of the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry was held on 15-16 November 2017 in Ankara. During the meetings which were

chaired by Maher Alam Khan, Secretary General of ECO-CCI, delegations from the National Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey deliberated the issues pertaining to Trade Facilitation, Industry and Investment, Transportation, tourism, Arbitration and Women Entrepreneurs.

means for strengthening cooperation through greater engagement of the private sector.

In his statement, ECO Deputy Secretary General, Kanan Nazarov underlined the significance of cooperation in promoting the economic growth of the Member States and also improving living standards of people in this region of abundant natural and human resources. While referring to ECO's legal frameworks especially ECOTA, APPI, TTFA, Mr. Nazarov added that these institutional mechanisms are a vivid reflection of collaboration, requiring more interest and participation of the Member States to reap the potential benefits. He maintained that ECO Secretariat is endeavoring to

speed up completion of projects in the areas of trade, transportation, etc., with the collaboration of regional and international organizations.

The second segment of the 23rd Executive Committee Meeting constituted the Statutory Session. During the meeting, the Secretary General of ECO-CCI, Maher Alam Khan, presented a report of the annual activities of the chamber.

The meeting concluded with an appreciative note and high spirit aimed at strengthening cooperation and collaboration in all vital areas and with a commitment to capitalize the region's vast resources and to take maximum benefit from the current global economic environment.



## mittees in Ankara.

During the meetings, the representative of the ECO Secretariat briefed the delegations on ECO Vision 2025 and ECO meetings since the 27th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) in December 2016. The ECO Secretariat also provided updates on various ECO agreements and appreciated the efforts of the ECO-CCI in promoting commercial, industrial and economic cooperation among member states.

A recent proposal to form "Trade Facilitation Desks" in ECO Member States, "ECO Arbitration

Centre" and the "Business Rating Program" (BRP ) was also deliberated. It was also informed that the theme for the 2nd Confobition on Health Tourism - to be held in Iran in 2018- will now include Tourism, Health Tourism, Confobition and the Halal Conference. The draft Report of the meetings was presented to the Executive Committee of the ECO-CCI for adoption.

# ECO Customs Experts Sub- Committee held in Islamabad

 The 4th Meeting of the Sub-Committee of ECO Customs Experts (SCOEs) was held in Islamabad on 13th November 2017. The meeting which was inaugurated by Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue Member Custom, Muhammad Zahid Khokhar, saw delegations of Customs experts from six ECO Member States i.e. the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Islamic

Republic of Pakistan the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey come together to discuss avenues of cooperation on customs.

In his statement, Mr. Mohammad Zahid underscored the significance of cooperation in this area and considered it an effective means to increase the volume of inter-regional and intra-regional trade and more meaningful for the landlocked states.

In his speech, ECO Deputy Secretary General, Kanan Nazarov, highlighted the need for economic integration of the ECO Region which would lead to the development of the intra-regional trade. He



hoped that the commitment of Member States for the simplification, harmonization, and modernization of Customs procedures will promote integration within the ECO Region.

During the session, the ECO Secretariat informed that Six Member States have already signed the Agreement on Establishment and Operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank and three Member States have so far ratified it. It was further informed that upon ratification of fourth Member State, the document will come into force. The Republic of Azerbaijan announced that it has ratified this Agreement and the Instrument of the Ratification will be communicated via diplomatic channels.

In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan outlined the salient features of the proposed Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). It was

agreed that the implementation of the proposed EDI mechanism will help in facilitating trade in the region and a Technical Committee on EDI was formed to further expedite the progress in this regard.

The delegates briefed the Meeting regarding the legislation and various developments in their countries on implementation of their AEO Programmes.

The Islamic Republic of



Pakistan made a presentation on "Facilities Provided by Pakistan to Expedite Cargo" and highlighted the Customs arrangement for the movement of perishable goods to the neighboring countries especially the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It was decided that the transit trade facility for perishable goods will be linked with the EDI System once it is in place.

The other delegations also provided updates on the issue and maintained that training courses for Customs officials of the ECO Member States can be very useful for strengthening cooperation among the Member States. The Sub-Committee recommended the Member States to finalize the Calendar of Trainings in their respective countries and share the details with the ECO Secretariat for circulation among the Member States.

The Chairman of the Sub-Committee thanked the delegations for their active participation. The Meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the host. A dinner was also hosted by the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Revenue and the Minister of State of

the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Haroon Akhtar Khan, where the distinguished delegates had the further opportunity to share their views and experiences on developments and challenges in this regard.

 The 4th Seminar on Trade Patterns in the ECO Region and WTO Issues was the Ministry of Commerce of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) on October 25-26, 2017 in Islamabad. The meeting saw representatives the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Turkey, ECO Secretariat and ECO Trade and Development come together to share views on Trading patterns, WTO Accession Process and Benefits of Memberships, Regional Trade Integration and Analysis of the Comparative Advantages of the ECO Countries. The Intellectual Property Rights and prospects of Cooperation between ECO countries were also deliberated during the two-day event.

The Seminar was held in premises of Pakistan Institute of Trade & Development (PITAD), the Government of Pakistan's Institute for trade capacity-building and human development and was opened by Pakistan's Minister of Commerce, H.E. Muhammad Pervaiz Malik. In His speech, the Minister underlined the impor-

# ECO Trade Patterns, WTO Issues Seminar

## held in Islamabad



tance of regional economic cooperation in view of the rapidly changing global environment. He emphasized that while other countries are moving towards regional economic integration, ECO remains one of the least integrated regions. After 14 years, the non-operationalization of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) was one of the main areas of concern, he added. Pakistan is open to discuss all



proposals by the Member States to make ECOTA more beneficial and more inclusive to all Member States and during the forthcoming ECO Ministerial Meeting on Trade in January 2018, member states can discuss means to reinvigorate trade in the region to make ECO a viable regional economic entity.

The President of ECO Trade and Development Bank Javaid Aslam also addressed the Seminar, underlining the importance of regional economic cooperation with the aim of increased trade within the ECO region and assured the members of the Bank's commitment to this cause.

In his statement, the ECO Director for Trade and Investment Dr. Muhammad Adnan thanked all the participants for attending the Seminar and ECO Trade and Development Bank for its support. He also acknowledged the role played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran and Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic in the completion of the quorum. At the end of the Plenary Session, on behalf of the Secretary General of ECO, Plaques were presented to Pakistan's Minister of Commerce, the President of the ECO Bank, and the Director General of PITAD.

On the evening of the first day, Minister of Commerce of Pakistan, H.E. Muhammad Pervaiz Malik, hosted a dinner in honor of all the delegates, ECO Secretariat delegation and various officials from the Government of Pakistan. Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Commerce, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, attended the dinner on behalf of the

Minister of Commerce. While speaking on the occasion, she said that there were rich historical and cultural links among ECO countries. She emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation to realize the true potential of the ECO.

On the last day, in the closing remarks, Mr. Ilyas Ghori, Director General of Pakistan Institute for Trade and Development (PITAD) of Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan thanked the representatives for their participation as well as for their recommendations during the course of deliberations. He appreciated the ECO Secretariat and ECO Trade and Development Bank for their contributions.

# ECO- UNESCO School Safety Workshop held in Tehran



A School Safety Workshop was organized from 22 to 24 October 2017 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran, participated by representatives and experts from Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Pakistan as well as officials from UNESCO, UNhabitat, International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), Natural Disaster Research Institute (NDRI) and ECO Secretariat.

ECO Deputy Secretary General, Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, in his opening remarks welcomed the delegations from the ECO Member States and partner organizations and appreciated their contributions to this impor-



tant workshop. He particularly thanked UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office for the excellent organization of the Workshop and UNESCO Headquarters in Paris for sending relevant Expert to share with the participants the global programmes and initiatives on school safety. He also briefed the audience on ECO activities particularly in disaster-related issues and recalled ECO cooperation with international partners on school safety, including with OECD and UNISDR. He welcomed the recent interest of UNESCO in ECO Region and recalled some recent joint activities.

Deputy Secretary General further informed about the post-Sendai activities in the ECO Region, including the development of "ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction" which was finalized a few days ago in Ankara, with the contributions from the Member States and international partners such as UNESCAP, UNISDR, and IDB. He finally expressed hope that ECO Secretariat would get valuable lessons and advice from the discussions in the 3-day workshop, which will be utilized in the implementation of the relevant activities of the ECO Regional Framework.



Overall annual economic losses from disasters In her opening remarks, the Director of UNESCO's Cluster Office, Kuisch Laroche said that annual disaster related economic losses represent between USD 250 billion and USD 300 billion. She further highlighted that studies of disaster trends and the likely consequences of climate change suggest that each year 175 million children will be affected by natural hazard-related disasters alone. She emphasized that without safe

schools, learning and teaching will be disrupted in the aftermath of a disaster, often causing children to roam around in the streets where they may be more exposed to abuse, exploitation, and separation from their families in the chaotic post-disaster situation. This might further cause them to lose an entire school year, as they cannot catch up on the weeks or months spent out of school.

Deputy Head of the Organization for the Development, Renovation, and Equipping of Schools of Iran, Ali Shahri, also made remarks highlighting the importance of safe schools for a sustainable future of countries. He mentioned that in 2005, Iran's Parliament allocated 4 billion dollars to retrofit and renovate 9,500 schools. An additional 3 million dollars was allocated in 2016 for school renovation projects to be implemented

ty. He further added that resilient cities and schools can be achievable in the context of "New Urban Agenda" which sets a new global standard for sustainable urban development.

The Workshop included a series of presentations by Margherita Fanchiotti from UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and DRR international expert of the ECO Secretariat, Mahmudul Islam, fol-



from 2017 to 2022. This shows the willingness of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the implementation of the Safe School Initiative under the Sendai Framework. Moreover, charity organizations and the private sectors in Iran contributed over 400 million dollars in 2014 alone for the retrofitting of schools in Iran.

In his remarks, UN-Habitat Tehran Chief Siamak Moghaddam, underscored that schools do not only serve students during the earthquakes or other disasters, but they can also act as a temporary shelter for communities. Although building codes and regulations have been developed in many countries, but the quality aspects of the implementation of the codes have been compromised in the midst of a huge rush towards quanti-

lowed by interactive discussions among the participants on the issues such as global and regional frameworks, including ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; tools and techniques to implement the "Comprehensive School Safety" programme, including VISUS tools for assessing school safety; resilient citizenry; culture of safety through integrating DRR and resilience in education system; etc.



## TTCC Meeting Held in Islamabad

**ECO CHRONICLE** The meetings of 9th Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC), 9th Road Committee of TTCC and 6th meeting of the Customs Transit Committee of TTCC were held in Islamabad on 13-15th February 2018. Delegations representing transport and customs authorities/administrations of eight Member States, Contracting Parties to Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), namely, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan,

Tajikistan, and Turkey participated in the Meetings. In addition representatives of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (TOBB) and the ECO Secretariat took part in the two-day deliberations.

The Road Committee of TTCC discussed at length the outstanding technical issues impeding the smooth flow of traffic. Facilitation of multiple visas for drivers, issuance of permits

without limitation, technical requirements for roads and vehicles, accession to major international legal tools facilitating movement of goods were among top issues addressed by

meeting of ECO Ministers of Transport.

The Customs Transit Committee of TTCC was also updated on measures regarding electronic TIR (e-TIR), TIR

Electronic Pre-Declarations (TIR-EPD), TIR+, GPS tracking of cargo, with the representative of IRU providing a comprehensive presentation on the latest status of TIR implementation in ECO region (2005-2017). The Meeting called on all Member States to provide regular updates in line with the imple-



mentation of the 5-year Action Plan prepared under ECO/IDB Project on customs provisions of TTFA and modernization of border crossing points. The performance of the TTFA Fund in the fiscal year of 2017 was also addressed at the Meeting. After an initial briefing by the ECO Secretariat, the Meeting discussed proposed Programme of the TTFA Fund for 2018/2019 which would cover TTFA related activities and events.



The  
227th

Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meeting was held at the International Convention Centre of Kish Island of Iran in 14th February 2018.

The Meeting chaired by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Iran, Asif Ali Khan Durrani, was attended by the

Permanent Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan.

ECO Secretary General along with concerned officials of the Secretariat also attended the Meeting.

In his inaugural remarks, Deputy Director for Economic



and Investment Affairs of Kish Free Zone Organization, Mohammad Reza Saeedi welcomed the participants, while ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, also made a statement.

The Meeting discussed the issues related to holding of 23rd Council of Ministers on 17 April 2018 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan, as well as other issues of importance in a friendly and constructive environment.

# 227th CPR

## Held in Kish Island



## ECO Attorney Generals meet in Islamabad



**ECO CHRONICLE** The “3rd Meeting of Attorneys/ Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States” was held at Islamabad, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from 30th to 31st January 2018. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organisation, Halil Ibrahim Akca, also attended the meeting.

The meeting focused on the effective mechanism for judicial cooperation in the ECO Region, mutual legal assistance and fight against transnational organized crime, sharing best practices and

challenges including human trafficking, migrant smuggling and trans-boundary kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, relationship between transnational organized crime and terrorism, fight against cybercrime, preventive measures in fight against trans-national crimes, developing scientific and research ties among the training centers of Attorneys/ Prosecutors General offices, etc.

In his statement, H.E the Secretary General of ECO expressed his gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the 3rd Meeting of the Attorneys/ Prosecutor General of ECO Member States. He explained how, since its inception, the ECO has worked towards increasing the regional connectivity and integration. He informed that during the 13th ECO Summit in Islamabad, the Member States approved the ECO vision 2025 which focuses on improving trade, transportation, energy, tourism, economic growth and social welfare.

The Meeting condemned the recent acts of terrorism in Afghanistan and expressed solidarity with the victims and people of Afghanistan. The meeting concluded with adoption of “Islamabad Declaration” wherein Islamic Republic of Pakistan inter alia also proposed to share a draft framework agreement for judicial cooperation/legal assistance mechanism for the ECO Region.

## ECO SG, Pakistan PM meet in Islamabad



ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, met the Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan at the Prime Minister Office on 31st of January 2018.

The meeting took place during the Secretary General's visit to Islamabad to attend the 3rd Meeting of the Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States. During the meeting, Mr. Akca acknowledged Pakistan's active role in advancing ECO goals during the chairmanship of Pakistan. He said that ECO Secretariat was actively pursuing the goals set in the ECO

Vision 2015-25 for promoting trade, enhancing regional connectivity through greater rail and road links and tourism promotion besides other areas



of mutual benefit.

Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, highlighted the huge potential between the ECO Member States in

different areas including trade, regional connectivity, tourism and people to people contacts.

He said that ECO could play a critical role towards advancing these goals and bringing the people further closer to each other. Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi also said that Pakistan extends full support to the organization in promoting bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation among the ECO Member States.

He reiterated Pakistan's continued commitment to play an active role in regional integration and strengthening multi-faceted cooperation through the ECO platform.



# ECO SG Attends Regional Infrastructure Projects Inauguration in Turkmenistan



A ceremony on the occasion of launching the new construction phase of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI), Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan power transmission (TAP-500), as well as fiber-optic communication lines, and the new railroad along the route Serhetabat (Turkmenistan) - Turgundi (Afghanistan), was held on 23 February 2018 in Serhetabat, Turkmenistan.

The President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahid

Khaqan Abbasi and Minister of State for External Affairs of India M.J. Akbar, as well as the high-level representatives from governments, international organizations and business circles, participated in the event.

The pipeline is planned to transport of 33 bcma of Turkmenistan's natural gas to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India along the 1,800 km route.

Alongside the significant enhancement of energy security of three ECO Member States, namely Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, TAPI is also set to contribute to peace and overall economic development of the involved countries.



The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan 500-kV power transmission line project (TAP-500) is sought to export Turkmenistan's power electricity to Afghanistan, Pakistan and beyond. Meanwhile, the new fiber-optic line is expected to facilitate the development of regional information and communication networks.

The Serhetabat-Turgundi new railroad offers immense opportunities for connecting

Afghanistan to the transport and logistics system of Central Asia. Upon official invitation from the Government of Turkmenistan, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akça participated in the ceremony as a Guest.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the ECO Secretary General had a bilateral consultation with the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov on 24

with the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov on 24 February in Serhetabat.

Both sides exchanged views on the forthcoming ECO Ministerial Meeting



February in Serhetabat. Both sides exchanged views on the forthcoming ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport, expected to be held in May 2018 in Turkmenbashi port of Turkmenistan, and the possibilities for enhancing the role of Turkmenistan in ECO activities.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the ECO Secretary General had a bilateral consultation

on Transport, expected to be held in May 2018 in Turkmenbashi port of Turkmenistan, and the possibilities for enhancing the role of Turkmenistan in ECO activities.

# ECO SG attends D8 Summit



**ECO CHRONICLE** ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, participated in the "9th Summit of the Developing Eight Organization for Economic Cooperation" which was held on 20 October 2017 in Istanbul, Turkey.

Marking the 20th anniversary of the D8 under the theme of "Expanding Opportunities through Cooperation", the Summit was attended by the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, President of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, First Vice-

President of Iran, Eshaq Jahangiri and the Vice-President of Indonesia Jusuf Kalla.

In his opening remarks, Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, recalled the founding principles of the organization and highlighted the huge capacities and resources of the 8 Member Countries and the existing potential for expansion of cooperation among them. He particularly underscored the need for trade facilitation among Member Countries and expressed his conviction that Members Countries will experience a significant boost in their trade if using their national currencies. The Summit approved the "Istanbul Declaration 2017" and "D-8 Istanbul Plan of Action".

The "Developing Eight Organization for Economic Cooperation", known as the "D8", was founded by then Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in 1997. Formed as an economic alliance, the body consists of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.



# AMF Acting SG Visits ECO Secretariat

ECO  
CHRONICLE

A delegation from Asian Mayors Forum (AMF) visited the ECO Secretariat in Tehran on 23 January 2018 and met with ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca. The delegation was headed by the AMF Acting Secretary General, Goshtasb Mozafari.

During the meeting, Mr. Mozaffari touched on the many issues that urban development projects face in today's world.

He raised the possibility of cooperation among ECO cities on major areas such as waste and traffic management; public transportation, etc.

Mr. Akca briefed the guests about ECO's history, goals and objectives, mandates and potential capacities



ties. AMF includes 35 Member Cities from the ECO Region.

as well as its future prospects for regional cooperation.

While acknowledging the need for cooperation and interaction among cities in the Region, ECO Secretary General particularly referred to priority areas for regional cooperation among the ECO Member States and highlighted the relevant ECO

platforms for possible cooperation between ECO and AMF.

Two sides agreed to continue further discussions with a view to elaborating ways and means for possible cooperation. The Asian Mayors Forum is a Tehran-based organization with the aim of facilitating cooperation among Asian municipalities.







ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, represented the Organization in the 7th Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process held on 1st of December 2017 in Baku.

During his inaugural speech, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said his country regards the "Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process" as a valuable mechanism of dialogue and cooperation for attaining peace, reconciliation, security and economic development of Afghanistan.

In his statement delivered during the Conference, the ECO Secretary General reassured delegates of ECO's support for the aims and objectives of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

While stressing on the importance of connectivity towards regional prosperity, Mr. Akca

## ECO SG attends Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process meeting in Baku

asserted that any attempt for wider connectivity within Asia cannot be successful unless Afghanistan is stable and peaceful country, as geographically it is at the heart of Asia.

The ECO Secretary General also held a meeting with Executive Director-Designate of the CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia) Gong Jianwei, where two sides discussed issues of common interest.

The Secretary General congratulated him on his election and stressed on

the need to synergize the efforts of ECO and CICA Secretariats in the areas of transport, environment, and tourism.

The Secretary General also held an informal meeting with the outgoing Executive Director of CICA Çınar Aldemir and lauded his efforts for making CICA an effective forum for promoting dialogue and cooperation in the region.



**ECO CHRONICLE** On the invitation of the Governments of Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, attended the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VII) held on 14-15 November 2017 in Ashgabat. The

organizations, including UN agencies, as well as a number of public organizations attended the Conference.

In his statement, ECO Secretary General highlighted the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's engagement in regional activities sponsored by the Economic Cooperation Organization since its accession to ECO in 1992. He also assured the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan of the full support of ECO for the national, regional and global activities aiming at securing higher rate of economic growth for Afghanistan and more prosperity for its people and expressed readiness to share with potential partners from outside



## ECO SG attends Regional Afghanistan Conference in Ashgabat

Conference was aimed to further strengthen and enhance regional economic cooperation in support of sustainable development and stability in Afghanistan and across the wider region. Representatives from thirty six countries representing Asia, Europe, North and South America, Oceania, twenty-eight international

the Region ECO's capacities to help implement development-friendly programmes for Afghanistan.

During the Conference, "Transit and Transport Cooperation Agreement" (Lapis Lazuli Route Agreement) between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan was signed. The transport corridor is designed to increase the economic integration of the region and increase the volume of trade. As an outcome of the Conference, the participants unanimously adopted the "RECCA VII Declaration".

## ECO SG attends Security & Sustainable Development Conference in Samarkand

 On the invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, participated in the “International High-level Conference on Security and Sustainable Development in Central Asia” held on 10-11 November 2017 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The Conference was aimed at discussing economic, ecological, and cultural and security issues faced by Central Asia and further increasing the cooperation in the region with particular attention to the role of Afghanistan in the region.

During his statement to the session, ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, highlighted the importance of Central Asia in terms of geographical location and abundance of rich and varied energy resources and the successes of the Central Asian Countries in terms of creating conducive economic policy environment. Mr. Akca emphasized that ECO is pursuing sustained economic growth and sustainable development through regional cooperation and harmonization across a wide spectrum of areas and sectors, as they are also crucial for preventing suffering from menaces of insecurity, drugs



and organized crimes.

Afghanistan's importance was also highlighted as it is a country whose five out of six neighbors are ECO members and the economic development and stability of the Country carry importance for the whole ECO Region.


Secretary General concluded his statement by pointing out that Central Asia is not only a geographical and geopolitical region but also constitutes a single cultural and civilized space. Because of these rich and common cultural values, there is a reason to be hopeful that collective and individual efforts by all regional countries would promote sustainable development, peace, and stability in Central Asia.

## SG, Uzbekistan Foreign Trade Minister meet in Samarkand

 ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, met the Minister of Foreign Trade of Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Ganiev Elyor Magidovitch on 11 November 2017, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. During the meeting which took place on the sidelines of the "International High-level Conference on Security and Sustainable Development in Central Asia", Mr. Akca commended the recent development of ECO relations with Uzbekistan and briefed Mr. Magidovitch on the importance of the 28th ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) meeting to be held from 11 to 14 December 2017 in Islamabad. The Secretary General expressed hope that the Minister could attend the meeting.



## ECO, TEPAV Sign MoU

 The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 12 February 2018. ECO Secretary General Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça and TEPAV Managing Director, Güven Sak, signed the document in a ceremony held in TEPAV in Ankara. On the sidelines of the Event, both officials also discussed ways and means for cooperation.

TEPAV is a think-tank established by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB). It became operational in December 2004 with the goal of conducting research and policy development in economic and social fields.

# ECO, SESRIC sign MoU

**ECO CHRONICLE** Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 16 January 2018. ECO Secretary General Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça and SESRIC Director General Ambassador Musa Kulalikaya signed the document in a ceremony held in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. On the sidelines of the Event, both officials also discussed ways and means for cooperation, including through implementation of the MoU. Based in Ankara, Republic of Turkey, SESRIC started its activities in 1978 as the subsidiary organ of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). It functions in three areas of i) development and dissemination of socio-economic statistics; ii) study and evaluation of the economic and social developments in the OIC member



countries with a view to enhancing co-operation among them; and iii) organization of training programmes in the fields of interest to the member countries.



# ECO SG attends International Trans Eurasia Conference in Astana



**ECO CHRONICLE** ECO Secretary General, Halil Ibrahim Akca, participated in the "10th Trans Eurasia International Conference on Transport and Transit Potential", hosted by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Investments and Development on 2nd November 2017 in Astana. About 300 participants from the Eurasian countries, representing public and private sectors and transport sector, diplomatic corps in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and regional and international organizations, financial institutions, transport associations, and companies were present in the Conference. ECO Secretary General delivered a statement to the high-level audience elaborating on ECO's transit transport related activities.

The Conference adopted its final Resolution where, inter alia, efforts of ECO on streamlining regional transport connectivity and trade facilitation mechanisms, including initiatives on commercialization of the railway connecting Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran (KTI), have been welcomed. On the sidelines of the Conference, ECO Secretary General met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov, where two sides reviewed relations between ECO and Republic of Kazakhstan.

Minister Abdrakhmanov appreciated ECO's role, including its transport-related activities, in contributing to the economic development of its member countries and expressed support to ECO's Vision-2025 and reform process. He also awarded to Ambassador Akca a Commemorative Medal on the occasion of 25th Anniversary of the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

# ECO Secretariat attends 33rd COMCEC Ministerial Session



The ECO Secretariat took part in the 33rd Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation which was held in Istanbul on November 20-23, 2017. The

Ministers and high-level representatives of the Member States, as well as high-level representatives of the international and regional organizations, attended the Ministerial Session on the "Development of Trans-Border Transport Corridors in the OIC Member Countries".

ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Kanan Nazarov, participated in the Special Sessions on the themes of "Private Sector Perspective on Transnational Transport Corridors", "Governance of Transnational Transport Corridors", "Economic Impacts of

Transnational Transport Corridors" and "Developing Special Transnational Transport Corridors". He also had deliberations with high-level representatives of COMCEC, SESRIC, D-8, and OTIF on the sidelines of the Session.

The Ministerial Working Session of

the COMCEC was held under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Development of the Republic of Turkey. Ministers and Heads of delegations of Member Countries made presentations on their country experiences with regard to transnational transport corridors. As an outcome of the Ministerial Session, the participants adopted the Resolution of the 33rd Session of COMCEC and Ministerial Declaration on Improving Transnational Transport Corridors in the OIC Member States.



# ICRC Tehran Chief visits ECO Secretariat

 ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari met with the head of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mission in Iran, Ms. Florence Gillette on 1 November 2017 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

Ms. Gillette, who was accompanied by ICRC Diplomatic Advisor in Geneva, Nicholas Hawton, briefed the ECO official about ICRC's global initiatives and activities covering disaster preparedness and response as well as activities in health and education areas.

She also referred to some examples where ICRC has played a pivotal role in the humanitarian support and lawmaking.

The ECO Deputy Secretary

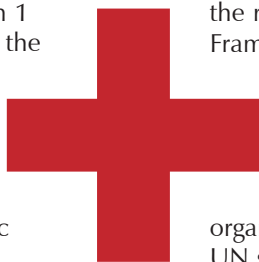


General briefed the guests about ECO's history, goals, and objectives, mandates, and potential capacities as well as the future prospects for regional cooperation as envisaged in "ECO Vision 2025" and other instruments.

He particularly referred to regional cooperation on disaster risk management and reduction and highlighted the comprehensiveness of the recently finalized "ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (ECO-RFDRR) which addresses preparedness, response and recovery aspects of disasters. Mr. Alavi also recalled some ECO partnerships with international organizations from within and outside the UN system and emphasized that such partnerships are made where contributions to the national efforts by the Member States can be envisaged.

Also present at the meeting was ECO DRR International Consultant, Mr. Mahmudul Islam, who discussed the different components of the ECO Regional Framework for DRR, including its flagship programmes to be implemented through partnerships with relevant organizations from within and outside the region.

Two sides agreed to continue further discussions with a view to elaborating ways and means to assist implementation of the ECO Regional Framework for DRR.





# ECO Region marks UN Disaster Reduction International Day



**ECO CHRONICLE** ECO Member States and partner organizations celebrated the "UN International Day for Disaster Reduction" on 13th October 2017 in Ankara in a befitting manner. The ECO Secretariat and Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) of Republic of Turkey jointly organized the event.

The event was inaugurated by Deputy President of AFAD, Hamza TASDELEN, and the ECO Deputy Secretary

General, Seyed Jaleedin Alavi Sabzevari who addressed the audience on activities of their relevant organizations and the importance of the UN International Day.

The event continued its proceedings with a roundtable discussion attended by Executive Director of Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Mr. Hans Guttman, UNDP Turkey Country Director, Mr. Claudio Tomasi, and Deputy UNHCR Representative in Turkey, Mr. Jean-Marie Garelli, who highlighted the importance of awareness of disaster risk reduction. They also shared with the audience the relevant activities of their organizations as regard disaster reduction, particularly in terms of reducing the number of the affected people, which is the theme of this year UN International Day.



In the end, a video message by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction Mr. Robert Glasser, was displayed.

In parallel, AFAD organized a national event where hundreds of school students, teachers, and a large number of disaster and emergency stakeholders got together at the AFAD premises engaging in activities, exercises and simulations focusing on the slogan of "Home Safe Home".



# ECO Secretariat attends UN Environment Assembly

**ECO CHRONICLE** The Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) was convened on 4-6 December 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya under the overarching theme Towards a Pollution-Free Planet. UNEA-3 brought together over 4,300 delegates, including heads of state, ministers and other delegates from more than 170 Member States, UN officials, inter-governmental organizations, business leaders, civil society representatives, activists, and celebrities.

ECO Director of Energy, Minerals, and Environment, Fuad Farzalibeyov participated in the High-Level Segment of UNEA-3.

On the sidelines of the Event, he met with the officials of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), notably with Chief Scientist and Director of Science Division, Jian Liu and the Director of Europe Office, Jan Dusik.

During the course of the meetings, ECO Secretariat and UNEP deliberated on UNEP's possible contribution to the the first State of Environment (SoE) Report for the ECO Region which seeks to serve as a solid basis for any regional plan of action on the preservation of the environment in the region.

ECO-UNEP MoU was signed in August 2004 to institutionalize cooperation in environmental matters, particularly on



enhancing environmentally sound and renewable energy services and resources, capacity building in environmental law, environmental education, ecotourism and supporting environmental assessment services.

UNEA is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment and addresses the critical environmental challenges facing the world. Understanding these challenges and preserving and rehabilitating the environment is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



## ECO SG attends Tehran International Tourism Exhibition

 The 11th Tehran International Exhibition of Tourism and Related Industries was held at the Tehran International permanent fairground on 23-26 Jan 2018 with the participation of Iran Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, Travel Agencies, Hotels, Travel Insurance Companies and other Tourism Related Industries. Also, representatives from over 21 countries attended in this exhibition.

The ECO Secretariat participated in

the inauguration day of this four-day international Exhibition with the Director for Agriculture, Industry, and Tourism, Mr. Memduh Unal, visiting the various sections of the exhibition and meet the relevant provincial authorities of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization.

This exhibition by performing local music and dancing, providing arts and handicrafts, is an opportunity to introduce the capacities of the provinces internationally.





The Economic Cooperation

Organization took part in the 28th Energy Charter Conference (ECC) on 28-29 November 2017 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, which brought together both the new and the existing member countries of the Energy Charter and provided an opportunity for mobilizing support towards the full implementation of the principles of the Energy Charter.

During the Ministerial Session the subject of "Mobilizing



# ECO Secretariat attends the 28th Energy Charter Conference



investment for sustainable energy future and diversified transportation routes" was open for discussion for all observers, international organizations, and the private sector. The Meeting deliberated on the overall global energy issues, including two-panel sessions on "Modernization of the Energy Charter Treaty" and "Diversifying energy resources and transit routes in the international energy markets and approved the concluding document of

the 28th Meeting of the Energy Charter Conference.

ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by Director of Energy, Minerals, and Environment, Fuad Farzalibeyov, participated in the Ministerial Session as an observer and made its contribution in the panel on "Diversifying energy resources and transit routes in the international energy markets". During the session, Mr. Farzalibeyov highlighted underscored that diversification of energy supply routes and sources play a fundamental role in the ECO Region given its unique geostrategic location, as well as the land-locked status of the majority of the ECO Member States. He further briefed the audience on the initiative of the establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM) and track of cooperation between ECO and ECC.

The ECO delegation also met with Deputy Secretary General of Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEID-



CO), Cheng Zhiqiang and the Principal Coordinator of the International Energy Charter (IEC) Secretariat, Marat Terterov. The Energy Charter's possible support to ongoing ECO initiative on the establishment of ECO-REM was high on the agenda with both sides committing to further relations for the development of ECO-REM initiative. During the delegations meeting with Turkey's Deputy General Director of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Öztürk Selvitop, the arrangements for the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum and the 3rd Iran-Turkey Bilateral Meeting on the establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market and the Terms of Reference (ToR) on hiring international and local consultants for preparation of a Feasibility Study on the establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market were discussed.

# Geo-economic Importance

— of a New —  
Project within the  
ECO Region

*H.E. Mr. Ahmed Gorbanov*

*The Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Tehran*

**T**he third decade of February 2018 will be considered as a new bright page inscribed with golden letters in the glorious history of Neutral

Turkmenistan that marks an important milestone on the path of further development of integration processes in the region and international cooperation in a wider



perspective. Particularly, it is clear that this process will positively reflect on stability, serve the interests of the world peace and progress, as well as allow Turkmenistan to not only diversify its natural gas exports routes but equally national economy.

Groundbreaking ceremony of February 23 took place in the cities of Serhedabad (Turkmenistan) and Herat (Afghanistan) devoted to the beginning of the next stage of construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, the 500 kV Power Transmission Line and Fiber-Optic Cable along the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) route. On the

very day, the Serhetabat (Turkmenistan) - Turgundi (Afghanistan) Railroad was also commissioned which will serve the purpose of inaugurating the famous Lapiz-Lazuli transport corridor through Turkmenistan as part of its commitment to integrating Afghanistan to other economic development programs and initiatives.

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani,

Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Shahid Hakan Abbasi, and Minister of State for External Affairs of India Mobashar Javed Akbar participated in the solemn ceremony.

The giant Galkynysh natural gas field is the origin of the TAPI gas pipeline with proven reserves of 26.2 trillion cubic meters, which is the second largest reservoir of the world that contains ecologically clean and green energy. It should be emphasized that the implementation of this project, in addition to addressing modern challenges of economic and social development in the region, should ultimately play a crucial role in meeting

*The giant Galkynysh natural gas field, with 26.2 trillion cubic meters of reserves, is the origin of the TAPI gas pipeline*



the goals of strengthening global sustainable development. Primarily, the TAPI project is a vehicle to create thousands of new jobs in the stakeholder countries, members of this largest project in the history of the entire region with ever-growing energy demand.

As per the project's objectives, after commission, the new pipeline with the total length of 1,814 kilometers will supply 33 billion cubic meters of Turkmen natural gas that will reduce dependence on less friendly means of fossils, thus drastically changing the regional carbon footprint.

With a pipe diameter of 1,420 millimeters (or 56 inches), the project spans through the region with 214 kilometers in Turkmenistan, 744 kilometers through Afghanistan, 826 kilometers through Pakistan while ending at the township of Fazilka in north-western India. As the Turkmen proverb vividly explains - "A true neighbor hurries to help, without waiting for a call," Turkmenistan since Independence has repeatedly provided humanitarian aid to its brotherly neighbor, Afghanistan.

Construction of the new

Serhetabat-Turgundi Railway is yet another testimony to the commitment of the Turkmen people to fraternal ties with neighboring countries and will definitely boost Afghanistan's access to the outer world in a similar pattern of the Kerki-Akkina Rail Link and brighten its chances of exporting agricultural products, carpets and other goods, hence giving hope to millions of Afghans to lead the path of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Eventually, these projects along with the TAPI Gas Pipeline, Power

*Turkmenistan highly values its relations with all members of the Economic Cooperation Organization.*

Transmission Line and Fiber-Optic Communication Line, beyond serving the above expected objectives of sustainable development with far-reaching consequences on the everyday life of millions of people across several borders, must be looked at as a backbone of Turkmenistan's commitment towards implementation of Istanbul Process's Infrastructure Projects where Ashgabat along with Baku is leading. And as the President of Turkmenistan underlined, "This makes us confident in the future of both

current and future generations."

This in effect shows how Turkmenistan offers its peace-keeping capital to the service of mankind, and along with the path of creation as per the vision of the Honorable President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov of these projects they will contribute to the strengthening of friendship, good-neighborliness and establishment of new alliances based on shared interests of mutually beneficial and equal partnerships with neighboring countries and around the world.

With solid economic foundation and the GDP growth rate at 6.5% in 2017, which exceeds 2016 data by 0.3%, Turkmenistan currently heavily invests in its own infrastructure development with about 1,700 large projects worth over 42 billion US dollars are being implemented within central government's development programmes. Turkmenbashi Sea Port as the Gateway to Central Asia is the leading project among all others and will be operationalized in May this year.

In 2017 Turkmenistan continued its proactive engagement both politically and with the



global economic system and maintained foreign trade relations with 119 countries of the world. The largest trading partners were China, Turkey, UAE, Iran, Italy, and Russia, which accounted for about 77% of foreign trade turnover.

Among the major achievements of Turkmenistan in 2017 was undoubtedly successful hosting of the AIMAG-V, or the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, in Ashgabat. Beyond being an extraordinary sporting event of such a magnitude in the history of the Neutral Turkmenistan AIMAG-V was a unique opportunity not only to showcase Turkmenistan to the global stage but equally it was a statement that the country is capable to achieve

even greater highs in overall development.

Turkmenistan highly values its relations with all the countries of the region, who are mainly members of the Economic Cooperation Organization and attach great importance to their further development and prosperity. We are confident that joint efforts of the Member-States in pursuing constructive dialogue will qualitatively enrich it with new content.

The International Day of Nowruz is steadfastly approaching. It is our common holiday that transcended all boundaries and time. We all look at this occasion as a time to share our wishes of wellbeing, prosperity and do more of good deeds for the future of our relations among our communities, countries, and regions.

Turkmenistan as the country who supported the idea of the recognition of Nowruz at the

United Nations is also gearing up with its preparations to celebrate it with much enthusiasm and joy as our ancestors did for quite some time. Since then Nowruz became an integral part of our culture. Back in my home country Turkmenistan, the National Spring Holiday - the International Holiday of Nowruz Bayramy will be celebrated on March 21-22 in the "Nowruz Ýaýlasynyn Ak Öýi" complex in Nowruz Valley, at the foothills of the Kopet-Dag Mountains, near Ashgabat.

This brings me to the point to utilize this opportunity and to congratulate all your readers, as well as the entire people of the region this wonderful holiday of Nowruz! I wish you all the best in the New Year!



*The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country bordered by Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the far northeast. Its territory covers 652,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the 41st largest country in the world. It has a population of approximately 32 million, the 42nd most populous country in the world. Afghanistan joined Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1992. The fact that five out of six Afghanistan's neighbors are ECO Member States (Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and the profound solidarity of Member States towards the Afghan people have created forces which fuel the drive for assisting the country create a better future. This can be made possible through supporting reconstruction and development in Afghanistan.*



# What Is the ECO Fund for Recons

**T**he establishment of a Special Fund for ECO participation in Reconstruction of Afghanistan was agreed at the 12th Council of Ministers (COM) meeting held in October 2002 in Istanbul and was strongly supported by the 7th ECO Summit on 14

October 2002 in Istanbul. The 14th COM (September 12, 2004, Dushanbe) approved the modalities for establishment of the SFRA and instructed the secretariat to commence the implementation of four projects approved by successive Council of Permanent Representatives, namely, the construction of a maternity hospital in Faryab Province, a school in Bamyán Province and a block within the

Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Training and Research Center (MRRD) in Kabul, in addition to the construction of the Deh Mazang Public Park and rehabilitation of the Kabul Zoo.

The Fund was deemed as highly relevant as more than three decades of war and conflict have left a longstanding

mark on Afghanistan's economic infrastructure. In addition, there has been a strong realization among the international community and the Member States for the need to stabilize the Afghanistan economy and to help, through reconstruction work, early settlement of displaced Afghan people and refugees returning from other countries.

The main purpose of the Fund was to "be utilized for financing Afghanistan's priority projects and any other activity requested by Government of Afghanistan in connection with reconstruction of Afghanistan on a case by case basis". The total pledges by the Member States to the Fund were US\$ 11,150,000. This comprises US\$ 5 million by

Republic of Azerbaijan).

In 2014, a new list of projects was proposed by Afghanistan to be funded by ECO fund. The 25th RPC in 2015 also took note of the financial and executive issues of the completed and ongoing projects and requested the member states that have not transferred their pledges to the ECO SFRA as yet, to do so, enabling the secretariat to complete the ongoing projects and to initiate new projects, as

the Fund's performance and to develop a new ECO advocacy approach for Afghanistan including new possible missions for Fund.

With the exception of a school project, to-date, the other 3 projects have been completed. The construction of a school in Bamyan Province is still unfinished pending final report by the relevant authorities in Afghanistan. There was also a large list of proposed projects which fell short of financial resources available through the Fund.

In light of the current situation, ECO Heads of States have mandated the ECO Secretariat to develop a comprehensive Advocacy Programme, which will be approved in the 23rd



Mohammad Akbar Azizi  
ECO Staff

# Reconstruction of Afghanistan and Why It Matters

Pakistan, US\$ 5 million by Turkey, US\$ 1 million by Iran and US\$ 150,000 by the Republic of Azerbaijan. An amount of US\$ 3,550,000 was realized and transferred to the Fund (US\$ 2 million by Pakistan, US\$ 400,000 by Turkey, US\$ 1 million by Iran, and US\$ 150,000 by the

submitted and followed up by relevant authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Accordingly, the Council requested the Secretariat to convene a special meeting on Afghanistan with the participation of Afghan authorities, Fund's donors and other interested ECO Member States to review

Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.

<sup>1</sup>Modality for the Establishment and Operationalization of ECO Fund For Reconstruction of Afghanistan.

# The Economic Cooperation Organization & Sustainable Human Development

*Ugur Kilicarsalan, Director for Human Resources and Sustainable Development  
Maryam Torabi, ECO Staff*

From its designation at the World Conservation Strategy in 1980, the main objective of sustainable development has been a state of society where resources and living conditions continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural system. In other words, sustainability or sustainable development can be met through economic and social development in a way that the needs of the cur-



rent generation are met while considering the wants of the future generation. Despite differences on what precisely is considered sustainable and how to put the very notion into operation, states and international organizations strive to eradicate poverty while assisting the wise use of natural resources.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has for more than five decades thrived to become a driver of global economic growth through regional cooperation. The Organization's Directorate for Human Resources and Sustainable Development (HRSD) deals with the matters relating to human resource development, social development, health, disaster risk reduction,



and civil registration. Moreover, the ECO Vision 2025, which seeks to assist the Organization in achieving its objectives by supporting Member States to realize their own sustainable plans, has mandated the Directorate to help increase standard of living, quality of life, economic welfare and well being of the people of the region through adopting social protection and environment preservation policies within member states.

In a world where climate change is projected to increase in frequency and intensity, Disaster Risk Management has gained center stage at the Organization. The ECO Region is one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world. Most countries in the Region are highly vulnerable to disasters such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, and drought. Over the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the incidence rate of disasters in the ECO Region. During 2000-2015, about 333 natural disasters were reported in ECO Region that cumulatively affected more than 70 million people. The majority of the 470 million ECO Region's inhabitants live in the moderate to very high risks earthquake hazard areas.

In 2005, Governments around the world committed to taking action to reduce disaster risk, and adopted a guideline to reduce vulnerabilities to natural hazards, called the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). As the Framework requires, disaster risk reduction has to be integrated into sustainable development policies. ECO Member States responded quickly to the global Disaster Risk Management agenda in 2005 by organizing regional events to for information sharing, dissemination of DRR education materials, and advocacy for policy change. The importance of DRR cooperation among the ECO Member

States has been recognized in most of the ECO Summits since 2006. The annual ECO International Conferences on Disaster Risk Reduction are among the leading events to discuss enhanced regional cooperation based on experiences gained by the national disaster risk reduction strategies/institutions in the ECO Member States as well



*The ECO Vision 2025 calls for the adoption of social protection and environment preservation policies within Member States*

as the relevant international processes. Since 2006, seven of such conferences have been organized in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Republic of Azerbaijan respec-



tively where the need for a more focused and action-oriented cooperation roadmap emerged. The 8th conference will hopefully be organized in Turkey this year.

The ECO Secretariat is following Disaster Related matters globally, becoming an appreciated player in global efforts on Disaster Risk Reduction. The

first major agreement of the



that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local governments, the private sector and other stakeholders including regional organizations. The SFDRR also calls for the adoption and implementation of national, sub-national, local and regional disaster risk reduction policies, strategies and plans, across different timescales, with targets, indicators, and timeframes.

In line with its Framework responsibilities, the Economic Cooperation Organization finalized the ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (ECORFDRR). The Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) hosted the 2nd Experts Group Meeting for finalization of ECO Regional Framework for DRR on 11-12 October 2017 in Ankara. In a joint

ECO-AFAD programme on 13th

October 2017, the "International Day for Disaster Reduction"

was commemorated by Member State officials and representatives and relevant regional and international organizations.

The ECO Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction today

serves to reduce the impact of disasters through fostering more efficient planning, creating common information systems and exchanging good practices

and programmes for cooperation and capacity development. It also seeks to address common and trans-boundary disaster risks and assisting Member States in developing and implementing the right approaches and sound policies "to jointly respond to disaster emergencies" through concerted national efforts and intensified regional cooperation.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages is considered as an additional key aspect of Sustainable Development. Increasing life expectancy and reducing some of

*The 2017 ECO Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction today serves to reduce the impact of disasters in the region.*



post-2015

development agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework), recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but



the common killers associated with child and maternal mortality, along with access to clean water and sanitation, while addressing many different persistent and emerging health issues are essential to sustainable development.

Recognizing its significance, the ECO Member States have to date convened three Ministerial Meetings on the issue. The 3rd ECO Health Ministerial Meeting was held on the sidelines of 69th World Health Assembly in May 2016 in Geneva, where the Member States represented in the meeting expressed their wishes to closely cooperate on streamlining the draft Plan of Action on Health Cooperation in ECO Region.

The Economic Cooperation Organization is the most relevant regional framework in this part of the world where global and regional attempts can be accumulated in the interests of the Membership to fulfil 2015 development agenda.

Understanding the concept that humans are the real wealth of a nation, the Organization has placed priority on the concept of Human Development. The notion of Human Development essentially involves a long and healthy life as possible, access to education that enables filling an attractive job and access to a wide range of goods and services. In the context of sustainability, as the activities of human beings are inherently dependent on the surrounding environment and resources and the quality of their lives relies on the health, social security and economic stability of their society.

The First Meeting of Heads of National Civil Registration Organizations of ECO Member States was held on 3-4 October 2011 in Tehran. The objective of the Meeting was to provide an opportunity for the ECO Member States to exchange their experiences on important issues related to civil registration and associated services. Participants also shared experiences and best practices in their respective countries on areas such as registration of vital events; production and release of population statistics and information; National Codes and Smart Cards; promotion of safety and security factors for issued documents; civil status registration and

E-Government. The Educational and research co-operation was also on the meeting's agenda. The 2nd Meeting of the ECO Heads of National Organizations for Civil Registration on the 17 October 2017, in Istanbul, provided another timely opportunity for the Member States to agree on possible regional arrangements on civil registration cooperation. The Organization believes that the objective of any ECO regional supporting programme in civil registration should be to assist the Member States in developing capacities to operate and maintain the fundamental systems of civil registration and vital statistics in a coordinated manner. This may include publishing subject-specific handbooks on civil registration and vital statistics systems; organizing the regional workshops on the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics; best-practice sharing programmes; etc.

The implementation of ECO Vision and the Sustainable Development Goals is a timely opportunity for the Member States to reconsider their priorities. The establishment of the HRSO Directorate shows the awareness of the importance of the human development of the Member States which can only be effective through the commitment of the Member States. Now the Onus is on us to demonstrate our collective commitment towards eradicating poverty, achieving sustainable development and building a better future for all.





# Tourism Trends in ECO Region

*Memduh Unal*

*Director for Agriculture, Industry and Tourism*

## ■ Introduction

Tourism has played an increasingly important role in the economic growth of many countries since the beginning of the new millennium. Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced sustained expansion and diversification throughout the world. In this period, it has become one of the largest and



fastest-growing economic sectors. All around the world, an ever-increasing number of destinations have opened up to, and invested in tourism, turning it into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprises, export revenues, and infrastructure development.



### ■ Figures and Trends

According to the estimates by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism has experienced virtually an uninterrupted growth over time, despite occasional shocks, demonstrating the sector's strength and resilience. International tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016. Parallel to these developments, international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide have raised from 2 billion dollars in 1950 to 104 billion dollars in 1980, 495 billion dollars in 2000, and 1.2 trillion dollars in 2016. The developments in tourism have reflected significant figures including that the 7 percent of world exports and 10 percent of world income are arising from this industry. Moreover, the tourism industry has increased faster than world trade and economy for the past five years. According to the latest figures, more than every one out of ten jobs in the world economy is in the tourism sector.

Thanks to their high income, traditional international traveler sources namely North America, and Europe, have been an attractive source for international tourism service suppliers. In recent years East Asia and especially China have been added to the picture with their increasing income and population. From 2012 China has been the leader in the international tourism expenditures.

Another interesting UNWTO finding is that most of the international tourists travel within their own region, preferring to visit neighboring countries instead of travelling to a more distant country.

UNWTO's long-term forecast report "Tourism Towards 2030" forecasts that with an annual increase of 4.4 percent average for emerging destinations and 2.2 percent increase for advanced destinations, tourist arrivals will peak at 1.8 billion travelers in 2030. In other words, it is estimated that emerging destinations in the tourism industry will receive the lion's share of tourists in comparison to the advanced destinations.





### ■ Tourism in ECO Region

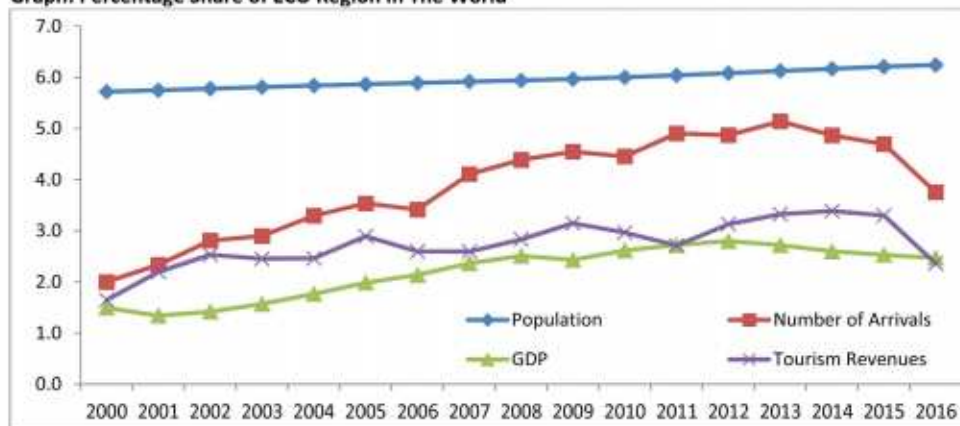
The ECO Region with an area of more than 8 million square kilometers stretching from central to the south and south-west Asia and a population of around 465 million inhabitants is well-known for its natural beauty, as well as the diversity of its historical and cultural heritage. In this respect, the region has a significant potential to be one of the major tourist destinations in the world.

Moreover, the Region is one of the world's richest in terms of historical and cultural heritage and echoes ancient memories of the Silk

Road. Moreover, ECO region is located between two important global tourism markets i.e. Europe and China.

The number of tourists visiting ECO region in 2016 is around 50 million people which constitutes 3.8 percent of total global tourist arrivals. This is also reflected in the tourism-related revenues of the region which implies that the region as a whole attracts only 2.4 percent of the world total international tourism expenditures. Unfortunately, with respect to the Region's potential and population, this ratio is relatively modest.

Graph: Percentage Share of ECO Region in The World



Source: World Development Indicators

Table: Direct Contribution of Tourism in 2016

	To the GDP		To the Employment		Visitor Export	
	Billion Dollar	% of total	Thousands	% of total	Billion Dollar	% of total Export of Good Services
Afghanistan	..	..	..	..	..	..
Azerbaijan	1.4	4.1	171	3.7	2.9	16.9
Iran	11.9	2.9	560	2.2	4.2	4.5
Kazakhstan	2.4	1.9	181	2.1	1.7	3.9
Kyrgyzstan	0.1	1.4	32	1.3	0.4	16.2
Pakistan	7.6	2.7	1338	2.3	0.9	3.2
Tajikistan	0.2	3.3	220	9.2	0.1	15.2
Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	29.1	4.1	495	1.8	26.5	14.7
Uzbekistan	0.7	1.0	140	0.8	0.2	0.0
<b>ECO</b>	<b>53.4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3137</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>
World	2306	3.1	108741	3.6	1402	6.6

Source: WTTC



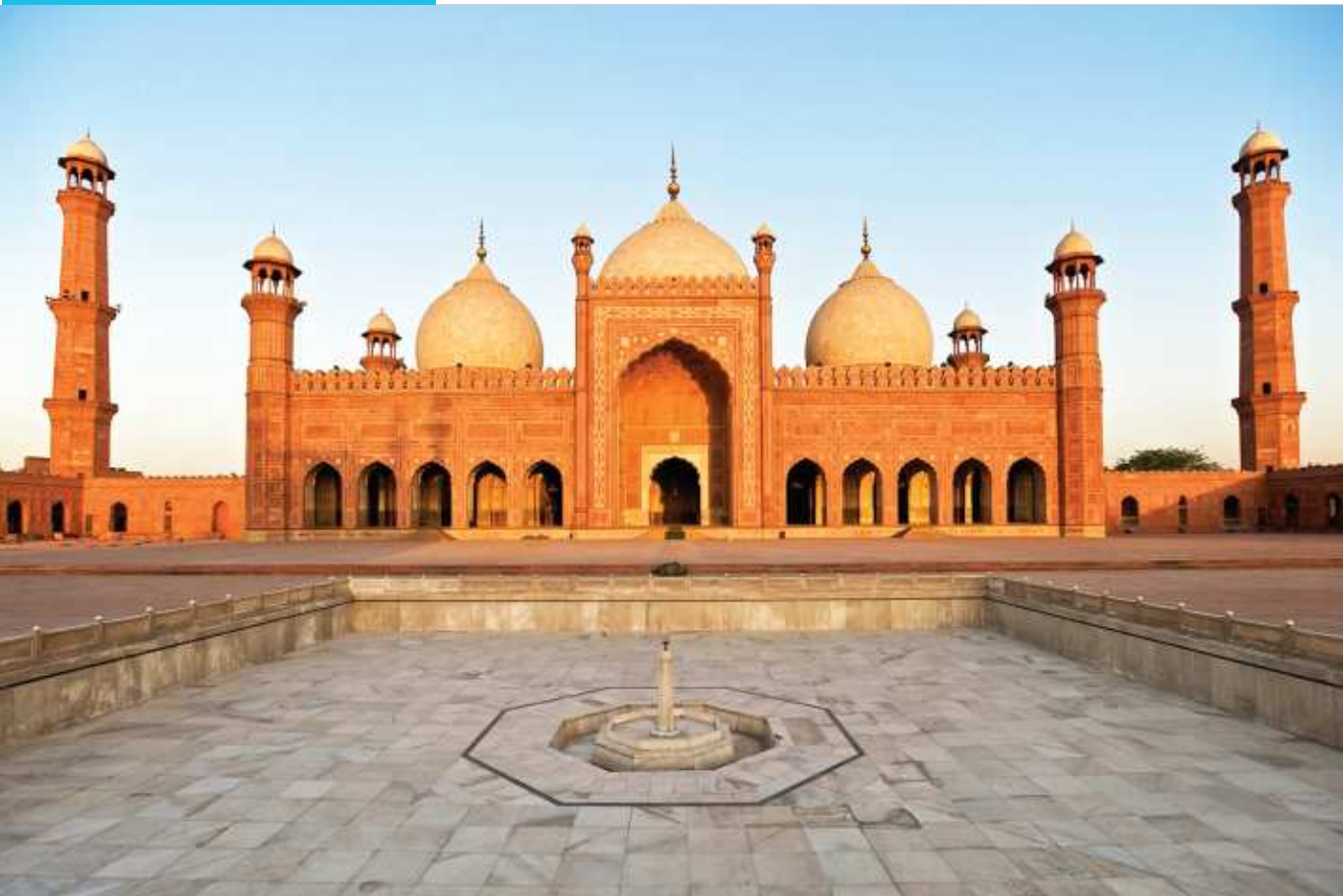
The direct contribution of tourism expenditures to the national income in ECO Region is more than 50 billion dollars. The total contri-

bution of tourism expenditures to national economies in 2016 amounted to around 150 billion dollars.

**Table: Total Contribution of Tourism in 2016**

	To the GDP		To the Employment		Capital Investment	
	Billion Dollar	% of total	Thousands	% of total	Billion Dollar	% of total Investment
Afghanistan	..	..	..	..	..	..
Azerbaijan	5.1	14.6	609	13.2	0.3	2.8
Iran	31.5	2.7	1624	6.5	3.5	3.3
Kazakhstan	7.9	6.2	521	6.0	1.7	5.4
Kyrgyzstan	0.3	3.9	90	3.7	0.1	3.8
Pakistan	19.4	6.9	3550	6.0	3.6	9.3
Tajikistan	0.6	8.2	491	20.5	0.1	4.0
Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	88.0	12.5	2198	8.1	17.5	12.3
Uzbekistan	2.1	3.1	445	2.7	0.3	2.1
<b>ECO</b>	<b>154.9</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>9528</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>
World	7613	10.2	292220	9.6	807	4.4

Source: WTTC



Average direct contribution to GDP in ECO region is close to the World average. However, figures of the total contribution of tourism expenditures to the GDP are lower than World average. In 2016 more than 10 per cent of GDP accounted for tourism and related industries. Nevertheless, this ratio for ECO region was 6.5 per cent. Tourism contributions in Azerbaijan and Turkey are higher than in the rest of the region for the aforementioned mentioned year.

According to the World Travel and

Tourism Council (WTTC) estimations, the year 2016 saw more than 3 million individuals directly and 6.5 million individuals indirectly employed in tourism and travel economy in the ECO region.

Around 37 billion dollars -10 percent of total good and services export in 2016- was from tourism revenues.

Uzbekistan and Iran, the two important ECO Member States in terms of culture, tourism, and history, have not been able to receive the deserved share from international tourism market. The number of





tourists arrivals in these countries are slightly lower than expected potentials.

### ■ Tourism and ECO-Vision 2025

Despite various activities and events on tourism, the ECO Region still lacks a comprehensive regional strategy for sustainable tourism development.

Isolated activities of the Member Countries have not served the regional tourism development in general. To utilize the great potential of the region, diversification and easement of tourism activities, availability of quality services and visibility of the area is a necessary requirement.

Under these considerations during the preparation of ECO-Vision 2025, tourism is accepted one of the main cooperation areas by the ECO Member States. The strategic objective of tourism is "to establish a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality services in the region". Moreover,

the Member States accepted various actions and activities in order to reach this strategic objective.

Implementing these actions and activities expected to result in the following listed outcomes.

- i. The ECO-Tourism brand will be strengthened in order to attract first-time and repeat visitors through effective mediums at the regional, national and international levels
- ii. Silk Road tourism will be revived through cooperation with the international community and relevant organizations
- iii. Visa application process will be facilitated for the citizens of the region.
- iv. Tourism activities will be diversified into various areas including; health/medical, ecological, cultural, winter, sea, mountain sports, climbing, skiing, desert and religious.
- v. Utilization of electronic media will be





increased in tourism promotional activities.

- vi. Tourism related human resources development and capacity building activities will be promoted.
- vii. Relevant rules and procedures in the tourism sector will be adopted in the ECO Region.
- viii. 'Standardization and accreditation bodies' and 'sustainable and green tourism' monitoring relevant mechanisms will be established and improved in collaboration with standards of the international tourism bodies.
- ix. Private sector and local community involvement in the tourism activities will be strengthened.
- x. Diverse means and new solutions will be developed and utilized to address emerging issues and range of markets to best serve the

ideals and goals of sustainable tourism in the region.

### ■ Conclusion

Tourism has become the leading sector in economic development in the last 60 years throughout the world.

It contributes a lot to employment, investment, export and national incomes directly and indirectly. So far, although the ECO region has a great potential in terms of its cultural, historical, and natural and health tourism, it has failed to realize its tourism potential.

Taking into account that ECO countries urgently need to earn revenues from all sources including tourism, which has a significant potential, they need to adopt a strategy to develop this sector throughout the region.

In order to achieve this objective, it is of utmost importance that the related provisions of ECO vision 2025 will be implemented.