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Foreword

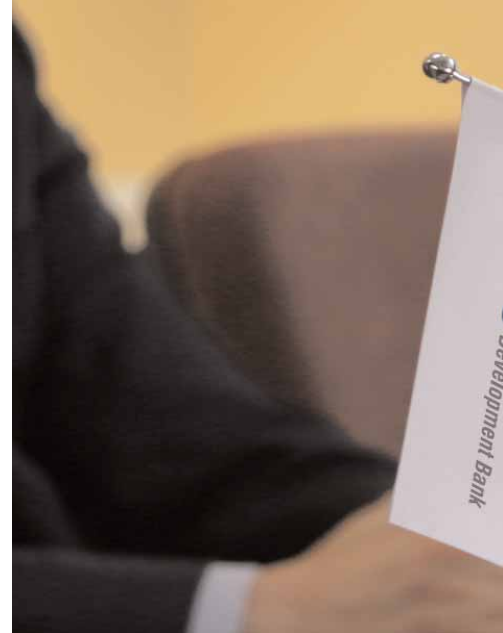
This issue of the Chronicle in hand sheds light on the most important activities of the ECO for the period between May 2020 and July 2021. We are hopeful that this will prove to be highly informative for all readers, especially diplomats, scholars and journalists.

It is important to mention and inform readers that despite the prevalence of the pandemic and life at a grinding halt at an unforeseen level, the ECO continued its work unabatedly. ECO Member States cooperated in areas including, but not limited to, Trade, Transport & Connectivity, Tourism, Energy, Economic Growth & Productivity, Social Welfare & Environment and Capacity Building. The ECO devotedly pursued the agenda of regional development through multilateral approach.

ECO is a dynamic international organisation. It has evolved over the years. Its membership has expanded with the passage of time. It is not a monolith unit; it is rather a full-fledge system comprising Specialised, Regional and Affiliated bodies. It has observers too. ECO has, over the years, developed a strong network of partnership with various regional and international organisation of its kind. And it is on the trajectory to take those relations to new horizons by obtaining Observer Status in those organizations on the basis of reciprocity.

It is true that due to outbreak of Covid-19, traditional diplomacy has undergone massive transformations. Digital platforms, with their merits and demerits, are in greater use than ever before.

The ECO also witnessed a surge in the number of online interactions. The cost has significantly gone down but arguably the negotiations, which are lifeline of multilateral diplomacy, have become quite cumbersome. ECO has a lot to do in this regard. We at the ECO are highly hopeful that given the resource potential the region is blessed with, ECO Member States can reap the dividends of regionalism if negotiations on a few outstanding documents are concluded successfully.



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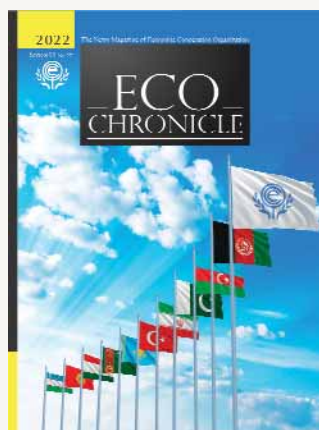
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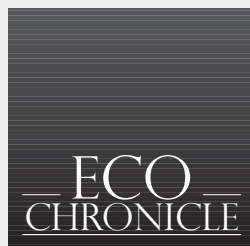


In The Name Of God

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Patron & Supervision

Khusrav Noziri
ECO Secretary General

Address

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

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

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

Graphic Design

Kia Saadatmand
+98-912 321 0 716

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The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hosts

2nd Meeting of the Heads of Free Trade/Special Economic Zones of the ECO Member States

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The '2nd Meeting of Heads of Free Trade/Special Economic Zones of the ECO Member States' was virtually hosted by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on August 2, 2021 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Atta Nasib, Director General of Afghanistan Investment Facilitation Unit (AIFU), office of the President of I.R of Afghanistan.

The representatives of the ECO Member States, delegation of the ECO Secretariat headed by Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Yahya Akhlaqi, Secretary General of the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Adam Kula and the representatives of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) & Pardis Technology Park of Iran; participated in event.





H.E. Mr. Atta Nasib, while chairing the meeting; apprised the participants about the special attention of the government of Afghanistan to the establishment and strengthening of ECO Zones with a view to deepen economic ties with the countries of the ECO region.

He shared the vision of His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to enhance regional economic cooperation for development, expand trade relations and enabling investment climate to play a pivotal role as a trade and transit hub in the region.

He shared the resolve of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to trade and connectivity with neighboring countries. He informed that AIFU is committed to take practical measures for establishing FT/SEZs in Afghanistan, utilizing the good experiences of other ECO Member States, including Turkey, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

The ECO Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Yahya Akhlaqi extended his warm gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for hosting the meeting while thanking the participants to attend the event. He stated that the aim of meeting is to take stock of the decisions made during the '1st Meeting of Heads of SEZs of the ECO Member States' and implementation of these decisions.

Moreover, the meeting is expected to develop an 'Action Plan' and a 'Road-Map' to improve business climate in ECO region, for investors and traders to invest and trade goods and services under the umbrella of ECO Zones.

The ECO Director (Trade & Investment), Mr. Zahid Hussain Abbasi; whilst briefing the meeting, emphasized the need to operationalize the ECO Agreements like ECOTA, APPI, ECO Reinsurance Company, cooperation in Customs and Taxation etc, to bolster business climate in the region. He explained the initiatives of the ECO Secretariat for removing Non Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and setting up robust financial systems for better transparency, predictability and reduction in cost of business.

The meeting deliberated on the harmonization of policies for the networking among ECO Zones, the sharing of experiences from the existing legal and regulatory frameworks for fostering proposed cooperation.

The meeting also requested the ECO Member States, to consider early implantation of ECOTA and APPI and expedite their nominations for the 'Standing Committee of ECO Zones' and engage their relevant SEZ/TFZ authorities for finalization for the guidelines with the Secretariat for setting up the network of ECO Zones.

ECO Holds Midterm Meeting of RPC

ECO CHRONICLE The Midterm Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) was held virtually on July 28, 2021. The Representatives of the ECO Member States and ECO Observers participated in the event. The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour and Chairman of the CPR, H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov, as well as ECO Deputies Secretary General, relevant Directors and Program Officers also attended the meeting.



the organization in special consideration of the COVID-19 and the post-pandemic conditions that obliged a shift in the global and regional working methods.

The Secretary General underlined that ECO was able to successfully hold several ministerial and experts group meetings of regional significance within the

first half of 2021, particularly the 14th ECO Summit on March 4, as well as 2nd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO Countries (PAECO) on June 1-3 at Islamabad.

Dr. Soleimanpour briefed the meeting about sector-wise implementation of some ECO projects, stressing that in the recent years the projects' execution rate has significantly increased.



The Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan and the Chairman of Midterm RPC, H.E. Mr. Toyli Malikov underscored that activities within the ECO had notably

increased in recent years, bearing positive impact on ECO's efforts for expanded regional cooperation. Nevertheless, he emphasized on the significant potential of the region, especially in economic, trade, transport, energy and investment areas that he considered necessary to be utilized to attain the developmental goals of ECO Vision 2025. He further accentuated that maximized collective and sustainable efforts of the member states could help enable the regional economy to recover from the post-pandemic state of rigidity.

While inaugurating the event, the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour welcomed the event's participants. Highlighting the RPC's actual mandate, Dr. Soleimanpour noted that this particular midterm meeting would review and adjust the year 2021's activities and engagements of

The meeting took into account the progress report on the ECO Work Program and Calendar of Events 2021 that contained ECO priority areas of development, including (i) trade & investment (ii) transport & communication (iii) energy, mineral & Environment (iv) agriculture & industry (v) tourism (vi) economic research & statistics (vii) human resources & sustainable development (viii) judicial & parliamentary coordination and ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (ix) ECO Regional Institutions /Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies and International Relations. The reviewed Work Program and Calendar of Events 2021, based on updates/suggestions of the member countries, were also adopted during the midterm meeting of the RPC.

ECO Secretary General Attend an International Conference in Uzbekistan

ECO CHRONICLE On the invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan, the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour visited Tashkent to attend an International Conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities" held on July 14 - 16, 2021.

The event was participated by several Heads of State, including President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Ashraf Ghani, and the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Imran Khan, as well as high-level government officials of the Central and South Asian countries and the Representatives of some International and Regional Organizations.

While inaugurating the Conference, the honourable President of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev under-

scored the rich historic and cultural linked past of the Central and South Asian Regions through the Silk Road. Emphasizing on the commonalities between the two regions, he noted that their reconnection was necessary to meet certain ends of mutual interests and benefits. President Mirziyoyev proposed an initiative for strengthening regional connectivity in the context of Uzbekistan's new open foreign policy strategy aimed at further deepening the economic cooperation in Central Asia with access to South Asia.

In his statement, the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour acknowledged the importance of common strategy for developing nexus approach to enhance interactions of regional players towards securing a better future. Salient features of his statement, inter alia, highlighted the significance of inter-regional connectivity to materialize the shared aims and objectives of the adjacent nations, underlining ECO's role for realization of the peoples' aspiration in wide range of areas, particularly, through development of transport and communications' network amongst its ten Central and South Asian Member States.



ECO Secretary General Meets with the President of Turkmenistan



ECO CHRONICLE On the invitation of the Government of Turkmenistan, the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour paid an official visit to Ashgabat from June 28-30, 2021.

During his visit, the ECO Secretary General held a meeting with the honourable President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr.

Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and explored the possibilities of developing the ongoing dialogue between the two sides for expanding multilateral cooperation and increased economic activities in the ECO region.

Felicitating H.E. Mr. Berdimuhamedov to assume ECO's Chairmanship for 2021, the Secretary General expressed his optimism that the Organization would enter into another phase of development under the kind patronage and visionary leadership of the honourable President of Turkmenistan.

Dr. Soleimanpour also briefed the President about the preparatory arrangements being made for the next (15th) ECO Summit which is scheduled for November 28, 2021 in Turkmenistan. He expected highest level participation in the Summit by Member States, as well as ECO regional and global partners.

H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov commended the Secretary General and his team for their active role in developing the Organization's agenda, as well as supporting Turkmenistan to facilitate the progressive activities of the ECO under their chairmanship.

He mentioned that Turkmenistan attaches huge significance to the ECO as an important regional economic forum, reaffirming country's continued and committed efforts to secure the objectives of ECO Vision 2025 and the Organization's strategic aims in the pursuit of sustainable development and growth in the Region.

Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour also had a meeting with H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. Their interactive talks, inter alia, touched upon ECO's engagements and activities within the framework of the Organization.

The main aspects of the concept developed by

Turkmen side for enhancing and accelerating ECO's functioning were also discussed during the deliberations.

The Foreign Minister recalled that Turkmen side aims to continue the arrangements to prepare to host the next Summit on the ECO Day on November 28, 2021.

The meeting further witnessed Turkmenistan's joining of the Economic Cooperation Organization Framework Agreement on Trade Cooperation, which was signed by Mr. O. Gurbannazarov, the Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations

of Turkmenistan.

During his visit, the ECO Secretary General also participated in the International Media Forum "Regional Dialogue with the Participation of Political Scientists and Journalists" held on June 30, 2021 in the Institute of International Relations of Turkmenistan and delivered his statement.



ECO Organizes the 5th Meeting of the Heads of National Statistical Offices of the ECO Member States



ECO CHRONICLE The 5th Meeting of the National Statistical Offices of the ECO Member States/7th High Level Expert Group Meeting on Statistics was organized virtually on 29th June 2021 by ECO Secretariat.

The Meeting was attended by the delegations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Türkiye and Turkmenistan.

The Deputy Secretary General of ECO, Ambassador Dr. Hüseyin Avni Biçaklı,

opened and chaired this high level Meeting. He noted that the ECO regional economy was presently restoring its pre-covid19 pandemic sustainable normalcy. Along this path, the role of statistics was deemed as critical.

Establishment of ECO Statistical Network in 2011, further operationalized via ECOSTAT, presents bright evidence of cooperation among Member States in the area of statistical data & information sharing.

As with today's global realities tuned toward building post-pandemic resilient



economies, the emphasis was put on application of technologically new statistical analytics to produce real time numerical value of the extent and scope of the ECO Region's economic growth.

The Chairman of State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, Honorable Sylap Sh. Velbegov, highlighted the importance of statistics in policy development by presenting significant developments in Turkmenistan and, in that regard, stressed on sharing knowledge and statistical expertise accumulated by states at the ECO regional level.

Mr. Seyed Nematollah Mifrallah Nassiri, Deputy Head of the Statistical Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran (SCI) emphasized on the importance of knowledge sharing and statistical capacity building among ECO Member States and, in that regard, informed the Member States that SCI's Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC) might provide the best of its practice-based expertise to ECO Member States.

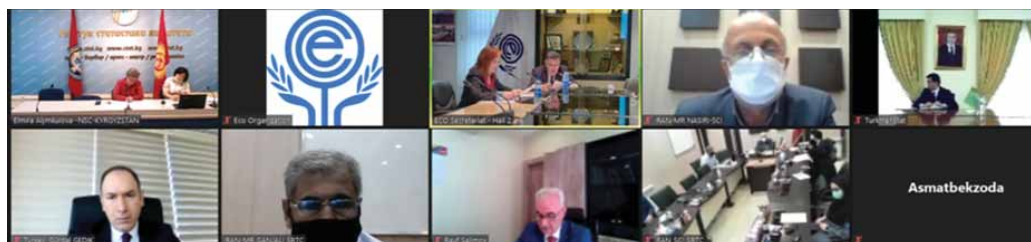
Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States delivered keynote state-

ments reflecting results-based statistical developments in countries while, at the same time, emphasizing the importance of addressing new technology-driven and thus modernized statistics' requirements via regional statistics, especially, on Business Register's development, FISIM with emphasis on Gross Value Added, Price Statistics and Tourism Statistics.

The previous proposals of the Member States on the Applied Statistics, Demography, Applied Statistical Research, GIS and System Development have met with the offer of technical support from within ECO.

On the ECO Statistical Capacity Building Programme, the Member States appreciated that the project proposal is designed to introduce new technology-driven statistical tools and, that it had been supported by the five ECO Member States.

In this regard, they tasked the Secretariat to develop the consolidated project document based on the aforementioned proposal, being a collaborative effort of ECO and FAOSTAT.



Azerbaijan Hosts the 4th ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting

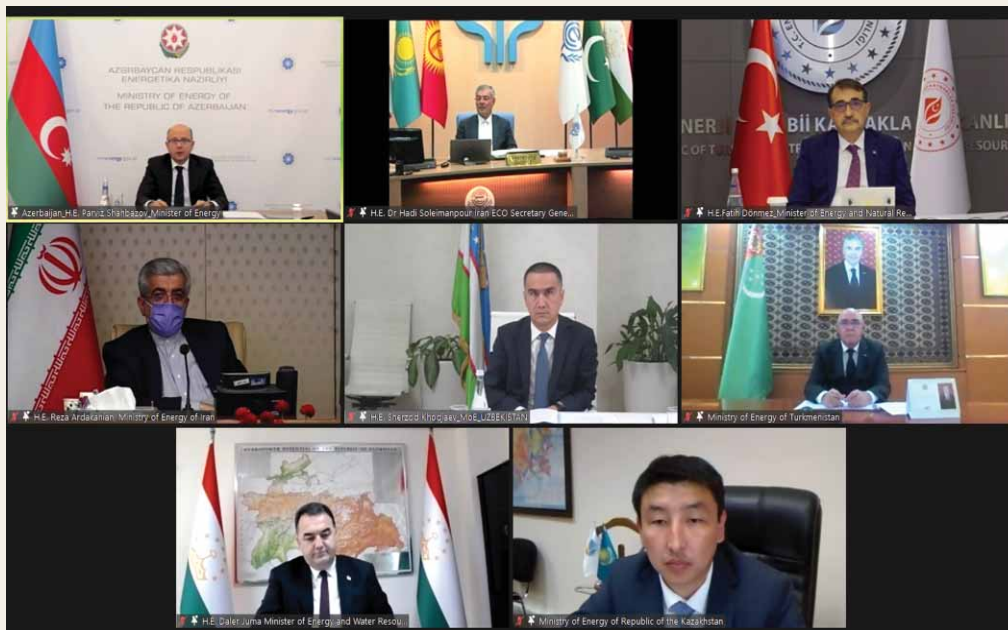


ECO CHRONICLE The 4th ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting, hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan, was held virtually on 24 June 2021. The Meeting was attended by delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan (host), Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan as well as the Secretary General of ECO along with other relevant officials of the ECO Secretariat. Turkish Cypriot State as an observer to ECO also participated in the event. Delegates from Energy Charter, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Islamic Development Bank attended the meeting.

His Excellency Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the ECO Secretary General, delivered a welcome statement and noted that ECO had been undergoing paradigm shift in mainstreaming sustainable energy devel-

opment. Establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre, promotion of Regional Electricity Market and endeavours to enhance energy security in the ECO region are clear token of such efforts. He also pointed out great achievement that ECO Member States decided to put forward new Energy Strategy up to 2030.

Minister of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Chairman of the Meeting), His Excellency Mr. Parviz Shahbazov, extended felicities that new opportunities for green energy in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan and their positive impact on the climate change mitigation efforts have been acknowledged by the ECO Member States and reflected in the Baku Declaration. Besides, Minister Shahbazov acknowledged support for projects such as establishment of ECO Clean Energy Center, ECO Regional Electricity Market, as well as highlighted significance of new energy strategy as an important policy guidance to put forward regional energy



cooperation priorities of ECO Member States.

Head of delegations from Member States delivered keynote statements emphasizing importance to enhance regional energy cooperation in clean energy, energy security, addressing UN SDGs as well as boosting business ties in the ECO region.

Earlier, on 22-23 June 2021, the 4th High Level Experts Group (HLEG) Meeting on Energy was organized virtually by the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Delegates from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan (host), Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as, delegations from the ECO Secretariat, Energy Charter Secretariat and

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) attended the meeting.



Mr. Rovshan Mirzayev, Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment of the ECO Secretariat welcomed the participants and noted that 4th HLEG meeting will consider future energy cooperation through validation of numerous documents of priority areas reflected as a follow up of "ECO Vision 2025".

By concurring in the proposed document which will be sought to be endorsed by Energy Ministers of the ECO Member States on June 24, 2021 will pave a way result-oriented decision, which will guide our enhanced partnership in coming years.

The Member States discussed and approved a number of documents to give impetus to the future energy cooperation of the region.

Uzbekistan Hosts the 4th Meeting of ECO Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and Ombudsmen



The 4th Meeting of the Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and Ombudsmen of the ECO Member States was hosted by the Republic of Uzbekistan on June 16 - 17, 2021. The event, organized in Tashkent, was attended by delegations of all Member States. The ECO Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Jandos Asanov and his delegation participated in the meeting virtually.

While inaugurating the meeting the Chairperson of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan Her Excellency Ms. Tanzila Nurbaeva welcomed the event's participants. She informed the meeting about the work that is being carried out in Uzbekistan on uprooting corruption.

In his statement, Ambassador Asanov felicitated the Republic of Uzbekistan for hosting this important meeting, extending his warm

gratitude to the Chairperson of the country's Senate for attending and opening the meeting. He commended the Uzbekistan's notable endeavours against corruption under the patronage and leadership of the honourable President of Uzbekistan His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoev, acknowledging the country's excellent contributions to secure ECO's aims and objectives towards sustainable development in the region. Relevantly, J. Asanov recalled the views of President Mirziyoev expressed during the 14th ECO Summit that emphasized, inter alia, on the significance of the region's transit-transport sector, conveying ECO's full support and cooperation to Uzbekistan in all its efforts for regional progress and prosperity.

During the Meeting, the Member States agreed to: (i) expedite national procedures for signing/ratification of the Statute of the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO) and its early Operationalization as an effective and useful forum to achieve desired results against corruption as well as other forms of financial crimes; (ii) organize training events concerning fight against corruption on regular basis; (iii) create a smart regional structure for transparency in the fight against corruption; (iv) organize the first Meeting of the General Assembly of the States Parties to RCCACO. The Member States also discussed various ways and means of strengthening mutual cooperation, as well as explored the possibilities for exchange of relevant information/experiences and sharing best practices on fight against corruption.

ECO Secretary General holds Online Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan

ECO CHRONICLE An online videoconference was held between the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov on June 16, 2021, to explore certain ways and means of expanded multilateral cooperation, diverse interactions and increased economic activities in the ECO Region.



The two sides, inter alia, discussed the possibility of holding a midterm Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) in July 2021, as well as 15th ECO Summit to be preceded by 25th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) sometime in November 2021 under the ECO's Chairmanship of Turkmenistan.

It was also deliberated to hold the Donors' Conference for Afghanistan as well as the ECO Day Program on the sidelines of next ECO Summit.

The honourable Minister emphasized on continuation of existing dialogue between Turkmenistan and ECO, assuring their full support to the Organization to boost regional progress and prosperity as well as overall socioeconomic development in the region. While appreciating the ECO Secretary General for facilitating and organizing several ministerial and other important events under their chairmanship, he invited him to visit

Turkmenistan for the extension of the ongoing negotiation process.

The ECO Secretary General re-acknowledged the valuable guidelines of the honourable President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov given during the 14th ECO Summit, underscoring that the organization is well-prepared to make smooth implementation of its prioritized tasks in special consideration of the guidance provided by the honourable President.

The event also entailed some interactive segments between the relevant directorates of the ECO Secretariat and heads and representatives of the concerned ministries as well as agencies of Turkmenistan to touch upon the potential areas of regional cooperation, including trade, transport, energy, environment, agriculture, industry, human resources and sustainable development.

ECO Secretary General Participates in the **2nd OIC Summit** on Science and Technology



the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Chairman of COMSTECH for promoting intra-OIC scientific and technological cooperation, coordinating the efforts of Member States and relevant OIC institutions for the implementation of OIC STI Agenda 2026 and advancement of science, technology and innovation in the Member States, especially the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The OIC Member States recognized that promotion of science, technology and innovation is crucial for addressing the contemporary challenges of development, poverty eradication, environment, education for all, climate change, human health, and energy and water resources. The Summit also identified the importance of increasing intra-OIC as well as regional and international links to strengthen institutional capacity and human resource development in the Member States through targeted capacity-building and financial assistance so that the Member States can benefit from the technological advances and subsequently create, comprehend, adapt and use science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development of their people.

In his letter to H.E. Dr. Soleimanpour, the OIC Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Yousef A. A. Al-Othaimeen thanked the ECO Secretary General for his participation in the 2nd OIC Summit on Science and Technology. The OIC Secretary General underlined the importance that the OIC attached to the ECO as a brotherly organization and expressed his desire for further close cooperation between the two organizations for benefit of the common member states

 On the invitation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour participated in the 2nd OIC Summit on Science and Technology. The Summit was held virtually on 16 June 2021 under the chairmanship of Government of United Arab Emirates to review the implementation of OIC STI Agenda 2026.

The Heads of State and Government of the OIC Members acknowledged the efforts made by the leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan in its capacity as Chairman of the First OIC Summit on Science & Technology for increasing Islamic Solidarity and cooperation in various fields, particularly for the scientific and technological progress of the OIC Member States.

The Heads of State and Government of Member States of the OIC appreciated the leadership of H.E. Arif Alvi, the President of

ECO Secretary General takes part in the



Revitalization Ceremony of the ECO Park

ECO CHRONICLE The ceremony for revival of the ECO Park was held in Tehran on 9 June 2021. The ceremony, co-hosted by ECO Cultural Institute and Abbas Abad Cultural and Tourism Zone, was attended by the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, accompanied by the Deputies Secretary General Dr. Huseyin Avni Bicakli and Dr. Sayed Yahia Akhlaki with the participation of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Dr. Rasoul Mohajer; the; and the ambassadors and representatives of the ECO Member States.

The ECO Park, a symbol of common regional cultural heritage and friendship among the member countries of the ECO, was inaugurated in 2013 on occasion of 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of the Organization. Comprising of an area of 27,000 square meters, the Park is part of a vast cultural center located in the beautiful Abbas Abad Hills, a large north-central neighborhood of Tehran, Iran.

While mentioning the background

of establishment of ECO Park in 2013, the Secretary General of the ECO, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, enlightened the participants of the ceremony about the primary inspiration for launching the project of ECO Park. The ECO Secretary General stated that the Park was established to preserve and promote the precious common culture and heritage of the ECO countries by organizing cultural activities and exhibitions in an excellent and natural environment. Referring to the underutilization of the ECO Park in the past, he pointed out lack of required infrastructure and facilities at the site as the foremost obstacle towards realization of aims and objectives of the Park.

The ECO Secretary General expressed his gratitude to President of the ECO Cultural Institute, H.E. Sarvar Bakhti the Tehran Municipality for initiating recent collaborations among all the stakeholders in order to revitalize the ECO's endeavor for renovation of the ECO Park. He stated conclusion of MoU between the Abbas Azad Land Renovation Organization and ECO Cultural Institute will pave the way to use the potential of the ECO Park for further strengthening the ties of the ECO States through cultural exchanges. Dr. Soleimanpour also provided his vision on the development and utilization of the Park for promoting regional rich culture and preserving magnificent civilization heritage.

Later at the event, the MoU was signed between the Abbas Azad Land Renovation Organization and ECO Cultural Institute for revival of the ECO Park.

ECO Holds the



4th Ministerial Meeting on Health

ECO CHRONICLE The Fourth Ministerial Meeting on Health was virtually hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran on June 2, 2021.

The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Dr. Saeed Namaki, the honourable Minister of Health and Education of Iran. The relevant ECO Ministers/Deputy Ministers, high-level Representatives of the Member States, WHO



Representatives, ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour and his delegation participated in the Meeting.

In his inaugural speech, the ECO Secretary General appreciated and thanked the host authorities for making excellent arrangements to organize

the Meeting.

He underscored that the importance of the Ministerial event was increased manifold due to the conditions taking place after the outbreak of



COVID-19. Dr. Soleimanpour noted that the post pandemic situation had slowed down the overall development in the ECO region, affecting smooth social economic progress of the Member States..

The Minister of health and Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran H.E. Dr. S. Namaki recalled that the ECO had already achieved many significant milestones in its work for regional development through joint efforts, building on the Member States' close cultural ties, shared historical past, and coordinated plans for future.

He emphasized on the importance of the meeting which was aimed at implementing practical cooperation and strengthening the health infrastructure particularly among the ECO Member States by establishing unique and feasible cross border protocols.



The meeting featured various aspects of the pandemic, exploring certain ways and means to address the associated regional health issues as well as a joint course of action to prepare a regional mechanism to collectively respond to the ongoing health crises, preempting such future conditions. Relevantly, the Meeting adopted the Tehran Declaration as well as a Plan of Action on Health Cooperation in ECO Region for 2021-2022.

The adopted Declaration stresses the need for an enhanced collaboration among the Member States and expansion of scope of their mutual activities and engagements to upgrade and improve regional health sector.



Pakistan Hosts the 2nd PAECO's General Conference

ECO CHRONICLE The 2nd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) was hosted by the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on June 1-2, 2021,

In his inaugural statement, H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, the President of Pakistan expressed his deep pleasure in welcoming the ECO parliamentary delegations. He noted that trade and connectivity could play a central role in ensuring consistent and unified regional progress, prosperity and development, adding that the inter-regional economic integration has got momentum in the past few decades, becoming priority of the governments to improve the quality of their peoples' lives. The President conveyed his firm conviction, stating that PAECO's initiatives towards viable regional integration through an open trade market within the region; an easy visa regime; promotion of an advanced communication, connectivity and transport, could noticeably develop people-to-people interactions and lead to sustainable development and poverty alleviation in the region.

The event's inaugural session comprised a welcome address of the



Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan H.E. Mr. Asad Qaiser and statements of chairpersons of parliaments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Delegation of Majilis (lower house) of Parliament of Kazakhstan participated in the conference virtually.

While addressing the ECO Parliamentarians as Chief Guest of the Conference's conclusive session, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Imran Khan accentuated that parliamentary dialogue amongst the ECO Parliaments would help bring the most desirable issues to the forefront of discussions. He expressed optimism that PAECO's conference would prove to be defining moment towards making this parliamentary forum fully operational by ratifying its Charter, identifying a viable roadmap for the respective governments of all the ECO Member States. Expressing his deep concerns

over the disastrous environmental issues, he urged the ECO Member States to take concrete decisions to contain adverse effects of the climate change to preclude any difficulties in the future.

Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the Secretary General of ECO who participated in the event virtually, underscored the significance of PAECO as an important ECO pillar. He briefed the Conference about some recent activities and engagements of the Organization, especially in the six prioritized areas of mutual cooperation, including trade, connectivity, energy, tourism, economic growth and sustainable development.

While acknowledging the fundamental role of PAECO to support and push the ECO's agenda of regional development, Dr.

increasing the scope of mutual trade and other related activities in the region.

The Conference had four thematic sessions that included (i) Women in Leadership Roles: Leading the Agenda of Regional Connectivity; (ii) Impact of Covid-19 on SDGs implementation in the region; (iii) Role of Parliaments in enhancing Trade & Connectivity and; (iv) Advancing Tourism for Development and Poverty Alleviation. Three committees were also formed to deliberate on issues of trade, communication and connectivity, women, youth and cultural affairs.

The Islamabad Declaration was



Soleimanpour particularly sought the Parliamentarians assistance to expedite the institutionalization of regional parliamentary cooperation, speeding up the ratification process of the PAECO's Charter as well as some core ECO Agreements.

The ECO Secretary General further emphasized that a strong and well-structured regional connectivity was genuinely needed for

also adopted by the Conference. The main focus of the adopted document is to underscore the importance of transit trade, reducing the cost of doing business, and financial infrastructure in expanding intra-regional trade volumes. It further emphasizes on the need of simplification of visa processes for businessmen and tourists.

Türkiye Organizes a Consultative Meeting on

ECO Regional Electricity Market

ECO CHRONICLE A Consultative Meeting on "ECO Regional Electricity Market" project was held virtually on May 31, 2021.

The Meeting was organized by the Republic of Türkiye and attended by the representatives of Azerbaijan, Iran, Türkiye to assess the possible cooperation opportunities in further stage of project. The ECO Secretariat facilitated the event and took part in the meeting by extending its vision and presentation on the status of electricity interconnections in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Ambassador Dr. Huseyin Avni Bicakli, Deputy Secretary General, while delivering the opening remarks, stated that enhancement of regional electricity trade can initially be realized via strengthening intra-regional trade in sub-regional markets, where an interconnected grid already exists but much needs to be adjusted to ensure adequate supplies of energy and security of supply.

Another important advantageous element in interconnecting the power systems of the ECO Member States is the potential of regional power

exchange, instead of only as a power export opportunity for the ECO Member States. He also clarified that role of international partners is instrumental to attract financial and technical support to the ECO-REM Project.

Dr. Öztürk Selvitop, Director General of Foreign Relations, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Türkiye, stressed in his opening remarks the importance of energy supply security and ensuring the stability and flexibility of the countries' energy sector, in particular with key significance of interconnections. Also, he emphasized efforts for evaluating and improving opportunities for international collaboration.

On behalf of Iranian delegation, Mr. Mohammad Ali Farahnakian, Adviser to the Minister for International Affairs and Head of the Center for International Affairs and Coordination of Water and Electricity Diplomacy, Ministry of Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, mentioned that Iran Ministry of Energy will comprehensively support initiating the ECO-REM. He emphasized that based on the previous agreements, initiating a pilot electricity market between Iran and Türkiye can speed up the development of the overall ECO-REM idea.

The experts from Azerbaijan, Iran and Türkiye, as well as ECO Secretariat delivered presentations covering the issues such as, recent developments in the electricity market of ECO region, regional electricity interconnection status and system operation activities.

ECO Proposes Enhanced Collaboration with the RCUWM

ECO CHRONICLE The 12th Governing Board Meeting (GMB) of UNESCO's Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) held virtually on 26 May 2021, with the participation of delegations from 18 countries. Representatives of 9 international and regional organizations including the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) also participated in the Meeting.

Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM-Tehran) has been established under the auspices of UNESCO since 2002 in Tehran. The 12th GBM was attended by the relevant Ministers of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Sri Lanka, Syria and Tajikistan; while Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and Türkiye participated in the meeting through their concerned deputy Ministers.

The meeting discussed several important issues including joint projects and transfer of experiences in the field of essential quality assured data and information for integrated urban water management, support for the development of water startups, and the use of new technologies in unconventional water management as well as task sharing between the interested member states on the approved proposals during the last GBM held in September 2020.

In his remarks, Head of International Relations Section of the ECO, Mr. Muhammad Farooq, appreciated the UNESCO and the government of Islamic Republic of Iran for their excellent contribu-



tions in the smooth and efficient functioning of the centre. He further recommended enhanced collaboration between the RCUWM and the ECO for extending regional cooperation in the relevant fields.

In the concluding Remarks, Chairman of the Governing Board, H.E. Mr. Reza Ardakanaian, Minister of Energy of I.R. of Iran, while thanking all the delegates for their active participation in the meeting, requested the member states and the relevant organizations to cooperate in the joint activities and projects of the Centre.

Tajikistan Organizes the

5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy

ECO CHRONICLE The 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy was hosted virtually by Republic of Tajikistan on May 25, 2021. The Minister for Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Zavqizoda Zavqi Amin chaired the event.

The relevant ECO Ministers/Deputy Ministers, high-level Representatives of the Member States, ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour and his delegation participated in the meeting. The President of ECO Trade and Development Bank, Mr. Yalcin Yuksel, along with his team as well as the Secretary General ECO-CCI, Mr. Adem Kula, also attended the event.



The Minister for Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan underscored the importance of the meeting which was aimed at expanding the scope of existing cooperation and engagements amongst the Member States as well as reviewing the overall pre/post-pandemic economic and financial conditions of the region. He appeared poised to express that the high-level interaction would yield desirable outcomes to gratify and jack up the economy of the region that is transiting through a strained phase due to the ongoing COVID crunch.

The ECO Secretary General, while recalling the aims and objectives of the Izmir Treaty, underlined



the significance of the ministerial meeting for the greater regional integration, giving a fresh impetus to the pace of multi-lateral economic activities in the region. He noted the essentiality of the event in special consideration to gauge

the organization's progress and performance in the area of finance and economy. Dr. Soleimanpour also acknowledged the committed contributions of the Member States for laying and maintaining the strong foundation of the ECO.

The meeting featured various ways and means of multifaceted economic and financial cooperation to maximize the utilization of available regional potentials for shouldering the process of socio-economic recovery in the region during the time of crisis. Among other central issues, the participants considered an accelerated implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), trade liberalization policies to attract FDI in the region, expansion of membership of the Agreement on Protection and Promotion of Investment (APPI) as well as ECO Reinsurance Company (ERI) to host a secure environment for investment in the region.

The ECO Secretary General Participates in the 77th Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



The ECO Secretary General Participates in the 77th Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, participated in the 77th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held virtually on 28 April 2021. The theme for the session was "building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific".

In the opening remarks of the Session, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Dr. Armida Salsiah, highlighted the importance of multilateralism in the aftermath of COVID-19 and articulated that regional and sub-regional approaches could contribute significantly towards success of the multilateralism. She shared some of the latest activities of ESCAP aiming at the economic recovery and social protection in Asia and Pacific.

In his statement delivered during the session, the ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, underlined the significance of building resilient and sustainable societies through collaborative efforts at regional and sub-regional levels for bringing swift socio-economic



recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and reducing vulnerabilities to future crisis. He stated that the pandemic has reshaped regional and global socio-economic trends and recommend that in order to maintain their meaningful relevance in the present international scenario, the regional organizations should act regionally while engaging globally.

The ECO Secretary General shared some of the key measures being taken by the ECO and its member states for enhanced regional cooperation in alleviating the adverse socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and transforming the ECO region a resilient region through intra and inter-regional collaboration in order to strengthen the preparedness for a more coordinated response in future. While highlighting the role of ESCAP in promoting intra-regional collaboration to advance common goals, Dr. Soleimanpour emphasized the importance of technical and financial assistance of ESCAP for ECO's programmes and projects. He also encouraged the ESCAP to explore partnerships to finance joint projects for infrastructural development, trade facilitation, clean energy and combating climate change for ensuring regional sustainable development and resilient regional economies in the aftermath of the COVID-19.

ECO Secretariat Hosts the First Virtual Meeting of the Energy Studies

ECO
CHRONICLE

ECO Secretariat hosted the First Virtual Meeting of the ECO Regional Network of Research Institutions / Centers and Think Tanks for Energy Studies on April 27, 2021.

The purpose of this meeting was to deliberate on the ECO Strategy for energy cooperation and its



action plan, which have been prepared by the consultants from Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Iran.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli, Deputy Secretary General of ECO, expressed that ECO strived for building up the diverse and resilient energy architecture in the Region via mainstreaming



sustainable energy transition in its overall energy agenda and transformation to clean energy sources.

He also emphasized that the accomplishment of its strategic energy objective requires a supportive policy environment which shall entail, inter alia, broad political consensus and involvement of all stakeholders from public and private sectors, while identification of energy mix is the independent decision of countries according to their national circumstances and priorities.

As a key note speaker, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President of ECO Science Foundation, stated that supply of reliable, clean and affordable energy remains critical for ECO Member Countries for developing essential indus-

trial and economic base in order to become regionally competitive in today's fast-changing world.

During the meeting, the participants were acquainted with ECO Strategy for energy cooperation and its action plan prepared by the consultants from Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Iran, hired to develop as a bankable project in the future.

The subject document is envisioned to be adopted during 4th Energy Ministerial Meeting.

Participants from Member States such as Iran and Türkiye commented with cooperation proposals in storage batteries for the development of renewable energy sources, and enhancing export potential in energy.



Türkiye Hosts the ECO Ministerial Conference Disaster Risk Reduction



ECO CHRONICLE The 8th ECO Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was virtually hosted by the Republic of Türkiye on March 17, 2021 under the chairmanship of the honourable Minister of Interior of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Süleyman Soylu. The event, organized by Disaster & Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD)

of the Ministry of Interior of Türkiye, was attended by high-level Representatives of the ECO Member States. The ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour and his delegation also participated in the Conference.

The Acting President of AFAD, Mr. Hamza Tasdelen, while inaugurating the Conference, underlined the importance that AFAD attaches to the multinational collaboration for reducing the regional disaster risks. He underscored that the world was living in an age, where the impacts of natural and human-induced disasters are on the rise. Mr. Tasdelen conveyed that the

current hazards such as fast and irregular urban sprawl, increasing population, climate change and pandemics/diseases were all threatening us and the peoples of the world. He considered that the most fundamental instrument to combat such threats was to identify these challenges in every walk of life, ensuring the preventions to be in place.

The AFAD's Acting President believed that the 8th ECO Ministerial Conference on DRR would reinforce regional cooperation and partnership towards the reduction of risks, expecting the outcomes of the event to be contributing for future of the region.

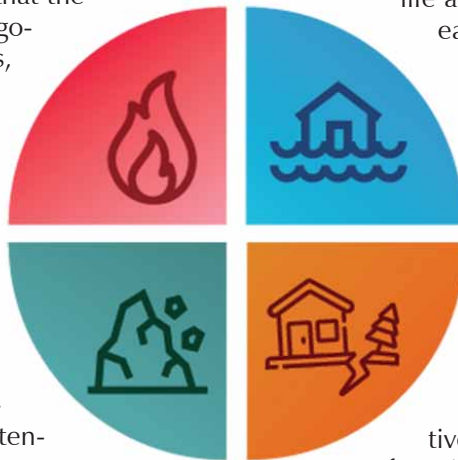
Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the ECO Secretary General, thanked the host authorities for making excellent arrangements to organize the Conference. He underlined that the ECO region had been undergoing repeated natural disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, drought, and floods, stating that the empirical evidences and scientific findings transpired the vulnerability of the region to be prone to adverse events in future.

Dr. Soleimanpour said that the region's exposure to various natural calamities was intensified due to the rapid climate change and increased urbanization that continued to hamper region's socioeconomic progress with a notable toll on human capital. The ECO Secretary General recalled the Member States' efforts for discovering some intra-regional ways and means to meet such challenges.

The ECO Secretary General noted that the jointly-developed documents, including the ECO Regional Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and its relevant roadmap as well as Ankara Declaration to be adopted by the Conference were expected to play a pivotal role in securing the desired aims and objectives on DRR.

H.E. Mr. Süleyman Soylu, Minister of Interior of Türkiye, while explaining the concept of globalization,

warned that its experiences in technology and communications were not enough for a safer and wealthier world. Illuminating the helplessness of the developed countries, which were supposed to overcome any such challenges, he noted that they were most affected by the pandemic. He emphasized that the process of globalization should not only be the of wealth creation but also security and peace, focusing on transnational cooperation in trade and development, every security issue, goodwill, right to life and sincerity, including each kind of disasters.



The Minister acknowledged the effectiveness of cooperative activities and shared experiences as well as risk reduction plans that helped reduce the possible damages of such disasters. He mentioned some of Türkiye's initiatives, projects and programs for mitigating and responding natural hazards to create a more resilient society, pointing out that creating a society resistant to disasters was also an important component of economic development.

The 8th ECO Ministerial Conference adopted the ECO Regional Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (ECORFDRR) and its implementation roadmap as well as the Ankara Declaration as ECO's main documents on disaster risk reduction.



ECO and Eurasian Regional Bodies

Hold a Joint Virtual Meeting

ECO CHRONICLE A joint virtual meeting was held amongst the Secretaries General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Permanent Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA (PS IGC TRACECA), the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council). The event, held on March 15, 2021, was aimed at elaborating the impact of COVID-19 as well as figuring out the possible ways forward to minimize the bearings of the pandemic on the road cargo transportation.

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour considered that the

prolonged shutdowns and restrictive policies would bear negative effects on the prospects of short-term intra-regional economic growth. He underscored that the ECO region already experienced post-pandemic slow-paced economic activities, including in the transport sector due to the imposition of preventive measures. Dr. Soleimanpour hoped that the impacts of this untoward situation could be overturned through resorting to a strong international cooperation and solidarity as well as collaborative, transparent, science-based and coordinated global and regional response. He pointed out that the central issue for regional economic organizations is to remain relevant under pandemic crisis. Relevantly, these Organizations need to

“think globally while act regionally” he added. To this end as well as regarding the area of connectivity, the ECO steers to concentrate on turning some selected Regional Transit-Transport corridors into Economic ones based on the proposal made by honourable President Berdimuhamedov of Turkmenistan after his country’s assumption of ECO chairmanship.

Dr. Soleimanpour updated on some immediately taken steps that bore instant implications to resume activities for regional connectivity and smooth socioeconomic recovery in the region, including the adoption of ECO Practical Guidelines on Cross Border Facilitation Measures under conditions of COVID-19. He thanked the IRU to help successfully launch a test run of loaded trucks in July 2020 that carried goods under TIR carnets along the Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI). He also acknowledged the importance of digital transport solution i.e. e-TIR and E-CMR in freight transport and the benefits of their inter-modality.

The meeting expressed concerns over the post-pandemic restrictions that severely affected the intra-regional and inter-region-

al trade in goods, hampering essential supply chains and smooth movement of cargo drivers at the border crossing points.

During their online interaction, the Secretaries General noted that many road transport operators, particularly small and mid-size firms, were on the verge of bankruptcy, encouraging concrete measures to help avoid their imminent liquidity crisis. It was emphasized that the transport workers required equal protection and priority for inoculation against the pandemic. The meeting recommended a well-coordinated approach to be adopted for a digital COVID test or passport for commercial drivers, seeking the creation of a network of designated focal points of the Member States for enhanced coordination and collaboration.

The meeting further agreed on the implementation on IRU’s Call for Action, urging the national governments for coordinated response to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic, provision of financial support to their road transport operators, harmonized border crossing procedures and preferred utilization of digital trade facilitation tools.





The ECO Secretariat has participated
1st Joint Meeting by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey
**on activation of Technical
Management Boards of
ECO-RISCAM**

ECO CHRONICLE 1st Joint Meeting by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey on activation of Technical Management Boards of ECO-RISCAM was virtually held on March 10, 2021. The 1st Joint Meeting by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for discussions and decision concerning the activation of Technical Management Boards of ECO-RISCAM virtually hosted by Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI), was attended by the Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Turkey, ECO Secretariat and ECO-RISCAM. Dr. Alireza Khakifirouz, President of

Iranian National Center of Accreditation chaired the meeting.

The meeting discussed, inter alia, activation of Technical Management Boards. Other issues taken into account during the interaction were activities in the area of standardization, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology in 2021-2.

The Statute of ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) was approved by the 18th Council of Minister (COM) along with the Road Map for its provisional implementation. The official opening ceremony of the Central Secretariat of ECO- RISCAM

and its Technical Management Board of Conformity Assessment was held on 14 December, 2016 in Tehran, Iran. The Secretariats of the Technical Management Board (TMB) of Standardization and Accreditation will be located in Turkey, Metrology in Pakistan and Conformity Assessment in Iran.

The ECO Vision 2025 has mandated the ECO-RISCAM to work for developing industrial standards and encouraging of green industries and services for the region.

The participants agreed to make all possible efforts for an increased level of cooperation and collaboration in the relevant areas of activities.

The ECO Secretary General Participates in the the First Symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member States Universities



ECO
CHRONICLE

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour participated in the First Symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member States Universities held virtually on 4 March, 2021.

The Symposium was organized by Allahmeh Tabataba'i University of Iran in collaboration with the ECO Specialized Agencies. The Symposium, attended by over 50 participants from the ECO Member States, recognized the significance of innovative and pragmatic approaches for enhanced regional cooperation in the field of education.

During the inaugural session of the Symposium, the ECO Secretary General delivered his opening speech and thanked the organizers for providing an opportunity to the relevant stakeholders, academics and intellectuals for exchanging views in order

to meet the challenges of the contemporary world in the field of education and research. Dr. Soleimanpour highlighted the importance of close cooperation among the ECO Member States in education and research for realization of the Organization's strategic goals.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid multi-dimensional developments taking place at the global level, the ECO Secretary General emphasized on the need for transformation in educational and research policies of the ECO Member States. While sharing some of the recent achievements of the ECO in the field of research, he mentioned the establishment of ECO Research Center that would benefit the region by contributing economic research studies as well as feasibility studies for the ECO regional

projects. He further maintained that there is need to establish an institutional linkage or networking of universities, through ECO Specialized Agencies, for promoting regional cooperation in the fields of science and education, and execution of joint research projects. The delegates acknowledged the efforts and valuable contributions of the ECO Secretariat, ECO Cultural Institute and the Allahmeh Tabataba'i University of Iran for successful organizing this important Symposium.

In the concluding session of the Symposium, a special discussion session was arranged where the participants provided their views and shared their experiences for enhanced regional cooperation in the field of education and research in the wake latest challenges of the globalized world.

The 14th ECO Summit



ECO CHRONICLE The Republic of Turkey organized the 14th ECO Summit virtually on March 4, 2021 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the honourable President of the Republic of Turkey. The event, convened under the theme of 'Regional Economic Cooperation in the aftermath of COVID-19', was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Imran

Khan, the honourable Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

All the ten ECO Heads of States and the ECO Secretary General, as well as the ECO Observers, including the President of Turkish Cypriot State, Secretaries General of the Turkic Council and International Energy Charter were present in the Summit.

H.E. President Erdogan, while acknowledging the significance of ECO for regional development, emphasized on the early implementation of ECO

Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and other progressive initiatives aimed at pushing the process of development in the region. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic gravely damaged the global economy and trade, straining on the existing healthcare system. President Erdogan said: "we can only win the fight against this global debacle through strong solidarity, regional and international cooperation." He underscored that during Turkey's Chairmanship of the Organization, the country had remained focussed on consolidating the organization and advancing regional cooperation. He felicitated H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the honourable President of Turkmenistan for assuming the chairmanship of the ECO for 2021, extending his best wishes for the country's success as new ECO Chair.

The honorable President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, expressing thanks for the assigned responsibility, assured of his country's complete support to secure the organization's overall aims and objectives. Voicing the priority vectors of cooperation within the framework of Turkmenistan's chairmanship of the ECO, he underlined his country's intention to promote the organization's work, focussing on the development of economic, cultural and humanitarian ties. He added that unfolding of the trade, transit-transport, energy, industrial and communication potential of the ECO would remain in the center of Turkmenistan's strategy during their chairmanship of the Organization. President Berdimuhamedov considered the establishment of economic corridors as a system of sustainable routes for the movement of goods, services, investment and industrial cooperation as well as energy corridors for diversification of energy resources supplies in the region, as Turkmenistan's key mission, with participation of Member States. He underscored that the essence of cooperation amongst ECO Member States was the geographical and historical ties, shared traditions, customs and values.

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour briefed on the ECO's recent developments made in the organization's priority areas of cooperation, including trade & investment, transit-transport, energy, tourism as well as activities

and engagements for enhanced economic connectivity in the region. He also illuminated the finalization of latest reform process to enhance the sense of owner/partnership amongst all Member States, as well as ECO's fresh approach for making the organization more project and result-oriented. He recommended some special initiatives for stimulating the intra-regional developmental activities that underwent in the aftermath of COVID-19. The Secretary General reaffirmed ECO's determination and support to shoulder the process of development and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The Heads of ECO Member States commended the valuable contributions of Dr. Soleimanpour made for accelerating the realization of the organization's agenda. Noting the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, they highlighted the key aspects of their countries' response to the crisis and emphasised on an enhanced collaboration amongst the Member States to mutually address the pandemic's affects as well as joint strategy for developing the region's healthcare system. The ECO Heads of States/Governments extended felicitations to H.E. President Berdimuhamedov for Turkmenistan's assumption of responsibilities as the new ECO Chair. In the concluding moments of the Summit, a ceremony was organized in Baku for signing the Charter of the ECO Research Centre.

The 15th ECO Summit would be held on November 28, 2021 in Turkmenistan.



ECO Secretary General Attends the Launching Ceremony of the International Year of Peace & Trust



The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour attended the virtually organized launching ceremony of the International Year of Peace and Trust on January 29, 2021.

The event was scheduled in line with the UN Resolution No. 73/338 adopted on September 12, 2019. The event was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, honourable Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan. Other speakers included H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Azerbaijan; H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the United Nations General Assembly; H.E. Mr. Altay Cengizer, President of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); H.E. Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO); H.E. Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director General United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG); and the relevant Representatives of the member countries, UN bodies and other regional



and international organizations.

While congratulating the honorable President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the people and the Government of Turkmenistan as main sponsor of this important UN Resolution and felicitating the relevant UN bodies for successfully facilitating this momentous move, the ECO Secretary General acknowledged the significance of this timely initiative. He underlined the positive aspects of the intended UN roadmap to mobilize the international community for creating a culture of peace and trust.

Dr. Soleimanpour noted that an expanded multilateralism coupled with a consolidated approach for extended integration could play an instrumental role to help prevail the culture of peace and trust amongst the nations. He stated that the regional integration is an essential instrument to back such process and particularly if applied from an economic forum. Within this context, he cited the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). He added that the people in the ECO region enjoy an amicable neighborhood, living in a traditional environment of peace, harmony and co-existence.

ECO

Secretary General holds Videoconference with the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan

 The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour held a videoconference with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov. The online interaction that took place between the two dignitaries on January 27, 2021 covered several issues of regional importance, including the amplification of collaborative activities from the ECO's forum to push further the process of sustainable economic growth and development in the region.

Dr. Soleimanpour congratulated the Foreign Minister for the 25th Anniversary of Permanent Neutrality Policy of Turkmenistan, praising the country's socio-economic development as well as international and political achievements under the patronage of President Gurbanguli Berdimohamadov. He also acknowledged the significant role of Turkmenistan to enrich and shoulder the Organization's agenda as per ECO Vision 2025 and the principles of Izmir Treaty, alongside country's appreciable contribution to achieve desirable results of regional projects, including in the areas of trade, economy, transport and energy, as well as the Organization's engagements and activities for development in Afghanistan under the ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan. The ECO Secretary General further appreciated and welcomed Turkmenistan's readiness to assume the Organization's Chairmanship from



the year 2021 and holding ECO Summit in November this year, assuring the Secretariat's full cooperation and support to the country in its capacity as the new ECO Chair.

The honourable Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan expressed his pleasure and satisfaction over the progressive pace of ECO. He commended the organization's recently adopted project-oriented approach and reaffirmed Turkmenistan's continued backing to the Organization in the pursuit of accelerated regional development. Moreover, the two sides emphasized on the need of more active and consolidated actions, underscoring the utility and significance of multilateral activism to secure the desired goals for the larger interest of the region.

ECO Holds

31st Meeting of the Regional Planning Council



ECO
CHRONICLE

The 31st Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council was held virtually on January 12 - 21, 2021. The Representatives of the ECO Member States,

ECO Regional Institutes, Specialized Agencies, Affiliated Bodies as well as ECO Observers participated in the event. The relevant sectoral committees of the RPC took into account the issues of regional importance that including, (i) trade &

investment, (ii) transport & communication, (iii) energy, mineral & environment, (iv) agriculture & industry, (v) tourism (vi) economic research & statistics, (vii) human resources & sus-

tainable development, (viii) judicial & parliamentary coordination and ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan, as well as (ix) ECO Regional Institutions /Specialized Agencies / Affiliated Bodies and International Relations".

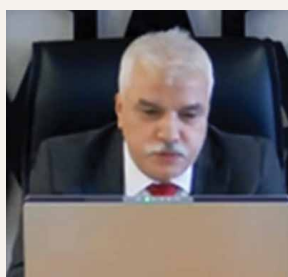


In the plenary session, the Council adopted the report of the Meeting, Work Program and Calendar of Events, containing the Organization's for activities he next year.

Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the ECO Secretary General, while welcoming the participants in the event, highlighted that this important ECO event was convened

ment the decision of the 24th COM in regard to organization's project-oriented approach. To do so, the Secretariat made its best to implement a host of small-sized projects.

The President of Strategy and Budget Office of the Republic of Türkiye and the Chairman of RPC, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim SENEL expressed his pleasure to join the meeting.



annually to review the past activities of the organization, as well as consider and frame some fresh programs and projects to be executed from Organization's platform for continuing the regional development process. He underscored that the COVID crunch, like most parts of the world, has not spared our region, hampering regular activities planned for 2020.

The ECO Secretary General noted that one of the ECO's experiences in the time of crisis was resorting to the virtual modes of working that proved to be efficient, cost-effective and fast-tracked RPC.

Meanwhile, the main approach of the organization during 2020 was to imple-

He stressed that the challenges posed by COVID-19 required comprehensive joint regional response to better address the situation, adding that urgent measures were needed for enhancing intra-regional trade and cooperation in agricultural sector.

Mr. SENEL conveyed that the Republic of Türkiye attaches immense importance to expand and deepen the all-around relations with the member countries as well as strengthen ECO's activities.

Other participating delegates also spoke during the meeting, focusing on an increased collaboration to meet the conditions taking place in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic.

ECO Deputy Secretary General Receives Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister



ECO CHRONICLE The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour received the newly appointed Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Economic Diplomacy, H.E. Sayed Rasool Mohajer.

The visit of the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister to the ECO Secretariat on January 19, 2021 was to reciprocate a courtesy call of the ECO Secretary General who visited him earlier on January 10, 2021.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on different activities being collaboratively done from the ECO's platform for continuing the process of sustainable economic growth and development in the region.

The ECO Secretary General, while appreciating the continued assistance and support of the Islamic Republic of Iran, being the host country, for smooth functioning of the ECO Secretariat, underscored some of the ECO's key achievements made at the

24th Meeting of the Council of Ministers in Antalya, including the organization's shift to be more project-oriented as well as the successful completion of reform process and Member States' agreement on the revised scales of assessment.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, expressing his pleasure and satisfaction over the performance of the ECO, appreciated the organization's freshly adopted project-oriented approach.

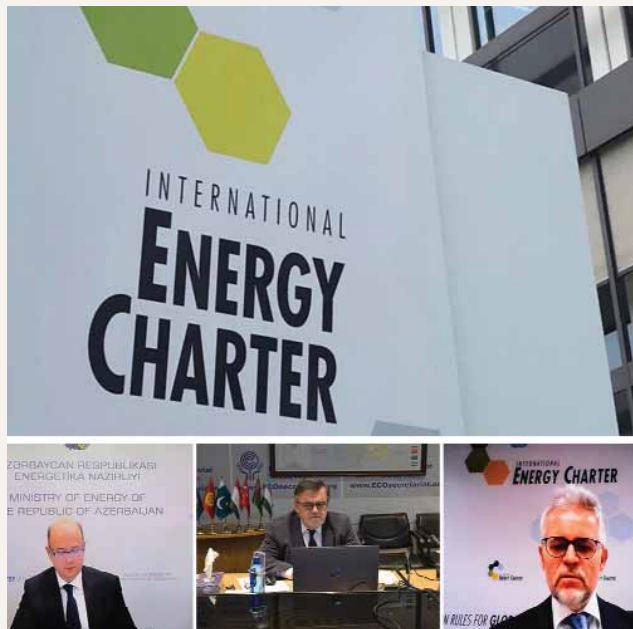
He also assured Iran's full cooperation and support to maintain the ECO's persuasive efforts for accelerated development and overall betterment in the region.

ECO Deputy Secretary General Participates in the 31st Meeting of Energy Charter

ECO CHRONICLE A delegation of the Economic Cooperation Organization headed by Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli, Deputy Secretary General of ECO, participated in the Ministerial Session of 31st Meeting of Energy Charter Conference held on December 17, 2020 under the chairmanship of Azerbaijan. The ECO delegation participated in the Conference on the invitation of Minister of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Secretary General of International Energy Charter.

The Conference was held in video conference format on the theme of "Energy Efficiency for All: Innovations and Investments".

During his statement, Ambassador Bicakli expressed ECO's readiness for collaboration with Azerbaijan and other Member States to move on the path of development for the collective betterment of the region. ECO Deputy Secretary General underlined the ECO's efforts to pave the way for diverse and resilient regional energy architecture, mainstreaming the sustainable energy transition in the organization's overall energy agenda and transformation to clean energy sources.



Ambassador Bicakli mentioned the organization's current process for the establishment of ECO Clean Energy Center and ECO Regional Electricity Market as explicit examples of ECO's efforts in this regard. Ambassador Bicakli also invited international partners seeking their cooperation to enrich the ECO's recent initiative for the formation of new Regional Energy Strategy which is aimed at providing a comprehensive direction for transformation of energy mix to reliable, sustainable, resilient and reformed energy market amid new dynamics on the global energy scene covering mid and long term perspectives.

The Ministerial Meeting, attended by the high-level speakers from member countries of the Energy Charter and international and regional organizations, discussed the innovations, sustainability and investments mechanisms to support and finance undertakings engaged in the energy sector.

ECO Secretary General Attends an International Conference on the Policy of Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan



Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the Secretary General of ECO, participated in an International Conference on the Policy of Neutrality and its significance in ensuring international peace, security and sustainable development. The event, held on December 12, 2020, was dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of the Permanent Neutrality Policy of Turkmenistan.

The ECO Secretary General, noted that the principles, ethos and practices of neutrality that demonstrates an enduring faith in peaceful coexistence, harmony and benevolence, were deeply rooted in the culture, society and history of the people of Turkmenistan.



Appreciating President Berdimuhamedow for his initiative of permanent neutrality and continued patronage of the policy, he acknowledged the rightful exploitation of such values by Turkmenistan.

Dr. Soleimanpour, while underlining the ongoing constructive and cooperative approach in the ECO region, emphasized that the region's potential and advantageous opportunities could be

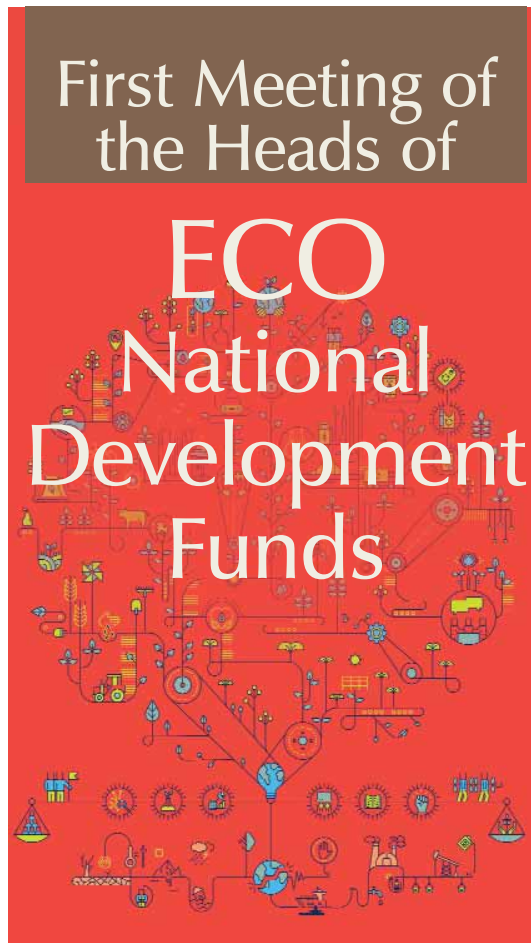
availed for promising as well as future-building-and-oriented initiatives to realize various plans and projects for achieving the sustainable development goals. The ECO Secretary General, inter alia, highlighted the organization's priority for developing regional energy sector, conveying some plans and projects, including ECO Clean Energy Center, ECO Regional Electricity Market and Regional Energy Strategy.

He also underscored that the promotion of such a kind narrative of neutrality coupled with the notion of cooperation could be instrumental as an engine of objectivity, growth, development and coexistence in the region.



The First Meeting of the Heads of National Development Funds of ECO Member States, held virtually on December 16, 2020 under the chairmanship of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was attended by relevant Representatives of the Member States, ECO Secretariat, ECO Trade and Development Bank and ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In his inaugural statement, the ECO Secretary General H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour recalled that an expanded intra-regional trade and attraction of investments were ECO's primary and strategic objectives for sustainable socioeconomic development in the region. He underlined that cooperation amongst the region's capital markets remained one of the organization's key areas for achieving the desired objectives. Noting the importance of the establishment of ECO National Development Funds as well as the region's huge investment potential, he hoped that the intended



forum might devise a feasible mechanism for enhanced economic activities and financing some regional infrastructure projects to attract the increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Region.

The Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Muhammetgeldi Serdarov participated in the event as special guest. While extending his gratitude to the Secretariat, as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran to host this important meeting, he said that Turkmenistan attaches great importance to

the ECO Member States. He also appreciated the initiative for establishing the intended wealth forum of the Member States, acknowledging its significance for the development and growth in the Region.

The Chair of the event as well as President/Head of Iran National Development, Dr. Shahidi Zade underscored the importance of mutually beneficial investment for an accelerated economic development in the region. He also emphasized on the significance of joining global value chains and connecting regional capacities to world markets.

While adopting a joint declaration, the meeting explored the possible ways and means for establishing the proposed ECO platform. It further took into account various features of the proposal, including its technical, financial and administrative aspects. The Meeting decided to hold second round of discussions, in due course, to push forward the process for establishing the perceived network.



ECO Holds Ministerial Meeting on Transport

ECO CHRONICLE The
ECO
Ministerial Meeting on
Transport was held virtu-
ally on December 15,
2020 to discuss the
impacts of COVID-19
pandemic on the region's
transport sector and the
ways and means to
address the stressed
socio-economic condi-
tions.



cooperative and interac-
tive for countering the
adverse effects of
Coronavirus on region's
transport sector.

Noting the sluggish
trade and transport activ-
ities on ECO Border
Crossing Points (BCPs) in
view of the post-pan-
demic's preemptive
measures, he looked for-
ward to a collective
response as to ensure an
unhindered passage of

ECO CHRONICLE In his inaugural
remarks, the ECO Secretary General Dr.
Hadi Soleimanpour welcomed the partici-
pants, underscoring the need to be more

essentially required supplies of goods in the
region, including food and medicines. In this
regard, the Secretary General requested the



endorsement of the Guidelines by honorable ministers.

The ECO Guidelines on Cross Border Facilitation Measures have been approved by the 247th Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), the Secretary General recalled.

Connectedly, Dr. Soleimanpour sought the consideration of the Ministers for implementation of the framed guidelines, as well as creation of 'TIR EPD green lanes' along the region's main transport routes for an expeditious movement of goods on the BCPs. While referring to the need for implementation of ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), he further conveyed the latest status and future planings for other ECO arrangements on different modes of transport, including railways, roads, maritime and civil aviation.

The Chair of the event and Minister for Road and Urban Development of the Islamic

Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Eslami, appreciated the Member States for their cooperative role to maintain and facilitate the regional trade and transport activities on region's BCPs.

Other participating Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the Member States also spoke to maximize their cooperation, especially in the COVID's crunch, to meet the emerging regional challenges.

The meeting, while acknowledging the severity of the crisis and meet the

region's immediate needs and requirements, adopted the recommended ECO Guidelines, as well as a 2020 Ministerial Declaration on transport which was considered by the relevant High Level Working Group's meeting on December 8, 2020.

The Declaration requested Member States to fully implement the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), and fulfill

their commitments as per TTFA provisions. The Document appreciates Member States for their constructive role during COVID-19 pandemic by keeping their borders open and facilitating transport and trade in the region, congratulating the Member States on the successful Test Run of the loaded trucks under TIR in KTAI Road Corridor during July –August 2020.

It further tasks the ECO

Secretariat to initiate new projects on Railway, Maritime and Civil Aviation cooperation in 2021.





ECO Secretary General Participates in the 36th Ministerial Session of the COMCEC

ECO CHRONICLE The Secretary General of ECO, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, participated in the 36th Ministerial Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) as an observer.

The Session that took place virtually on November 25 and 26, 2020 was inaugurated by the honourable President of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The theme of the Session was focused on tourism and the impact of COVID-19 thereof. Among others, the OIC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, and the representatives of the regional groups including Ministers of Economies of the State of Kuwait, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the People's Republic of Bangladesh attended the Ministerial Session.



3rd Asia-Pacific Forum for
South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Secretary General Participates in the Third Asia- Pacific Forum

ECO CHRONICLE On the invitation of the UNESCAP, the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour participated in the Third Asia-Pacific Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The event jointly organized by ESCAP, UNOSSC, Government of Indonesia as well as the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) was held on November 25, 2020 under the theme of "The Role of South-South Cooperation in Building Back from COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific."

Addressing the Forum, Dr. Soleimanpour underlined some of the ECO's post-COVID experience and

Regional Seminar on Geographical Indications

practices, conveying the immediate measures taken to counter the negative impacts of the ongoing pandemic on the region, including the initiative for establishing an all-inclusive consultative mechanism for regional health sector. Considering the adverse effects of the pandemic on transport sector, the ECO Secretariat developed some guidelines on cross border facilitation measures for the maintenance of essential supply chains to support the region's livelihood, the ECO Secretary General conveyed.

He further highlighted the strong and active cooperation between the ECO Secretariat, Member States and relevant international institutions to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable and affected countries in the region.

While acknowledging the importance of the role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the post-COVID scenario, Dr. Soleimanpour noted that the South-South and Triangular Cooperation could be instrumental to bring a degree of relief to the most affected developing nations. He stressed that any medicines or medical discoveries needed to be shared widely, ensuring their availability to all, preferably to most vulnerable countries.

Forum's participants, inter alia, discussed and explored the ways and means to meet the negative consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, including the significance and role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in this regard.

An ECO delegation headed by Dr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi, Deputy Secretary General, participated in the Regional Seminar on Geographical Indications (GIs) held virtually on November 18, 2020. The event under the theme of Distinctive Signs for "Origin-Based Products: Geographical Indication, Collective and Certification Marks" was hosted by the Intellectual Property Center (IPC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in cooperation of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), organizer of the Seminar. High-level Representatives from ECO Member Countries also attended the seminar.

In his statement Dr. Akhlaqi emphasized the aspects of the event covered under the umbrella of Geographical Indications, including (I) Protection of Distinctive Signs for Origin-Based Products, (II) Creating Commercial Value through Connecting Goods to their Geographical Origin: Challenges and Opportunities, (III) Systems of Protection for Origin-based Product and (IV) Protecting Geographical Indications Abroad.

While highlighting the importance of Distinctive Signs for Origin-Based Products, he underscored that trainings and exchange of expertise are the bases for expanding cooperation amongst the Member States and other International Organizations. He noted the essentiality of the role of national IP offices for developing nexus in order to accelerate the process of cooperation in the relevant area of activity.

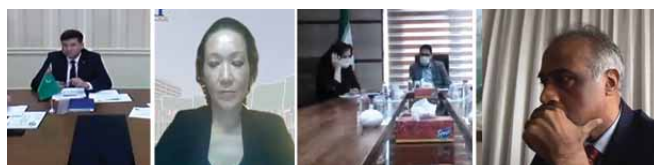
The Member countries and heads of delegations also delivered their reports/representations on different aspects of the Geographical Indications.

ECO Participates in a Trilateral Meeting on KTI Railway Corridor

 A trilateral review meeting on the project for commercialization of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Corridor (KTI) was held virtually on October 28, 2020. The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, as well as relevant officials of the IsDB, ESCAP, ECO and OSJD participated in the meeting.

In the opening remarks, Mr. Kanan Nazarov, ECO Deputy Secretary General, while expressing satisfaction with the ongoing activities on the study project, stated that proposed MoU is believed to serve a solid basis for future and uninterrupted interaction between the en-route countries. He also hoped that the future phases of the Study Project would result in transforming the present KTI railway corridor into a competitive, vibrantly developing economic corridor with its all necessary prerequisites to provide livelihood, vital employment, and cumulative benefits for multiple users in the Member States.

The UNESCAP's Representative, while stressing the significance of the Event, highlighted the interest and huge investments made by the railways of en-route countries to make this route physically feasible and their efforts towards development of the Corridor which is believed to be very important railway connectivity for the Central Asian region and beyond. ESCAP is also hoped to IsDB's future collabo-



ration to enable the steps forward and ultimately convert it into an economic corridor.

The Representative of the Islamic Development Bank, while noting their collective success on the project, recalled that the final goals of the project are to develop and commercialize the corridor. Recalling IsDB's commitment to the project, considering it to be on priority of the Bank, Bank's readiness for the physical finances at post-study phase was also noted.

The meeting agreed that the MoU would not create any new legal issue for the relevant countries and the MOU urges upon all parties to use the existing OSJD legal instruments on railway transport unless decided by all countries otherwise. The Meeting decided to allow a two-week time for securing formal views of the relevant authorities of the en-route countries on the MoU

The en-route countries also agreed that the future phases of the Study Project should be result-oriented towards the transformation of the present KTI railway corridor into an economic one with all its prerequisites including, inter alia, developing economic hubs/zones at the areas adjacent to the border crossings points of KTI route, keeping in view the Khorgos, the special trade zone/dry port on the Kazakhstan-China border, as one of the best practices in the region.

ECO Secretary General Participates in the in the Baku International Energy Charter Forum

ECO CHRONICLE On the invitation of International Energy Charter, a delegation of the ECO headed by the ECO Secretary General H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, participated in the Baku International Energy Charter Forum held virtually on October 28, 2020 under the theme of "Transition to renewables in power generation, transport, heating and cooling: modern challenges and trends".



The ECO Secretary General underlined the ECO's efforts to pave the way for diverse and resilient regional energy architecture, mainstreaming the sustainable energy transition in the organization's overall energy agenda and transformation to clean energy sources. He underscored the ECO's commitment to "Affordable and Clean Energy" under the Sustainable Development Goal-7, adding that transformation to renewable modes as well as cleaner and sustainable energy sources, portrays one of the expected outcomes perceived in the ECO Vision 2025.



In his statement at the high-level ministerial session, Dr. Soleimanpour expressed his deep concerns over the recent attacks on the strategic energy and transport infrastructure of Azerbaijan, worrying that such an offensive tendency could be detrimental to overall regional energy security.

The ECO Secretary General also expressed his condolence to the Government and the People of Azerbaijan for the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in recent episodes of the conflict.

He emphasized on the importance of peace and stability in the region in order to achieve the envisioned regional development goals, supporting the peaceful settlement of the dispute based on the international principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of recognized borders.



Dr. Soleimanpour also mentioned the organization's current process for the establishment of ECO Clean Energy Center and ECO Regional Electricity Market as explicit examples of ECO's efforts in the field of energy cooperation.

The ECO Secretary General invited international partners seeking their cooperation to enrich the ECO's recent initiative for the formation of new Energy Strategy which is aimed at providing a comprehensive direction for transformation of energy mix to reliable, sustainable, resilient and reformed energy market amid new dynamics on the global energy prospects.

ECO Delegation Attends 28 th Executive Committee & 18th General Assembly of ECO-CCI

 ECO Delegation Attends the 28th Executive Committee & 18th General Assembly of ECO -CCI, held on 19th October 2020.

The 28th Executive Committee & 18th General Assembly of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) held on 19th October, 2020 in a virtual mode.

An ECO delegation headed by H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, Secretary General of the ECO, participated in the event. In his statement, Dr. Soleimanpour expressed his deep concern over the flagrant violation and breach of internationally recognized humanitarian law and recent military attacks on the civilian population and residential areas in the Ganja city, Azerbaijan. Whilst extending deep condolences over the loss of precious human lives in this historical city, he paid tribute to the bravery and martyrdom of Azeri soldiers who sacrificed their lives to defend territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, recognized by international community through various UN resolutions.

The ECO Secretary General underscored the importance of regional private sectors as a driver of sustainable economic growth and enhanced trade & investment, leading to job creation and poverty alleviations, as set forth in the ECO Vision-2025.


Dr. Soleimanpour highlighted the need for a more proactive role of the private sectors through national chambers with a closer liaison with their governments to remove the impediments in regional trade integration and formulate uniform policies to create Regional Value Chains (RVCs). In this context, he suggested to the national chambers to pursue signing and ratification of "ECO Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI)" as well as operationalization of "Articles of Agreement of the ECO Reinsurance Company". He also suggested to national chambers of the non-signatory Member States to consider joining these two forums for increasing 'secure' investment.

Dr. Soleimanpour shared that the ECO has launched Small Scale Studies projects on trade facilitation, reduction in tariffs and removal of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Referring the negative repercussions of COVID-19 on the region's economy, he stressed the need for joint efforts to face challenges in the post pandemic era. The need to harmonize measures related to Covid-19 to facilitate trade in goods and services in hard hit sectors like transpiration, hospitality, travel and tourism etc, was also emphasized.

The Secretary General of ECO shared the idea that ECO-CCI may set up a regional task force to coordinate with private sectors and business communities across the ECO region, identify policy and production gaps in the wake of pandemic and recommend more realistic and uniform set of policies to regulate trade and investment, support long term development of RVCs and establish their linkages with GVCs. The task force may also study the potential for harmonization of standards like testing and certification for Covid-19 and measures on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs) to regulate movement of people, goods and services.

Energy Charter Secretariat and the ECO Secretariat Jointly Organizes a Virtual Workshop



 The Energy Charter Secretariat in cooperation with the ECO Secretariat organized a virtual technical workshop on 14 October 2020 on the theme of "Perspectives and Challenges of Regional Electricity Markets: Harnessing Trade and Investment Opportunities". The event brought together over forty government officials and energy experts from ECO Member States as well as international and regional organizations.

The objective of the workshop was to discuss international experiences on integration of power markets as well as the challenges and perspectives of developing ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO REM). The representatives of the European Commission, Eurasian Economic Commission, World Bank and Asian Development Bank shared best practices and lessons learnt on power market integration and implementation of infrastructure projects. Experts from

SAARC Energy Centre and CDC "Energiya" discussed current developments in the regions of Central and South Asia in terms of energy supply and demand, connectivity and electricity trade.

The participants also discussed further steps on establishing ECO REM which offers multiple benefits to participating states in terms of energy security, resource complementarity and economies of scale.

ECO Secretary General

Participates in the 19th Annual Meeting of the ECO Trade Development Bank

ECO CHRONICLE An ECO delegation headed by H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, Secretary General of the ECO participated in the Plenary Session of the 19th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) held on September 30, 2020.

On the onset of his statement, Dr. Soleimanpour requested the event's participants for observing a one-minute silence to recite the "Surah Fatiha" for the Azeri martyrs who sacrificed their lives to defend the proud Azerbaijani people and their land, as well as to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country.

The event's proceedings commenced with the welcome remarks by the ETDB's honourable President, H.E. Mr. Yalçın Yüksel, and the statement by the honourable Governor State Bank of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Raza Baqir, Chairman of the ETDB's Board of Governors, who while applauding the role of ETDB stressed the need



for an expanded and greater regional economic cooperation to offset the adverse effects of COVID-19, desiring the Board to make effective decisions for further promoting the activities of the Bank.

In his statement, the ECO Secretary General congratulated and thanked the Bank's management for financing the ECO's priority projects and supporting the monetary needs of the Member States.

Acknowledging the commendable contribution of ECO Trade and Development Bank

(ETDB) to foster and shoulder the process of development and prosperity in the region, he desired the ETDB to study and introduce a proper method of supporting and implementing the projects planned and patronized by ECO Secretariat, saving and increasing the Bank capacity and assets under a proper pay-back guarantee mechanism.

Referring the negative repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic on the region's economy, Dr. Soleimanpour underscored the need of ETDB's closer and meaningful collaboration with other regional and international financial institutions in a bid to make accelerated and collective efforts to effectively save the region's community from undesired conse-

wake of the pandemic, the ECO Secretary General mentioned.

Dr. Soleimanpour further conveyed that the ECO had launched studies on trade facilitation to enhance trade through removing Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs), including non-tariff barriers, para-tariff barriers etc., and by saving cost and time involved in the trade transactions.

He encouraged the ETDB to join the efforts in materializing the projects to be identified and recommended studies. Such projects




quences of COVID-19 and the post-pandemic affects.

In the given context, the ECO Secretariat approached some prominent regional and international financial institutions, seeking their collaborative engagements with ETDB for the overall betterment of the region in the

would play a significant role in the uplift and welfare of the region, accelerating the process of overall development and growth in the mutual interest of the Member States, the ECO Secretary General noted.

Deputy Secretary General of ECO Participates in the **International Conference on Universal Access to Information**

 The Deputy Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli, accompanied by ECO's Head of Section for International Relations, Mr. Muhammad Farooq, participated in the International Conference on Universal Access to Information held on September 28, 2020.

The conference, organized on the occasion of International Day on Universal Access to Information (IDUAI), was co-hosted virtually by Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media of Uzbekistan and the Project Coordinator of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Uzbekistan.

The conference, attended by over 180 participants from Uzbekistan, the OSCE area and beyond, recognized the significance of access to information and focused on the right to information in times of crisis as well as the advantages of having constitutional or policy guarantees for public access to information and formulation of sustainable policies through and beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid socio-economic developments taking place at the regional and global levels, the ECO strongly believes that joint and integrated efforts are required by all the



international and regional partners in achieving the information society leading to universal access to information as a key objective of the UN Agenda 2030 and ECO Vision 2025.

Acknowledging the efforts of ECO in developing communication infrastructure and relevant legal frameworks in information sector, the ECO delegates were invited at the conference by OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan as special guests.

On October 15, 2019, the 74th UN General Assembly proclaimed September 28 as International Day on Universal Access to Information (IDUAI).

ECO Secretariat Participates in the World Tourism Day Ceremony

 A delegation of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) headed by the Secretary General of the ECO, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour participated in a ceremony organized by Iranian Cultural heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) on September 27, 2020 at Eram Grand Hotel International Conference Center Tehran to mark the World Tourism Day-2020 under the theme of "Tourism and Rural Development".

Referring the ECO Vision-2025 on the occasion, the ECO Secretary General Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour underlined that the tourism industry had gained a very positive attention from the Member States, adding that the sector was placed among one of the ECO's important areas of interest, prioritized for development under the ECO Vision-2025. The strategic objective of the Vision is to establish a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality services in the region, he explained.

The ECO Secretary General further explicated that the growing tourism would bear positive impact for the economy, environment, local population and the tourists themselves.

H.E. Mr. Ali Asghar Mounesan, the honourable Minister of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that the



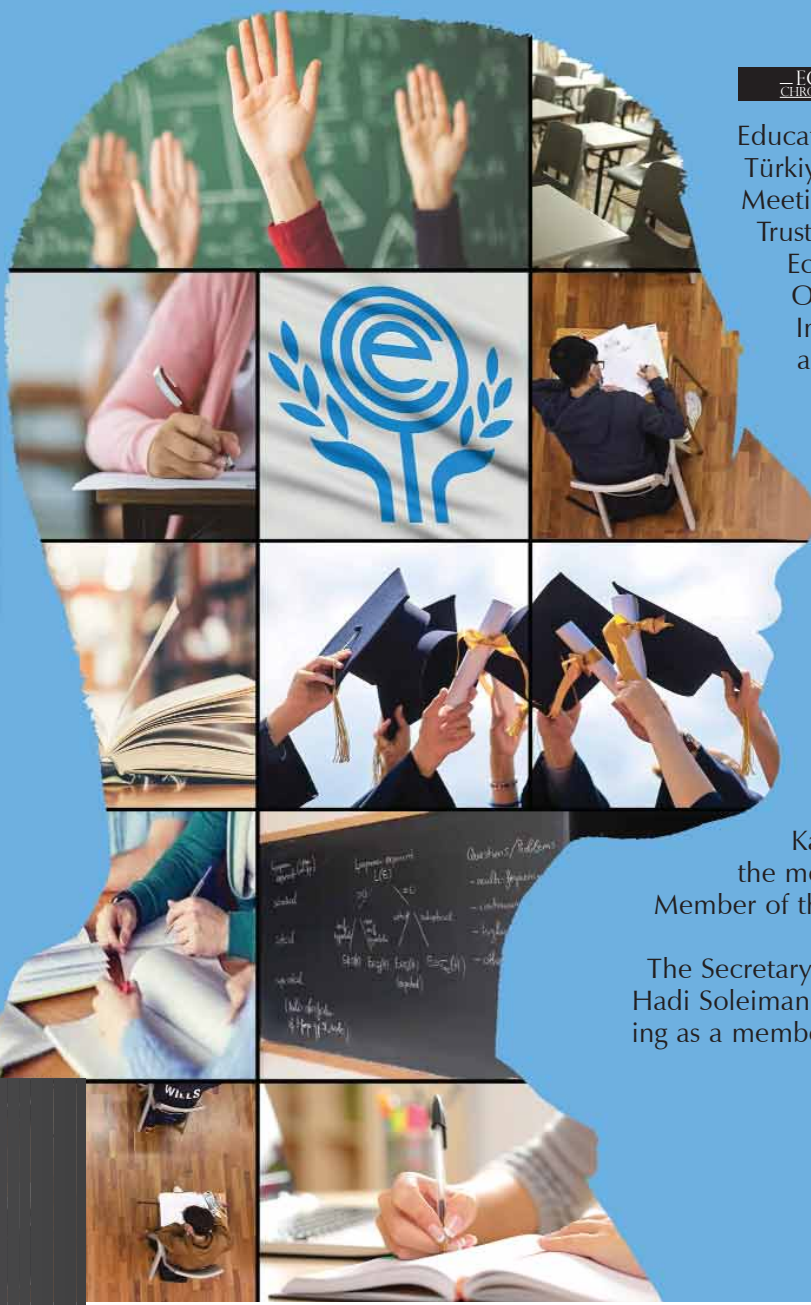
tourism industry of Iran was growing before the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that the sector's revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019 which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, near the average share of tourism in the world's GDP. While a number of countries around the world have been affected due to the ongoing pandemic, Iran's travel sector has had a loss of 12 trillion Rials (\$2.85 billion).

A message from Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was also transmitted in the beginning of the ceremony. In his message, the UNWTO's Secretary General emphasized on the role of tourism all around the world that, inter alia, empowers rural communities via generating jobs and other opportunities most particularly for women and youth. The Sector not only enables the rural communities to hold on to their unique cultural heritage and traditions but also safeguards the habitats and endangered species, he conveyed in the message.

In the conclusive moments of the ceremony, "Turquoise Simorgh" and "Majestic Iran, a Different Experience" were respectively selected as the logo and the motto of Iran's tourism industry. Simorgh is the most comprehensive logo for Iran's tourism as it depicts the religious and national identity of the people and conveys all the positive characteristics of the people of Iran.

The ECO Secretary General Participates

in the 3rd Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Educational Institute



**ECO
CHRONICLE** The Ministry of
National
Education of Republic of
Türkiye organized the 3rd
Meeting of the Board of
Trustees (BoT) of the
Economic Cooperation
Organization Educational
Institute (ECOEI) in a virtu-
al mode on 12th August
2020.

The meeting was
attended by the
delegates from five
ECOEI Member
States including the
Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan, Republic of
Azerbaijan, the Islamic
Republic of Iran, the
Islamic Republic of
Pakistan and Kyrgyz
Republic. Republic of
Kazakhstan participated in
the meeting as a non ratifying
Member of the ECOEI.

The Secretary General of ECO, H.E. Dr.
Hadi Soleimanpour, attended the meet-
ing as a member of the BoT.



The meeting, under the chairmanship of H.E. Prof. Ziya Selcuk, Minister of National Education of Republic of Türkiye, considered and adopted the comprehensive report of the ECOEI's President for the period 2017-2020.

The BoT considered and approved the ECOEI Scale of Assessments as well as Work Program for years 2021 and 2022.

The BoT also considered the exigency circumstances and recommended the nomination of incumbent President Prof. Mehmet Akif KIRECCI to ECO Council of Ministers for the post of President of ECOEI for another term of three years.

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour in his remarks highlighted the importance of cooperation among the ECO Member States in education and research for realization of Organization's strategic goals as envis-

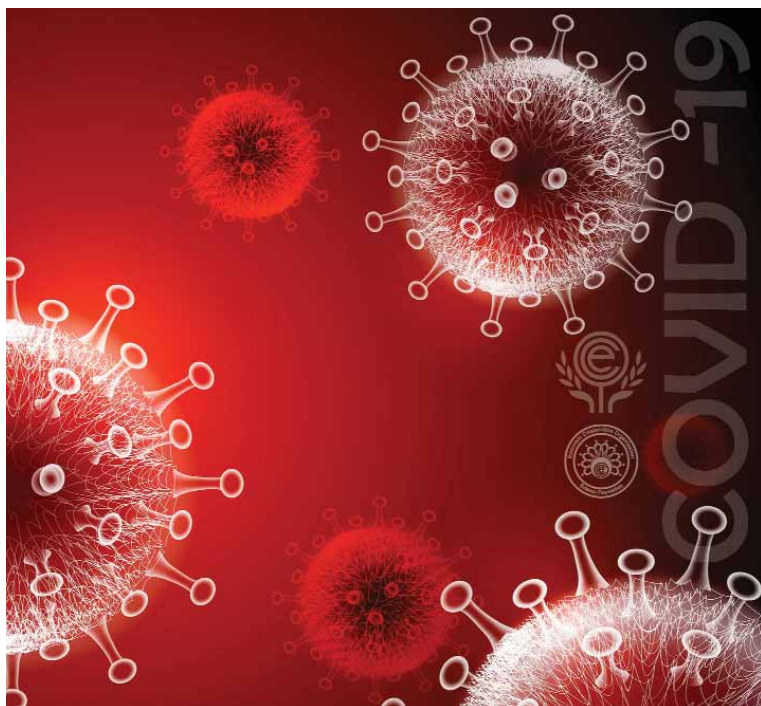
aged in the ECO Vision 2025.

He called upon the Member States to introduce innovative and pragmatic education policies in order to meet the challenges of the contemporary world.

He highlighted the importance of the close cooperation of among major universities in the region and appreciated the joint initiative of ECO Regional Planning Council and ECOEI to convene meeting of the Heads/Deans of top ten universities of the Region in the current year.

The ECO Secretary General expressed hope that the Institute would further strengthen the existing framework of regional integration of ECO and contribute to realizing its goals across the wide spectrum of fields of regional economy.

ECO Secretary General Participates in ECOSF's Webinar



ECO
CHRONICLE

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, participated in a live webinar on August 10, 2020, organized by the ECO Science Foundation in collaboration with Center of Excellence for International Economics (CEIE), University of Isfahan- Islamic Republic of Iran.

The President of ECO Science Foundation, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro; Chairman of Department of Global Health & Public Policy of Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Prof. Dr. Amirhossein Takian; Chief Economist of CAREC Institute, Dr. Hans Holzhaker; Vice President of University of Health Science of Türkiye, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Gerek; and Director of Center of Excellence for

International Economics (CEIE) of University of Isfahan, Prof. Dr. Syed Komail Tayebi also attended the event.

The webinar was organized to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on health and economy in the ECO region.

The ECO Secretary General underscored the strategy of reducing contagion and flattening the caseload curve to protect the population as well as to avoid excessive pressure on the region's health system in a bid to facilitate as much people as possible with the required remedies.

Dr. Soleimanpour conveyed in order to manage the economic implications of the pandemic in 2020 and the years ahead ECO would take various initiatives to address the needs and requirements of the region during and after the pandemic.

He highlighted the importance of Member States' monetary requirements especially in 2020 and 2021, for mobilizing the available resources to counter the impact of COVID-19 on development since majority of ECO Member States are expected to face budget deficit for 2020 and 2021.

The President of ECO Science Foundation, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro; Chairman of Department of Global Health & Public Policy of Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Prof. Dr. Amirhossein Takian; Chief Economist of CAREC Institute, Dr. Hans Holzhaker; Vice President of University of Health Science of Türkiye, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Gerek; and Director of Center of Excellence for International Economics (CEIE) of University of Isfahan, Prof. Dr. Syed Komail Tayebi also attended the event.

ECO CHRONICLE On 21 July 2020, the ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour had a telephonic conversation with the honourable Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov. Conveying felicitations to the newly appointed Foreign Minister, the Secretary General wished H.E. Jeyhun Bayramov every success in his new responsibilities.

The Secretary General expressed gratitude to the Foreign Minister for providing opportunity to share the initiatives, goals and challenges faced by the organization, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19, as well as negative repercussions of the pandemic all over the world, including the ECO Region. Stipulating the outstanding role of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a prominent member of the organization in promoting the activities of ECO, the Secretary General while conveying the Foreign Minister, in detail, the latest activities of the organization on regional economic cooperation, commended the country's continued support and guidance in realization of organization's goals and objectives for regional development, particularly in the areas of priority such as trade, transport transit, energy, agriculture envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025.

Emphasizing on the significant role of Economic Cooperation Organization as a regional platform for promoting economic cooperation, Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov reassured Azerbaijan's relentless support to the ECO in a bid to secure mutually beneficial targets for sustainable development and growth in the region. He further expressed his keenness to hold tête-à-tête for exploring maximum ways of expanded regional cooperation.

Referring the condolence letter by the Secretary General addressed to His Excellency President Ilham Aliyev, concerning the tensed environment on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as martyrdom of two high level military offi-

ECO Secretary General holds telephonic conversation with the appointed Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan




cials, the Secretary General emphasized on the territorial integrity, national sovereignty and the inviolability of internationally recognized border of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Foreign Minister briefed the Secretary General on the military provocation and attempt of new aggression by the Armenian armed forces along the international border of the two countries, as well as the current situation in the region. He also acknowledged the sympathies and condolences offered by the Secretary General, extending his deep appreciation for the goodwill gesture.



ECO Secretary General Participates in a Joint

ESCAP-OSJD Virtual Meeting

 A joint ESCAP-OSJD virtual meeting of experts on challenges & opportunities for international railway transport along the TAR Network and beyond was held on July 7 - 8, 2020 to discuss the post-COVID-19 situation and measures required to prevent the negative impacts of the disease on the railway transportation.

The event brought together 120 experts from different countries of Asia and Europe as well as some regional and international organizations including representatives of

the International Union of Railways (UIC), International Railway Committee (CIT), and International Coordinating Council on Trans-Asian Transportation (CCTT).

The meeting mulled over the scenario of regional and global railway networks, pursuing the objective of sharing the relevant experiences amongst Euro-Asian countries to cope with the post-COVID-19 crisis and identifying required actions to further enhance the sustainability of railway freight transport on the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR).

During the opening session of the meeting, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpur, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, delivered his keynote statement, sharing the ECO's responsive

activities to counter the adverse effects of the ongoing pandemic on transit transport in the ECO countries. While mentioning the "ECO Guidelines" shared amongst the Member States of the Organization, he underlined that the organization's core concern in the period of such crisis was, inter alia, to address region's fundamental requirements including, smooth passage of transportation carrying essentially required food and medical items through the border crossing points.



projects on ECO's railway network.

He further sought the ESCAP's assistance to transform ECO's existing transit transport corridors into sustainable economic passages in the interest and benefit of the region.

The participants underscored the need for an accelerated and boosted volume of cooperation at national and international levels to make a collaborative, coordinative and largely engaged effective response to preclude impact of the

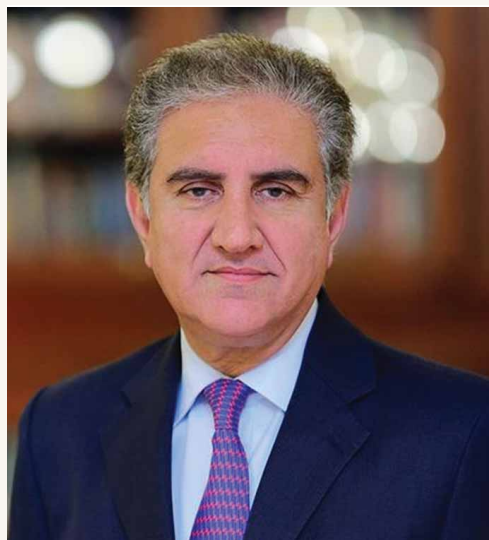
pandemic on the railway networks.

They further highlighted some of the required actions and the planning to counter the repercussions of the disease.

The ECO Secretary General emphasized on the need for a continued cooperation between the ECO and ESCAP proposed to the ESCAP to contribute in developing and jointly implementing some bankable



ECO Secretary General holds telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



ECO CHRONICLE On July 3, 2020, the ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour had a telephonic conversation with the honourable Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

The two sides discussed, inter alia, the ongoing activities under ECO Vision, measures to respond COVID-19, increased cooperation on economic and connectivity issues, as well as matters concerning the overall development in the region.

The Secretary General briefed the Foreign Minister on latest developments in regard to implementation of the decisions made by 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers, especially the successful accomplishment of reform process and organization's fresh approach towards making the ECO project-oriented.

The Secretary General also condemned the inhuman and terrible attack on the Karachi Stock Exchange, extending deep sympathies and condolences over the

loss of precious lives. He also condoled the human fatalities due to Coronavirus and conveyed best wishes for the affectees and survivors.

The Foreign Minister reasserted Pakistan's commitment to ECO and determination to achieve organization's goals, assuring the Secretary General of his complete support for enhancement of cooperation amongst the ECO Member States in the pursuit of aims and objectives envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025.

The Secretary General acknowledged the Pakistan's leading role for regional economic integration through the ECO's platform, commending the country's longstanding support to secure the organization's developmental goals enshrined in the Treaty of Izmir and the ECO Vision 2025.

He further admired the country's valued efforts for development and progress of the ECO that have been of greater utility and importance to transform the organization into an inspiring and strong regional economic forum.

During the telephonic interaction, the Foreign Minister underlined the "Global Initiative on Debt Relief" taken by His Excellency Mr. Imran Khan, the honourable Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, emphasizing on the collaborative, coordinative and comprehensive moves to create fiscal space for developing countries to tackle the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19.

The Secretary General appreciated the Pakistani Prime Minister's call for "Global Initiative on Debt Relief", supporting the idea of creating fiscal space at regional level to address the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The Secretary General also apprised the Foreign Minister on Secretariat's initiative of approaching some prominent regional and international monetary bodies, seeking their collaborative engagements with the ECO Trade and Development Bank, in order to address the negative effects of the Coronavirus and assist the most vulnerable countries in the region. He added that the responses received in this regard were quite encouraging.

Praising Pakistan's keenness in early convening of ECO Health Ministers' Virtual Conference, the Secretary General thanked the Foreign Minister for supporting the idea to host the said virtual event to mull over, mainly, a feasible and coordinated regional reaction to COVID-19.

While appreciating Pakistan's support to ECO's initiatives in Afghanistan for implementing selected projects through ECO Fund for Afghanistan, the Secretary General informed the Minister that the Secretariat was in process of developing some special project proposals for Afghanistan to help it meet the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

Both sides agreed to work closely for implementation of ECO Projects, particularly, in the area of transit-transport, health and to be engaged in any other facilitative measures that could help counter the negative effects of COVID-19.

The two sides also discussed other important regional issues including Kashmir and Afghanistan Peace Process which have been directly or indirectly hampering the smooth economic progress in the ECO region. They appeared mutually receptive to address all areas of common concerns.

Regional Validation Workshop Paves



The Way for a Clean Energy Centre for the ECO Region

ECO
CHRONICLE

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), organized a virtual meeting on 23 June, 2020 to validate the feasibility and viability of a Clean Energy Centre for the ECO region (CECECO).

Representatives from ECO

Member States, namely Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, and international partners such as Austria, the European Commission, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the International Energy Charter participated in the event.

During the meeting, Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli, Deputy Secretary General of ECO and Mr. Stefan Scholz, Ambassador of Austria in Iran, expressed their mutual commitment to the new centre and regional cooperation as a tool to accelerate the energy and climate transformation.



"The future prosperity and growth of ECO member states highly depend on the access to clean, reliable and affordable energy services", added Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli.

"We are convinced that this center will become a strong member of the Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centers, which we are promoted in partnership with regional economic communities.

"There is plenty of room for joint learning and South-South cooperation on clean energy solutions and business models", said Mr. Tareq Emtairah, Director of the Department of Energy at UNIDO.

The participants reviewed the results of CECECO baseline and feasibility assessments, which were conducted by ECO and UNIDO over the past few months.

The meeting provided concrete recommendations with regard to the best institutional and technical design of the center that would be submitted to the relevant decision making bodies of ECO for their consideration and formal approval.



Fourth Dialogue on an effective Multilateral Policing Architecture against Global Threats

ECO CHRONICLE Fourth Dialogue on an effective Multilateral Policing Architecture against Global Threats
The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) organized a virtual meeting of the Fourth Dialogue on an effective Multilateral Policing Architecture against Global Threat on May 20, 2020.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of INTERPOL, EUROPOL, GCCPOL, ASEANPOL, AFRIPO, AMERIPOL, and UNODC. The ECO Secretariat delegation, headed by ECO Deputy Secretary General, also attended the meeting.

The Secretary General of the INTERPOL, Mr. Jurgen Stock, inaugurated the meeting. In his statement, he expressed his gratitude to the INTERPOL Member States as well as the regional and international organizations for participating in the virtual event. He emphasized the significance of data management during the COVID 19 outbreak and touched upon the ways to systematically share the information among the police organizations.

During the exchange of views, the participants in the videoconference recognized the importance of multilateral law-enforcement cooperation in times of emergency, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, given the inherent cross-border nature of criminal threats arising from the pandemic and related containment measures.

In his opening statement, ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Jandos Asanov expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the INTERPOL Organization for making excellent arrangements with regards to organizing the event.

He further briefed the meeting about ECO's profile and recent progress in advancing regional cooperation for formulating ECO regional policies and actions, including those pursued as regards addressing the menace of transnational organized crime.

