

Brief Note of the Chairman of the 12th ECO Council of Ministers

Annex-IV

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*Honourable Presidents,
Heads of Delegation,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my pleasant duty to briefly report on the productive deliberations of the 12th meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) held on October 12, 2002. The meeting discussed extensively and in detail the issues included in its agenda as well as activity reports including the comprehensive report of the Secretary General on activities of ECO since the conclusion of the 11th COM meeting held on May 4, 2001 in Dushanbe.

The Council of Ministers adopted the reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives, 12th meeting of Regional Planning Council & Work Programme for 2002, ECO budget, ECO audit reports for 2000 and 2001, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th meetings of the Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO). The Council took note of the reports of the first Ministerial meeting on Agriculture, held on July 23-25, 2002 in Islamabad (Pakistan) and 4th Ministerial meeting on Transport & Communications held on September 26-27, 2002 in Izmir (Turkey) and the status of ratification of signed ECO Agreements, Secretariat's paper on decisions of previous meetings of the Council of Ministers as well as Strategy Paper on implementation of Economic Cooperation Strategy for ECO region. The Council approved the recommendations of the ECO Awards Selection Committee on selection the winners from the member states for the ECO Awards 2002. Arrangements have been made to present to the recipients their ECO awards during this august Summit.

The Ministers also took note of the annual reports on the activities of the operational ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies namely; ECO Cultural Institute, ECO College of Insurance, ECO Shipping Company and ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry and called on the member states to take necessary measures to improve the performance of those institutions/ agencies. The Ministers also called for an early establishment and operationalization of the approved regional institutions and specialized agencies including the ECO Science Foundation and the ECO Trade & Development Bank as well as the ECO Reinsurance Company.

*Honourable Presidents and
Distinguished Delegates,*

I now wish to report to the Honourable Presidents and Heads of Delegation on the deliberations made by COM for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Ministers welcomed the return of normalcy in Afghanistan and appreciated the unanimous support of the member states for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development for the welfare of the Afghan people.

In this context, the ECO Secretariat was entrusted a number of tasks to promote preparation of feasibility studies to ensure early implementation of projects in areas defined as priority by the Afghan government. At the same time, the Secretariat was asked to follow on the recommendations contained in the ECO document on the subject in collaboration with the Afghan government and the member states.

The Ministers also supported the establishment of a special ECO Fund to assist early implementation of the reconstruction projects in the fields of Trade, Transport, Agriculture, Education, Health and Tele-communications, viewed by the Afghan government as priority areas. It was agreed to arrange an ECO Seminar on the reconstruction of Afghanistan to come up with realistic and concrete recommendation for raising ECO collective assistance programme for Afghanistan. Many more such useful proposals were tabled and included in the report adopted by COM.

The Ministers took note of the (i) presentation made by the Chairman of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey and Foreign Economic Relations Board on the ECO Business Forum (EBF) organized jointly by ECO and ITC on October 11, 2002 in Istanbul, on the sidelines of the 7th Summit meeting of ECO Heads of State, to expand the intra-regional trade in the ECO member states and (ii) the recommendations of the said Forum.

The Business Forum demonstrated the need for and usefulness of direct exchanges between business circles. In order to have the maximum effectiveness in the activities of the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry it was agreed to establish a permanent professional Secretariat.

The Ministers reviewed the draft Istanbul Declaration-2002 in the light of the proposed amendments from the member states and prepared it for submission to the 7th meeting of ECO Heads of State for adoption. The said Declaration will be released after its adoption by the Heads of State, Your Excellencies, on conclusion of the Summit today, October 14, 2002.

Excellencies,

Now, I would like to avail of this opportunity to express my gratitude for the cooperation, hard work and valuable contribution of my colleagues in the Council of Ministers meeting. Also, I would like to express my appreciation of the assistance given by the ECO Secretariat under the able guidance of the honourable Secretary General for facilitating the conduct of the 12th COM meeting.

Thank you for Your Excellencies kind attention.
