

## Statement of the ECO Secretary General

*Annex-V*

**By H.E. Ambassador Seyed Mojtaba Arastou**  
*ECO Secretary General*

*Honourable President of the Republic of Turkey*  
*Honourable Heads of State*  
*Excellencies*  
*Distinguished Delegates*  
*Ladies and Gentlemen*

1. It is a great honour for me to address the Honourable Presidents/Heads of Delegation of the ECO member states on the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit being held in Istanbul today.
2. I would like to join others in congratulating Your Excellency on your election for the Chairmanship of the 7<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit. I am confident that our Organization would continue to prosper under your able leadership.

It is also a pleasant duty for me to express our heartfelt thanks to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the excellent arrangements and the warm hospitality extended to all delegations.

My sincere thanks also go to the former Chairman, His Excellency President Seyed Muhammad Khatami for providing vision and support for the realization of ECO objectives.

I would also like to appreciate the participation of international and the UN bodies in this august gathering. The reports on their cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization have been circulated among the participating dignitaries.

*Honourable Presidents,*

It is my duty to appreciate the efforts of the Foreign Ministers to finalize and adopt the report of the 12<sup>th</sup> COM. The report gives a new road map for the future ECO activities as well as a credible mechanism for their early implementation. The respectful Foreign Ministers during their deliberations touched upon various issues including ECO's participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Another important document they reviewed and prepared for the consideration of the Presidents and Heads of delegation was the Istanbul Declaration-2002. Once adopted, the Declaration would provide another opportunity to the member states to pursue action in the defined fields and sectors. The Foreign Ministers also appreciated the comprehensive report of the Secretary General on the ECO activities since the last Summit.

In the past two years, we have been able to hold four Ministerial meetings in areas such as Energy, Agriculture, Trade and Transport.

The ECO Decade of Transport and Communications from 1998 to 2007 is under implementation. Notable achievements have been a) the start of the regular cargo container train along Almaty-Tashkent-Turkmenabad-Tehran-Istanbul route, b) the dry run of the pilot

passenger train in March 2002, c) completion/upgradation of missing road and rail links in the region and d) the start of the joint IDB/ECO/UNESCAP/UNCTAD Multimodal Transport Operation Project. Nevertheless, the early implementation of Transit Trade Agreement (1995) and the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (1998) would further speed up the completion of the Decade of Transport.

The major achievement in Trade area has been the substantive progress made with regard to the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) which calls for progressive elimination of non-tariff barriers and rationalization of tariff structure.

Another important activity launched since the last Summit meeting is the Joint ECO/ITC project on expanding intra-regional trade. In this context, an ECO Business Forum was jointly organized with ITC on Friday, 12 October, 2002. The Council took note of its recommendations calling for annual scheduling of activities under the ECO Business Forum in different countries to promote trade. I would like to express the hope that the member states would do their best to promote the involvement of the private sector in ECO activities to enhance intra-regional trade.

The Plan of Action in Energy Sector is under implementation in line with the targets set by the 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial meeting held in Islamabad on November 8, 2000. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting on the subject to be held in Tehran next year is expected to further promote the ECO objectives in this priority area.

The ECO Feasibility Study on the power systems interconnection within the region, supported by the grant from the Islamic Development Bank, is making satisfactory progress. Another study regarding the oil and gas pipeline routes is under consideration of the Islamic Development Bank for the purpose of providing funds.

For the first time in the history of ECO, the member states adopted the Islamabad Declaration on Agriculture during the 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial meeting held on July 23-25 in Islamabad. The Declaration highlighted the importance of Agriculture for the economies of the member states and agreed on the need to formulate a 5-year Plan of Action by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting scheduled to take place in 2004 in Turkey. Moreover, with FAO, ECO is on the verge of evolving a Regional Programme for Food Security and Agricultural Development. A Technical Assistance Programme to this effect was recently signed by the two Organizations.

For the next two years our important future activities in different sectors will include the following:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial meeting on Environment** – December 2002, in Tehran
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting on Energy** – January 2003, in Tehran
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting on Trade** – July 2003, in Islamabad
- **1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial meeting on the Information Technology (ICT)** – in Tehran, in 2003
- **5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications** – in 2004, in Bishkek
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting on Agriculture** – in 2004, in Turkey.
- **13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers** – in Bishkek, in 2003.

Now a few words about ECO's external relations: These are growing to my full satisfaction.

ECO has used its growing links with UN bodies and regional organizations as well as financial institutions to promote development projects in the region. Relevant agencies continue to play an active role in assuming substantive responsibilities in various ECO projects and programmes. IDB, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNFPA, UNCTAD, FAO and ITC, deserve particular mention in this connection. Also, I would like to highlight the opportunities likely to unfold with regard to ECO-ASEAN cooperation. For the first time, the Foreign Ministers of ECO and ASEAN in their 7<sup>th</sup> joint meeting held recently in New York agreed to have a joint project in this regard.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Drug Control Coordination Unit, in collaboration with UNDCP and EU, is to begin shortly to effectively deal with the drug abuse in the region.

ECO should continue its relations with regional and other international Organizations to raise the necessary support and funding with a view to implementing different ECO development projects in the region.

I would like to emphasize that the success of ECO as a regional organization solely depends on the political and financial support of member states. We need to evolve a mechanism which can ensure the matching of our expectations with the available opportunities, without ignoring the challenges.

*Excellencies*

Allow me to thank you for the support I received from you today and from the Honourable Foreign Ministers during the 12<sup>th</sup> COM yesterday and at other occasions since my appointment as the Secretary General of ECO. Once again, I would like to reiterate that I will do my utmost with the able assistance of ECO staff to give new momentum to the Organization. For our success, we need the support, guidance and the blessings of Your Excellencies.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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