

**Statement by
ECO Secretary General
Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca**

**At the
The United Nations Global Conference on Sustainable
Transport**

26-27 November 2016 - Ashgabat

Mr. Chairman

Honorable Ministers, Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure and privilege to address this august event of global sustainable transport conference, the title of which is very close to the heart of ECO's activities. ECO has a proven record in facilitating regional and international transport and removal of unsustainable transport practices. Accordingly sustainable transport is of prime importance and high relevance to ECO and we appreciate the Secretary-General of the United Nations for its timely initiative to convene this conference with far-reaching repercussions for all components of sustainable development namely economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. I would like to commend the host country, Turkmenistan, a very significant and proud Member State of the ECO for the excellent arrangements made and the warm hospitality extended towards us. ECO will do its utmost to make a positive contribution to the success of this well-organized process.

Mr. Chairman, honorable guests,

There is consensus in almost all SDG's related literature that the transport, drives development, enables trade, tourism, and economic growth and allows people to access jobs, services, education.

However, it is to be underscored that to maximize sustainable benefits of better transport connectivity to shift merchandize and people, it **MUST** be safe, efficient, and green in other words; 'sustainable and climate friendly'

Mr. Chairman,

ECO is alive to this challenge, especially as it is an organization of ten developing countries of which seven are landlocked thus making efficient and sustainable transport connectivity a crucial challenge and endeavor for sustainable development of the ECO region. ECO's work in the past has been concentrated on devising most efficient road and rail corridors to connect the landlocked ECO countries to global trading hubs, improving border crossing points through better management and harmonization of regulations under various UN transport conventions. ECO works under three main pillars of economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability to achieve affordable, safe, efficient and cleaner transportation.

Accordingly, Mr. Chairman, ECO has endeavored to focus on "efficiency" as common denominator of all three pillars. As far as our regional transport related activities including ECO corridors and projects are concerned, our studies clearly indicate that the element of efficiency serves economy, society and the environment. It saves time, cost and resources.

Some main barriers identified through studies conducted in ECO region including the one conducted with assistance of IRU are as follows: the inefficiencies in rail operations, difficulties at border crossings, the use of dated transport and information technologies, safety related issues and lack of harmonization of regulatory provisions. This is exactly where the idea of transport reform is justified as a necessary means to reach transport sustainability at regional level. To put it simply, ECO is trying to avoid and avert unsustainable practices and inefficiencies, through launching a range of corrective measures.

Given the above and taking fully into account the formative role of Corridors in the overall development of Member States and a more

integrated approach toward transport, Corridor development and corridor management have become an institutional priority of ECO.

ECO has strived and has been engaged in using corridor-based arrangements to promote development of its member countries through road and railway smooth and seamless transit system in the region. ECO has worked on two north-south corridors to connect the northern landlocked member countries to open seas in the south; the ECO railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran, with a total length of about 700 km, serving as the eastern wing, has already been inaugurated by the presidents of the en-route Member States and ECO is partnering with the Islamic Development Bank to develop a management mechanism to make its operations sustainable and commercially viable. The other north-south connection between Azerbaijan and Iran is under construction.

On East-West Corridors ECO endeavors to becoming a global bridge connecting Europe with Asia with shortest and most efficient road, train and mutli-modal networks; the ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Islamabad Route has been launched since 2010. The ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Almati, Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route are well in place. The railway connecting China to Europe through Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Afghanistan and Iran is also under feasibility study.

Mr. Chairman, Honorable guests, Excellencies

I would like to conclude my remarks with two important issues: first, that ECO is fully committed to the SDGs and realize that sustainable transport is a backbone in achieving them as development of sustainable transport is directly related to successful attainment of at least 5 SDGs (SDGS 3 (health; transport safety), (7; energy), (8; decent work & economic growth), (9; resilient infrastructure), (11;access to sustainable urban transport in sustainable cities), (12; sustainable production and consumption; fossil fuel)). The 2nd issue which also crucial is that ECO,

due to geographical peculiarities, is a bridge between the Europe and Asia and having accepted this role through its established and planned corridors, believes that initiatives like the present Conference will encourage, international and regional development and financial institutions, governments and other relevant stakeholders to take steps towards developing mechanisms to partner with ECO and help in technical aspects as well as financing of corridors of international importance and thus creating an enabling environment for more sustainable transport to materialize for global good.

Mr. Chairman,

I am confident that your able stewardship bears the promise of a gainful and successful meeting leading to important headway towards a more sustainable transport at all levels

I thank you.