



Statement by
ECO Secretary General,
H.E. Ambassador Halil İbrahim AKÇA

At the
13th ECO Summit

1st March 2017, Islamabad

Honourable Chairman

Honourable Heads of State and Government

Honourable Delegates

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

It is a great privilege for me to present to 13th ECO Summit a brief report on the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization. At the outset, I wish to avail this opportunity to express my profound felicitations to His Excellency, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the honourable Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on his unanimous election as the Chairman of the 13th ECO Summit. Under his able leadership, ECO would make further progress.

I would also express my sincere thanks to the Honourable President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev for his excellent guidance the ECO since 2012. And I would like to extend my sincere thanks to leaders of ECO Member States and honourable guests.

The Summit is of prime importance for ECO as it presents an opportunity for the Heads of the ECO Member States to review our performance as well as guide us in our future endeavours. This 13th Summit with its very proper theme of “Connectivity for Regional Prosperity” will prove itself to be an important milestone in achieving our shared goals and objectives.

Excellencies

At the beginning of my statement, I want to share with you the overall profile of the ECO Region.

The population of ECO Region has reached to 471 million with the 30 percent increase compared to the world population increase of 20 percent in the last 15 years.

Meanwhile, total GDP of the member states crossed US \$ 1 trillion and 795 billion and income per capita is close to US \$ 4,000.

The share of ECO's aggregated GDP to the world GDP improved from 2.06 percent in 2000 to 2.63 percent in 2015.

On the trade count, ECO has modest performance. The share of ECO merchandise trade to world trade reached only 2.10.

ECO's intra-regional trade witnessed improvement to 8.7 percent in 2015 as against 5.3 percent in 2000, that is requiring concerted efforts to boost it to targeted level of 20 percent.

Honourable Chairman

During the period from the last Summit, ECO has continued to implement programmes and projects as developed and decided by the decision-making bodies. Trade, transport and energy continued to be the core areas of ECO agenda, while other issues of global and regional importance, including food security, environment, industrial production and tourism, were also pursued within ECO.

In trade and Investment sector, the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECOTDB) has expanded its operations and membership. Trade Capacity Building Project is being carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the areas of Standards and Quality. However, non-implementation of ECOTA calls for a new approach.

Activities of ECO in **Transport Sector** remain the strongest; under the 'Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA)', important initiative

have been undertaken in partnership with IDB, which include approvals of several road and rail corridors. Special emphasis has been given to corridors which will give access to ECO land-locked countries to major sea ports in the South and markets in East and West. A study on development of border points and harmonization of customs provisions and ICT needs of the region have been finished successfully.

In the Energy Sector, we have little cooperation at the regional level at ECO platforms. Despite the fact that major pipeline projects are out of the ECO portfolio, certain progress in the ECO Regional Electricity Market (REM) and in renewable and alternative energy sources has been achieved.

Environment, as a cross-cutting sector in the region and in the world, got more interest from international organizations. ECO has worked closely with UN institutions and was granted Observer Status in the respective UN organizations and conventions.

The disaster risk reduction is also a prominent issue in ECO Region which is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. We are in the process of developing an ECO regional framework for cooperation on disaster risk reduction with the support of relevant regional and international organizations.

Agriculture is a key sector and essential in achieving food security for ECO region and developing countries. It employs 37 percent of total active population of the region. Under the ECO Regional Programme for Food Security several projects have been implementing targeting food security through collaboration with relevant international organizations.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, **tourism** has been proposed as a priority area in the ECO Vision 2025. A Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and collaboration with UNESCO to utilize mutual potentials of the two organizations to promote tourism activities are in process.

Excellencies,

Having derived the guidance from the Treaty of Izmir, decisions of the Summits/CoM, ECO has developed its external relations.

ECO enjoys observer status with the United Nations and its various organs; the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Islamic Development Bank. Reciprocal observer-ship between ECO and Energy Charter Treaty has just adapted by the Council of Ministers.

Over the years, ECO has signed 45 Memorandum of Understanding and Agreements with the UN system as well as other regional and international organizations.

Excellencies

One of the important output of this summit will be the "ECO Vision 2025" that is adapted yesterday. The Vision 2025 addresses the emerging needs and requirements for economic development of ECO Member States and the Region, will guide the Economic Cooperation Organization in the next 10 years. The Vision document attempts to focus on core areas of trade, transport connectivity and energy, as per the needs and aspirations of the Member States, as well as tourism as another sector on which Member States have agreed to focus on realization of its great potential for the Member states as well as the Region.

By concluding my presentation, I would like to once again thank your Excellencies for your participation in this important and timely meeting and would like to reiterate the need for your valuable support and contributions to the Organization. Let me conclude by expressing my

sincere thanks to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hospitality provided to the delegations and excellent organization of all events.

I thank you very much.