



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

**at the**

**College of Environment/ECO Institute of  
Environmental Science and Technology (ECO IEST)**

**15 February 2016, Karaj**

**Distinguished President of ECO-IEST Dr. Fazel,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Dear students,**

I'm honored and delighted to address the students of College of Environment today on behalf of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), my appreciation goes to Dr. Fazel and his able team for organizing this timely visit allowing us to deliberate on imperative topics of climate change and its cross-cutting effects which are the part of the global agenda.

ECO, a regional inter-governmental organization with diverse membership from Caucuses and Central Asia, as well as South and West Asia covers more than 8 million square kilometers and more than 440 million inhabitants. During last two decades ECO has developed into a full-fledged regional organization with growing international profile and has been exposed to the trending challenges international community is facing.

Since its enlargement in 1992 ECO has been engaged with national and regional stakeholders in formulating result-oriented strategies, elaborating new partnership frameworks, as well as setting-up various institutional mechanisms for enhanced regional cooperation and dialogue. The role of ECO as the most inclusive intergovernmental platform for the region was acknowledged by key global players -UNIDO,

UNESCAP, UNEP, UNFF, OFID, IRENA, other UN and global multilateral agencies.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

Global environmental challenges have already induced regional cooperation in the ECO Region. Climate change constitutes one of the most serious global challenges of the times which threatens not only the development prospects of the countries and peoples but also the very existence and survival of countries and societies. Climate change is affecting individual organisms, populations, species distributions and ecosystem composition and functions. In the ECO Region, climate change is no longer a threat, but a reality alarming more challenges ahead. Droughts; dust haze and sand storms; more frequent floods, land erosion and other disasters; water shortages; and reduced agricultural production are among climatic phenomena heavily affected and continue to threaten our Region. All these are calling for action now and there is an urgent need for crafting inclusive, sustainable and resilient climate agenda for our Region. We need to consider a shift in paradigm focusing on synergy impacts and enhancing regional concerted actions to identify common applicable approaches on climate change and to mobilize resources for adaptation and mitigation related actions. At regional level, we need to understand challenges and strategies of Member States in their diverse national

climate contexts. I believe that ECO can play an important role in advancement of regional coherence for climate resiliency in post-Paris era.

2014 and 2015 were milestone years for Secretariat's environmental dimension as we succeeded in stimulating high level policy debates for development of appropriate frameworks for regional and global partnerships. The "ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment" was held in June 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya, on the sidelines of the "United Nations Environment Assembly" (UNEA) and developed set of action points for building future resilience in tackling regional environmental challenges. The 5<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment held in Istanbul in December 2014 in a way was a historic event for generating long-needed momentum and adopting set of recommendations for further endorsement by Council of Ministers, so called "ECO Climate Package" in line with ongoing global climate negotiations and adopted "Istanbul Declaration on Climate Change and Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development.

ECO, also, convened its Coordinating Meeting in December 2015, on the sidelines of the 21<sup>st</sup> UNFCCC Conference of the Parties to deliberate on trending challenges and concluded with common understanding that efforts and regional dialogue are needed to tackle adverse impacts of climate change in ECO Region.

Secretariat engaged in wider interaction with the UNEP and extended a standing invitation to ECO to participate as Observer in the sessions and work of the United Nations Environmental Assembly and its subsidiary organs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is undeniable that global climate process wouldn't be all inclusive and target specific without comprehensive and robust science data complementing decision making process both on political and technical levels. Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provided policymakers with all-round and comprehensive scientific, technical and socioeconomic perspective on climate change identified some information gaps especially on emerging issues, such as the links between climate change and desertification, precipitation changes and trends in drought. Highlighting such findings might be a strong science-based argument in convincing decision-makers and multilateral climate finance entities to extend support for addressing those knowledge gaps, especially in light of recent efforts by the Secretariat in coordination with and assistance by ECO-IEST for developing a regional project proposal on desertification, dust haze and storms.

Availability and visibility of scientific data, including information on the emission pathways, potential contribution

of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems to global and regional carbon budgets, mapping of global patterns of carbon stocks and potential emissions may considerably eliminate uncertainties, knowledge gaps, national and trans-boundary perceptions of climate change. Going back to regional umbrella this issue can be addressed at regional level within respective capabilities of ECO institutional arrangements, relevant subsidiary bodies like ECO-IEST and via enhanced introduction of methodological advances and promoting research and baseline studies to support scientific understanding, long-term monitoring and management.

Dear students,

It is evident that time has finally come to shift from a development paradigm that focuses only on the rate of economic growth to one that ensures quality of growth which is inclusive and sustainable, resulting in shared prosperity, social progress and environmental sustainability.

Involved stakeholders around the globe are working to find common ground in implementing a global Post-2015 Development Agenda that will embrace all aspects of sustainable development guided by a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I believe ECO region could and will play an important role in advancement and implementation of Post-2015 Development agenda and SDGs through

institutional arrangements and regional outreach. The Secretariat will spare no efforts in full implementation of its mandate in the area of global warming and environmental cooperation.

At the end, I would like to thank ECO IEST and personally Dr. Fazel for this visit and wish you success in all your endeavors.

**Thank you.**