

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

**At the
3rd ECO Health Ministerial Meeting
On the sidelines of 69th World Health Assembly**

24 May 2016, Geneva- Switzerland

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honor for me to welcome you all to this ECO Health Ministerial Meeting in Geneva. Let me express my sincere gratitude to those who facilitated our meeting today, particularly H.E. Ambassador Naziri and his colleagues in the Permanent Mission of Iran in Geneva, my colleagues in the ECO Secretariat, as well as UN Office in Geneva and WHO Secretariat. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Seyed Hasan Hashemi, the honourable Minister of Iran who chaired our last Meeting and kindly accepted to chair this Meeting today.

Distinguished Participants,

Since last ECO Ministerial Meeting in May 2015, the international community has changed the pace from MDGs to SDGs. In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 17 ambitious goals for 2030. Health-related sustainable development goals and targets continue to be relevant in our ECO Region, attesting to the continued health challenges our countries will be facing by 2030. In MDGs context and as you may kindly recall, ECO Member States had agreed to focus their regional cooperation on three goals, namely, Goal 4 (Reduce Child Mortality), Goal 5 (Improve Maternal Health), and Goal 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases). By 2015 and at the end of MDGs era, our countries had registered different rates of implementation of these goals. The achievements in our Region have been extensively evaluated in the Report before you and I skip to mention them here.

Goal 3 of SDGs is addressing good health and well-being with a view to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all people at all ages in the world. There are targets set to be achieved by 2030 which will shape the next 15 years health policies and strategies.

Excellencies;

In the last ECO Ministerial Meeting, the honourable Ministers adopted the outline for an ECO Plan of Action on Health Cooperation to be developed in line with the emerging SDGs, taking into account the immediate needs and requirements of our countries and ECO Region as a whole. Accordingly, the text of the Plan of Action was drafted jointly by the Secretariat and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran whom I would like to thank wholeheartedly. The draft was then circulated among the Member States and now is before this august meeting to be discussed for adoption later today. Keeping the directions of the Goal 3 of SDGs, the ECO Plan of Action is focusing on the areas of immediate impacts for ECO Region. Concrete actions have been identified at regional level as complementary to those to be taken by countries under SDGs.

As indicated in the implementation part of the Plan of Action, following approval by this Meeting, senior experts from Member States will get together in the Secretariat to prioritize the envisaged actions and to work out time-bound modalities for its implementation. An advisory group of 4 experts from Member States may also be established to help Secretariat and Member States in implementation and evaluation of the Plan of Action. I am very much relying on your Excellencies support for the Secretariat to ensure effective implementation of the Plan of Action.

Excellencies
Dear Participants

ECO Ministerial Meeting of this year happens in the right time and right place. Having meeting on the sidelines of the most important health-related annual gathering of the international community in the time when UN system and Member States are exploring ways and means to effectively address health challenges in the post 2015 development agenda enables ECO and its Member States to streamline and synergize their efforts with the global attempts. We are very much hopeful that ECO and UN relevant agencies, particularly WHO can further expand their relations and cooperation towards meeting the needs and requirements of the ECO countries and Region in SDGs era. We strongly believe that ECO continue to be the most relevant regional framework in this part of the world when global and regional attempts can be accumulated in the interests of our countries to fulfil 2015 development agenda.

To conclude my opening remarks, allow me to appreciate your valued participation in our Meeting today and wish you successful discussions and fruitful and feasible outcomes.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.