

Informal COM Meeting  
(New York, 19 September 2017)  
The Secretary General's Statement

**Honourable Chairman**

**Honourable Ministers and Delegates**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Guests**

It is a great privilege for me to present a brief report on the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization. At the outset, I wish to avail this opportunity to express my profound felicitation to His Excellency, Mr. Khawaja Muhammad Asif, the honourable Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the permanent representatives of Pakistan in New York.

I would also express my sincere thanks to the Honourable Ministers and delegates who devoted their time to this meeting despite their tight agenda.

At the beginning of my statement, I want to brief the overall profile of the ECO Region.

**Excellencies**

The share of the population of ECO region in the world is 6.3 percent, GDP 2.63, trade volume 2.10 percent and FDI 2.4 percent. The share of intra-regional is 8.7 percent in 2015 but decrease to 7.6 percent in 2016.

These figures reflect the low level development and the poor integration of ECO region with the world economy and within the region despite its rich natural and human resources, and corridor status between big markets.

## **Excellencies**

After the Summit held in Islamabad in March of 2017, all ECO bodies have started to implement the ECO Vision 2025. As a first step we have been organizing sectoral ministerial meetings as many as possible to develop the mechanism to implement the vision. We have already held Ministerial Meeting on Education that took the necessary decisions to activate the ECO-Education Institute. Ministerial meeting on Tourism will be held next week in Istanbul to discuss the Tourism Strategy, ICT ministerial meeting in Baku, Transport in Ashgabat and Commerce in Islamabad are already scheduled. In December we will also hold Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting at ministerial level in Islamabad.

On the project side, we have been studying on identification and implementation of projects. We have already identified the border-crossing project, ICT projects, roads and railway corridor management projects, Electricity Market Project, Trade Capacity Development Project, Trans Boundary Animal Disease Project, etc. We have been working with international organizations to develop projects. UN institutions and the OIC institutions are the main partner to receive finance and expertise. This August I paid a visit to IDB head-quarters with the aim to review and evaluate the existing ECO project portfolio with the IDB and also to seek IDB assistance on various new project proposals prepared by the ECO in priority areas of transport, trade, tourism and energy which are necessary for efficient implementation of ECO Vision 2025. In addition to IDB, ECO is also presently partnering with UNIDO, FAO, and UNECE to carry out various projects in the field of trade, industry, food security and ICT.

## **Excellencies,**

While ECO-TDB has been performing well, and recently Republic of Tajikistan has also show interest to become its member, its resources are not enough to finance major development projects in the ECO region.

As ECO family there is an important need to get access more financial resources to realize the projects indicated under the ECO 2025 Vision.

**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 Organization was approved in the 22nd COM meeting in March 2017.

Over the years, ECO has signed 45 Memorandum of Understanding and Agreements with the UN system as well as other regional and international organizations. Recently, this September, CPR has approved ECO's signing of MOUs with UNOSS, OIC-SESTRIC and TOBB-TEPAV.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Excellencies,**

It is also worth mentioning that, the reform of the Organization as a whole should be launched as early as possible with the aim of enhancement of the effectiveness of the Organization in order to follow the objectives envisaged within the Treaty of Izmir as well as in the ECO 2025 Vision. The ECO reform has been studied in three dimensions; restructuring the Secretariat, reviewing the functions of the ECO Intuitions and Special Agencies and improving the staff recruitment policies. A comprehensive reform proposal covering ECO Secretariat restructure and staff recruitment policies was circulated to receive your Excellencies' views.

The functions of the ECO Intuitions and Special Agencies are more crucial. ECO decision making bodies have approved or recommended to establish about 20 institutions. However only less than half of these are operational which have also been experiencing

administrative and financial problems. ECO secretariat has been working on this issue which needs more deliberation.

### **Excellencies,**

The Council of Ministers in the Islamabad Summit directed the CPR to finalize the Scale of Assessments for coming years at the earliest, preferably within four months. The Council has also urged the Member States to resolve the issue as soon as possible in order to keep the Secretariat financially viable due to the un-sustainability of the 18 percent yearly budget deficit.

To this end, the Council of Permanent Representatives has established a Working group, which was assigned with the task of negotiations over the question at hand with the aim of finding a way forward. It is unfortunate that the Working group despite holding several meetings has not finalized it due to the lack of mandate from capitals of some member states.

It should also be noted that, the reform process of ECO is expected to be initiated based on the outcome of the negotiations on the scale of assessments.

In the end I would like to thank the Chairman of COM, Excellency Khawaja Muhammad Asif for hosting this meeting and to all other distinguished foreign ministers and representatives of the ECO member countries for attending the meeting.

**I thank you for your kind attention**