

Annex-II**(Ekonomik İşbirliği Teşkilatı (ECO) Dönem Başkanı olarak Sayın Bakanımızın ev sahipliğinde düzenlenecek olan 18. ECO Gayriresmi Bakanlar Konseyi Toplantısı için Sayın Bakanımızın İstifade Edebilecekleri Konuşma Taslağı**

(27 Eylül 2011, Saat 13:00-15:00, New York, Türkiye)

Excellencies,

Mr. Secretary General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

As the Chairman-in Office of the Economic Cooperation Organization, it is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all in the Turkish House, in New York, on the occasion of the 18th Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers.

Global challenges such as economic and financial crises, energy and food security and climate change all call for prompt and coordinated action at regional and global levels. Therefore, regional cooperation and solidarity in these areas have become crucial more than ever.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), based on our common historical and cultural ties, constitutes an excellent ground to enhance regional cooperation and has immense potential to help the region integrate with the global economy.

As a founding member, Turkey attaches importance to the ECO activities and considers the ECO as a multinational economic platform that contributes to the economic stability and prosperity in our region. ECO, which has now reached a mature age continues to unite us under this common vision.

Implementation of the projects in the priority areas of cooperation of ECO, such as trade, energy, agriculture, industry and transportation will certainly benefit all member states.

Therefore, strengthening and ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness and visibility of our Organization should always be our main priority.

Six years ago, the ECO Vision 2015 document where we revised our goals and objectives to meet the new global economic challenges, as well as to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our organization was adopted in Astana.

Under the auspices of President Abdullah Gül in December 2010 in Istanbul, the 11th ECO Summit gave us the opportunity to evaluate our performance towards reaching these goals and objectiveness.

As a result of this evaluation, we have decided to establish an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) with the mandate to prepare recommendations on further steps to be taken for reviewing the work of the Organization, as well as the ECO Vision 2015. The recommendations of the EPG are expected to be submitted to the Council of Ministers that is envisaged to take place in Baku, in June 2012 .

I am confident that the outcome of the work carried out by the EPG will be instrumental in facilitating our endeavors towards achieving our 2015 Vision.

As you know, the First EPG Meeting was held on 25-26 July 2011 in Ankara. EPG's Second Meeting is scheduled to take place next week, in Teheran. It is important that all Member States appoint their representatives to the said Group and encourage their participation in all the EPG Meetings. In order to facilitate the organization of the meetings of the EPG, Turkey, will contribute 200.000 US Dollars to the Secretariat of the ECO. We hope to see other member states making similar contributions for the success of the EPG's Mission.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to introduce Turkey's EPG member, Retired Ambassador, Mr. Numan Hazar, who is with us today, on the occasion of this meeting.

Distinguished colleagues,

In order to improve regional economic cooperation, arrangements that facilitate free trade between the member countries are necessary. In this context, the ECO Trade Agreement or ECOTA requires particular attention. The Agreement was devised to promote the intra-regional trade which at the time constituted only a negligible share in the total volume of trade of the ECO member states.

Regrettably, that share of trade, especially for regional trade, has not improved as foreseen in the ECO Vision 2015 Document. Although the intra-trade of the ECO countries has increased, the share of regional trade vis-à-vis global trade has remained at 7 percent.

We strongly believe that trade liberalization schemes produce win-win outcomes for all the parties involved. It is my firm conviction that ECOTA has the potential to provide very similar outcomes for the contracting parties.

In this context, we attach utmost importance to the speedy implementation of ECOTA that has already entered into force.

On the other hand, we have to admit that ECO has not reached its true potential, yet. I believe that there is a need to put more effort with regard to the level of participation in the activities of the ECO. The political will and valuable support of the member states are required to help shape ECO's future strategy. I once again reiterate Turkey's commitment to the strengthening of our Organization and further enhancing our cooperation.

I am confident that the 18th Informal Meeting of the Council of Ministers will give us an opportunity to evaluate the developments in our cooperation and the impetus needed for our Organization to move forward.

Distinguished Colleagues,

I thank the Contact Group for their valuable recommendations. We are pleased that a draft resolution reflecting the recent developments as well as offering new areas of cooperation with the UN was adopted last year in December at the 65th General Assembly.

We are hopeful that further implementation of this resolution will pave the way to open new avenues of cooperation with the United Nations system. The ongoing projects within the framework of the MoU's signed with UNDP, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNODC, UNEP and various other UN agencies, as stated in the Status Report of the ECO Secretariat, are good examples which need to be further developed.

Let me also recall that Turkey is currently hosting the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the International Center for Private Sector in Development of the UNDP in Istanbul. The Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Center for Regional Cooperation of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) are based in Ankara. Our aim in hosting these UN offices is to contribute to the development and welfare of our region and beyond in cooperation with the United Nations system. We look forward to receiving proposals of joint projects from all ECO member states.

Dear colleagues,

In concluding, I wish to express my gratitude to the Ministers/Representatives for their participation and valuable contributions to the deliberations. I also like to thank the Secretary General and his staff for their efforts and contributions towards the success of the Meeting.

I thank you all.