

## **The Informal COM Meeting**

Joint Press Release by the ECO Council of Ministers held on the sidelines of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly

( UN - New York, 02 October, 2003 )

*Annex-XII*

The Ministers from ECO Member States along with their Permanent Representatives held an Informal meeting at the UN Headquarters on October 2, 2003 in New York, USA. The Foreign Minister of Kyrgyz Republic H.E. Mr. Askar Ch Aitmatov chaired the meeting.

The ECO Ministers were in New York to attend the general debate of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly. Taking the opportunity of their presence in New York, the ECO Ministers met on the sidelines of the session to discuss amongst themselves ECO related issues which arose after their formal meeting of June in Bishkek and needed their attention particularly in the priority areas of transport, trade, agriculture, health and drug control; and, directed the ECO Secretariat accordingly.

The Ministers congratulated the new Secretary General on his assumption of charge in the ECO Secretariat and expressed their support to him in carrying out his responsibilities towards the Council. They also appreciated the contributions made by the former Secretary General.

The Council reviewed the progress made after the Ministerial meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade in Islamabad in July and hailed the signing of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) by ECO member states. It also took note of the decisions of the Expert Groups meetings on Power; Road Transport and on Transit Transport Agreement and Transit Transport Framework Agreement. In this respect, they called upon all ECO countries to take immediate steps for implementation of all the ECO decisions. The Council urged the Secretariat to make the forthcoming ECO events such as 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial meeting on Information Technology, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum, 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting on Transport & Communications, 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial meeting on Industry and meetings of Mineral Experts Group, Senior Officials of Agriculture, Anti-Narcotics and Investment etc more meaningful by suggesting and working on innovative ideas.

The Council expressed satisfaction over signing of MoUs with three international organizations namely: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, World Customs Organization and Colombo Plan and requested the Secretariat to initiate projects with these organizations with a view to bring technical assistance to ECO countries.

The Council also took note of the developing relations between ECO and all relevant international, regional and financial organizations.

The Council also discussed other issues of interest to the ECO including reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and performance of ECO.