Report of the 19th RPC Meeting

(Tehran, 12 – 14 January, 2009)

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1. The Nineteenth Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was held on January 12-14, 2009 at Tehran, hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Preparatory/Review meetings were held on the sidelines. The meeting was attended by all the ten Member States. The delegation of ECO Secretariat was led by the Secretary General. Also present in the meeting were representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and ECO's Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutes, including the ECO Cultural Institute, the ECO College of Insurance, the ECO Trade and Development Bank, the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as the ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management. The list of participants is placed at ***Annex-I***.

2. At the outset, one-minute silence was observed in solidarity with the people of Gaza. The meeting also condemned the brutalities of the Israeli occupation forces, resulting in a heavy loss of life and property. The meeting called for an immediate end to Israeli attacks on innocent civilians and expressed the readiness of the Organization to assist the innocent victims of the Israeli aggression.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

3. The meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Minister welcomed all delegates and expressed the hope that their deliberations would result in new initiatives, plans and programmes to carry forward the aims and objectives of the organization. Referring to the global financial crisis, he observed that the ECO member states could tackle its adverse consequences through closer regional cooperation, clearly identifying the effects of the crisis and working appropriate strategies to counter them. He appreciated the steps that ECO had taken in various fields, including trade, transport, energy and agriculture. The Minister noted that the ECO region had great potential to play an important role on the wider economic plane. He expressed the hope that it would succeed in realizing its aims and ideas. A copy of the statement is attached at ***Annex-II***.

4. The Secretary General gave a brief resumé of the activities of the organization during 2008, including the progress made in some areas and the challenges that lay ahead in others. He noted that the Trade Agreement had taken effect and its implementation should get underway without delay. In transport and agriculture, the momentum built last year had to be maintained. There was a need to add more substance to cooperation in energy, environment and industry. The campaign against drugs, money-laundering and human-smuggling must be kept under close focus. The number and level of meetings in all sectors should be maintained. The Secretary General stressed that the 17th COM's decision about every member state hosting no less than two meetings every year had to be followed closely. The statement is placed at ***Annex-III.***

Agenda Item No. 2
Election of the Chairman **.**

5. His Excellency Dr. Mohsen Talaie, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the meeting. In his opening statement, Dr. Talaie welcomed the participants and thanked them for electing him as the Chairman of the RPC. He emphasized the importance of the RPC and the significance of its 19th meeting. He expressed the hope that very productive deliberations would follow with valuable contributions by all delegates.

Agenda Item No. 3
Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Council adopted the following agenda:-

1. Inauguration of the Meeting.
   - Inaugural statement of the high dignitary from Iran
   - Statement of the Secretary General
2. Election of the Chairman.
3. Adoption of the Agenda.
4. Statements by Heads of Delegation.
5. Consideration of the report of the Secretary General on ECO activities for 2008.
6. Review of implementation of ECO's approved programmes of action and projects and consideration of new programmes and projects for the year 2009 as well as evaluation of performance of the Economic Directorates of the Secretariat since the 18th RPC Meeting in the following areas:
   - Trade and Investment;
   - Transport and Communications;
   - Energy, Minerals and Environment;
   - Agriculture, Industry and Tourism;
   - Human Resources and Sustainable Development;
   - Project Research and Economic Research & Statistics;
   - Inter-Regional Activities:
     i. ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies
     ii. International relations
7. The ECO Calendar of Events for 2009-2010.
8. Any other business.
9. Date and Venue of the next Meeting.
10. Adoption of the Report.
11. Vote of Thanks

Agenda Item No. 4
Statements by Heads of Delegation

7. The heads of delegation made opening statements, outlining their countries' policies and views on the programmes and activities of the Organization. Copies of the statements are placed at ***Annex-IV***.

Agenda Item No. 5
Consideration of the report of the Secretary General on ECO activities for 2008

8. The Secretary General's report to the Council on the activities of the Organization during 2008 had been circulated to member states vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. SG/19th RPC/2008/2131 dated 31st December, 2008.

9. The Council appreciated the comprehensive report and took note of the useful observations and suggestions reflected in the Working Papers prepared by different Directorates. These were discussed in detail in the sectoral review meetings.

Agenda Item No. 6
Review of implementation of ECO's approved programmes of action and projects and consideration of new programmes and projects for the year 2009 as well as evaluation of performance of the Economic Directorates of the Secretariat since the 18th RPC Meeting in the following areas:

- Trade and Investment;
- Transport & Communications;
- Energy, Minerals and Environment;
- Agriculture, Industry and Tourism;
- Human Resources & Sustainable Development;
- Project Research and Economic Research & Statistics;
- Inter-Regional Activities:
  i. ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies
  ii. International relations

10. The sectoral preparatory/review meetings were presided over by representatives of different member states as shown below:

(a)	Trade and Investment	-	Mr. Abdul Qadir Memon, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan
(b)	Transport and Communications	-	Mr. Saeed Mojtehad Soleimani, Director General of International Affairs of the Ministry of Road and Transportation of the Islamic Republic of Iran
(c)	Energy, Minerals & Environment	-	Mr. Ferruh TIGLI, Director General, Foreign Economic Affairs, State Planning Organization (SPO), Turkey
(d)	Agriculture, Industry & Tourism	-	Dr. Saeed Sarkar, Secretary of Iranian Nano-Technology Initiative, Iran
(e)	Human Resources & Sustainable Development	-	Ambassador Damanpak Jami, Deputy Director General (ECO Affairs' Bureau), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran
(f)	Project and Economic Research & Statistics	-	Mr. Mohammad Hossein Amini Moslehabadi, Senior Expert, Office of Economic Accounts, Statistical Center of Iran

(g)	Inter Regional activities: (i) ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies and (ii) International Relations	-	Mr. Abolghasem Tahmasebi, Director (ECO Affairs' Bureau), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran

11. The Council dwelt at length on the programmes and proposals contained in the working papers prepared by the ECO Secretariat. These included status reports on the ECO Calendar of Events for 2008-2009, highlighting the progress made on the implementation of activities approved by the 17th COM meeting.

12. The Council noted, with appreciation, the work of the Secretariat for implementation of the decisions of RPCs and other high level ECO organs as well as the ongoing Programmes/Projects and Calendar of Events for the year 2008. A brief resume, covering the main areas of activity, is given below:

(a) Trade and Investment

13. The Council appreciated the timely submission of Offer Lists for ECOTA by Pakistan and Turkey and urged the other Contracting Members to submit their Offer Lists expeditiously so that ECOTA provisions could be implemented.

14. The Council welcomed the announcement by Tajikistan to ratify Annexures to ECOTA within the first half of 2009. The Council urged Tajikistan to expedite clarifying the matter.

15. The Council urged the non-signatory Member States to sign and ratify ECOTA as early as possible in order to realize the vision of establishing a Free Trade Area by the year 2015.

16. The Council appreciated the hosting of the 1st Meeting of the ECOTA Cooperation Council (Mersin, 21-22 May 2008) by Turkey where the Contracting Parties reached consensus on outstanding issues and decided that tariff concessions shall take effect from 1st January, 2009. The Council welcomed the offer of Turkey to host the 2nd Meeting of ECOTA Cooperation Council in Ankara as soon as the Contracting Parties provide Offer Lists to the Secretariat.

17. The Council recommended to the Cooperation Council to consider inviting ECO-CCI in its future meetings.

18. The Council noted that in accordance with the decision of the Informal Meeting on ECOTA held on the sidelines of the 18th RPC Meeting (Islamabad, 3-6 March 2008), a Concept Paper on the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building (TACB) of the Member States and the Trade and Investment Directorate was prepared. The 1st Meeting of ECOTA Cooperation Council (Mersin, 21-22 May 2008) decided that the Concept Paper be considered by an appropriate ECO forum. The 19th RPC urged the Secretariat to circulate the Concept Paper among the Member States for their views/ comments.

19. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Kazakhstan to host the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade, preceded by the 5th HLEG on

Trade and Investment and a Workshop on Potential Benefits of ECOTA in the 1st half of 2009 in Astana.

20. The Council thanked Iran for hosting the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy (Tehran 21-23 December, 2008) which took important decisions on increased cooperation in diverse areas of finance and economy, establishment of new forums, urging expeditious actions on pending issues and hosting ECO activities during 2009.

21. The Council urged the Member States to expedite follow up action to implement the decisions of the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy.

22. Noting that the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) had been signed by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey, the Council urged ratification by these Member States for its implementation during 2009 as stressed by the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy. The Council urged the remaining Member States to sign/ratify the Agreement and ensure its implementation during the current year.

23. The Council, recalling the decision of the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy (Antalya, April 5-7, 2007) during which Pakistan agreed to sign the APPI in one of the CPR Meetings at ECO Secretariat, urged Pakistan for early signing of the Agreement.

24. The Council urged Iran to announce specific dates for hosting the 2nd Meeting of ECO Heads of Central Banks during the first quarter of 2009. It also appreciated the proposal prepared by the State Bank of Pakistan for establishment of the ECO Central Banks Network (ECBN) and welcomed the offer of Iran to host the 1st Meeting of ECBN prior to the 2nd Meeting of ECO Heads of Central Banks.

25. The Council called on the Member States to expedite follow up actions on the decisions of the 1st Meeting of ECO Heads of Central Banks hosted by Pakistan in April 2007.

26. Recalling the decision of the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting, the Council welcomed the establishment of a Working Group comprising relevant experts of the Member States and ECO Secretariat to study the negative implications of the Global Financial Crisis on the economies of the Member States and urged early hosting of the meeting by one of the Member States. The Council requested Member States for sending their inputs to the Secretariat on priority basis for a Background Paper on the Financial Crisis which would be presented to the 18th Meeting of the Council of Ministers as decided by 143rd CPR.

27. The Council welcomed the offer of Iran to host the 1st meeting of the Working Group of ECO Commodity and Stock Exchanges in Tehran during 2009 and requested early announcement of its schedule. The Council urged the Member States to actively participate in the meeting as and when the dates were announced.

28. The Council welcomed the decision of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy to set up a forum for ECO Heads of Investment Promotion Agencies (ECO-IPAs) on the pattern of ECO Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) Forum and urged any of the Member States to consider hosting its first meeting during 2009.

29. The Council welcomed the decision of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy declaring Tajikistan as the Coordinating Country on ECO initiatives concerning investment and requested Tajikistan to host the 4th ECO Investment Conference during August 2009.

30. The Council welcomed the offer of Iran for hosting the 1st Meeting of the ECO Heads of Tax Administrations and requested finalizing the schedule with specific dates during 2009. The Council requested the Member States to expedite conveying comments on the Draft Multilateral Treaty on Avoidance of Double Taxation in order to finalize it at the 1st Meeting of ECO Heads of Tax Administration to be hosted by Iran.

31. Thanking Turkey for hosting the EGM on Money-Laundering (Ankara, 13-14 May 2008) and the Technical Workshop on Inflation Targeting (Izmir 9-10 May 2008), the Council requested the Member States to expedite follow up actions on the decisions taken during those events. The Council also urged Kyrgyzstan to announce hosting the 2nd EGM on Corruption and Money Laundering as per decision of the 1st EGM held in May 2008 in Ankara.

32. The Council urged Member States to expedite conveying their inputs on the Draft Plan of Action and the Draft Agreement on Prevention of Corruption and Money Laundering prepared by Turkey and Pakistan respectively.

33. The Council thanked Turkey for its positive offer of all possible support to Member States including sending its expert trainers and urged Member States to identify areas where training of officials, dealing with issues of Corruption and Money Laundering, was required.

34. The Council appreciated the commencement of operations of ECO Trade and Development Bank and noted the credit facilities extended by the Bank to the SMEs sectors in Pakistan and Turkey. It also noted with appreciation the progress achieved toward opening of ECO Bank Representative Offices in Iran and Pakistan and urged the two Member States to expedite opening Representative Offices as early as possible. The Council requests the Bank to provide technical assistance to Member States. The Council appreciated the interest shown by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in joining the ECO Trade and Development Bank and requested the other Member States to join the Bank.

35. The Council appreciated the readiness of Iran and Turkey for signing the draft Articles of the Agreement for the Establishment of ECO Reinsurance Company and called on Pakistan for early hosting of the meeting of the Heads of Insurance Companies of the Member States for signing the Articles. It stressed speedy progress towards the establishment and operationalization of the ECO Reinsurance Company.

36. The Council appreciated the signing of the Agreement on Establishment and Operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank by Iran and urged the signatory States to ratify it and the non signatory ones to sign and ratify it. All they may expedite comments on the Action Plan on this initiative prepared by Turkey.

37. The Council appreciated the readiness of Turkey to sign the ECO Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters and urged the remaining Member States to expedite completion of necessary procedures for signing it during 2009 in a relevant Ministerial Meeting.

38. The Council welcomed Pakistan's offer to host the 7th Council of Heads of Customs Administrations (CHCA) meeting in the second half of 2009. The Council recommended that the CHCA meetings be preceded by the SCOEs meetings.

39. Recalling the MOU between ASEAN and ECO Secretariat and a Work Programme for ECO-ASEAN cooperation in carrying out Studies and enhancing the capacity of the Member States on trade-related issues, the Council stressed closer collaboration, particularly for evolving appropriate Trade Facilitation Measures.

40. The Council welcomed the finalization of the Draft Additional Protocol on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen and Transit Drivers of the ECO Member States and the Plan of Action by the Working Group Meeting held in the ECO Secretariat on August 18-19, 2008 and the decision of 141st CPR to place the finalized Protocol before the 18th COM for approval.

41. The Council appreciated the initiative of the Iran for hosting the 1st Meeting of ECO Heads of Trade Promotion Organizations (ECO-TPOs) in Tehran and urged Member States to strengthen cooperation in joint trade promotional activities. The Council welcomed the offer of Azerbaijan to host the 2nd Meeting of the ECO-TPOs Forum in Baku during 2009.

42. The Council appreciated Pakistan's initiative to host the 2nd ECO Trade Fair on July 23-26, 2008 in Karachi. It particularly commended the facilities and incentives offered to participants in that biggest trade activity ever organized by ECO. The Council requested all Member States to actively participate in the 3rd ECO Trade Fair in Kazakhstan during 2009. The Council urged other Member States to offer hosting Trade Fairs during 2010 and 2011.

43. The Council thanked Pakistan and Turkey for allocating a composite ECO pavilion in one of their important fairs and urged other Member States to do the same.

44. The Council welcomed the fresh proposal of the Secretariat regarding Integrated Market Promotion Plans (IMPP) and requested CPR to approve allocation of US$ 50,000/ from the ECO Feasibility Study Fund, each for IMPP activity in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan during 2009 to support the smaller economies of ECO.

45. The Council thanked Azerbaijan and the Iran for their offers to organize the 4th and 5th Business Forum during 2009-2010. Member States were requested to confirm active participation as soon as the schedule of those events was announced. The

Council recommended that the Business Forums be scheduled back-to-back with an important ECO meeting.

46. The Council, recalling the recommendation of the 3rd ECO Business Forum (Karachi 23 July 2008), requested that Iran, Pakistan and Turkey kindly consider allocating space in their Auto Parts Fairs.

47. The Council took note of the proposal of Turkey to increase the role of ECO-CCI in private sector activities by giving it the leading role in organizing Business Forums, Trade Fairs and all other private-sector initiatives in cooperation with the ECO Secretariat and requested the Member States' views/comments on the proposal.

48. The Council, recalling the recommendation of the 3rd Business Forum for promoting awareness on Branding of Products and Trade Marks, urged interested Member States to organize Seminars, with one of the Member States taking over the role of the Coordinating Country on ECO initiatives concerning Intellectual Property Rights.

49. The Council urged Uzbekistan to indicate an exact date (earlier planned for November 2008) and venue for hosting the 1st ECO Seminar on Women Entrepreneurship Development during the first half of 2009. It stressed that all Member States extend support to the host authorities for the success of the event. The Council recommended to CPR to approve financing the event from ECO SS Fund. The Council recommended that the ECO Secretariat and the host Member State coordinate this event with the ECO-CCI.

50. The Council appreciated the regular holding of the Trade Officers' Working Group (TOWG) meetings by the Secretariat and the information circulated through the TOWG Newsletter and urged active participation of all ECO Embassies in Tehran in its meetings.

51. The Council thanked UNIDO for provision of US $ 228,441/ for the 2nd Phase of the ECO-UNIDO Project on Trade Capacity Building of ECO Member States on Standard, Metrology, Testing and Quality (SMTQ) and stressed that Member States fully avail the facility.

52. The Council requested Member States to make necessary coordination for supporting activities under the 2nd Phase of ECO-UNIDO Project during 2009.

53. Pakistan showed its willingness to host an International Symposium on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and Sanitary Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) measures to mark the conclusion of 2nd Phase of ECO-UNIDO Project on Trade Capacity Building of ECO Member States during the last quarter of 2009 with the financial support of ECO-SSF.

54. The Council, welcoming the approval of the 136th CPR for the Study on the Trading Patterns in the ECO Region by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), urged Member States to initiate necessary preparatory work as recommended by the ECO Secretariat.

55. The Council acknowledged the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ECO-CCI and the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry and requested the ECO-CCI to initiate activities to realize benefits of MOU.

56. The Council thanked the Secretariat for developing an interactive ECO Trade and Investment Network Web Portal (www.tradeeco.org) and urged Member States to ensure regular contribution of information for the portal. The Council also requested Member States who had not yet nominated their National Focal Points for the Web Portal to nominate them urgently and initiate preparations for Orientation Seminars on the Operation of ECO Web Portal, to be conducted by the ECO experts during the first half of 2009.

57. The Council recommended that any scheduled Trade and Investment event not hosted by a Member State during one year be carried forward to the Calendar of Events of the next year and new events proposed for the following years be added to the list. Events not hosted for two consecutive years, will be reviewed by the RPC for a decision.

58. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 1st ECO Printing and Packaging Specialized Fair in September/October 2009.

(b) <u>Transport & Communications</u>

59. The Council appreciated the decisions of the 7th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications (Antalya, April 2008) for the development of transport and communications and hoped that the Antalya Declaration would be implemented effectively.

60. The Council welcomed the offer of the Kyrgyz Republic to host the 8th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications in 2010. The Kyrgyz delegation requested the Secretariat's assistance in financing the Meeting, including airfare and local accommodation. The Meeting recommended that the CPR include the Meeting in the list of events supported by SSF Fund. It requested the CPR to raise the ceiling of airfare to the actual costs of tickets. The CPR may also consider extending financial assistance to some Member States upon request for hosting ECO Meetings.

61. Endorsing the decisions of the 1st High Level Expert Group Meeting (Tehran, December, 2008) on the Programme of Action for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications, the Council called for expediting the study for preparing the new Program of Action, utilizing the ECO Feasibility Study Fund and other available sources.

62. Afghanistan, while reiterating their offer to host the 2nd Meeting of the HLEG in 2009, stated that their official offer would be conveyed within a month. While appreciating the offer, the Meeting asked the Secretariat to pursue the matter and, if necessary, make alternative arrangements for the Meeting. It was recommended that the next Meeting of the HLEG be covered by ECO SS Fund.

63. The Council emphasized that the new Programme of Action should cover regionally important projects. It should also complement TTFA by incorporating projects for actualizing transit routes specified in the TTFA. Projects being carried out by other institutions, such as UNECE and UNESCAP, may also be considered by the New Programme, if relevant to the ECO objectives.

64. The Council recommended establishing a financial mechanism to support transport infrastructure projects The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to establish contact with international specialized and financial institutions, donor countries, trust funds, regional investment funds, and other relevant institutions for partnership in implementation of the New Programme of Action.

65. The Council expressed satisfaction on the completion of the ratification process of the TTFA in the Republic of Turkey. It requested Uzbekistan to expedite acceding to the Agreement, and Turkmenistan to ratify it at an early date.

66. The Council requested the Secretariat and the relevant international organizations to define transit routes and set up test runs under the TTFA, including routes along Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iran and Turkey, as suggested by the delegation of Pakistan.

67. The Council appreciated the allocation of US$50,000 by CPR to the TTFA Fund in 2008, out of the total US$150,000 recommended by the 2nd TTCC Meeting (Baku, September 2007). The RPC requested the CPR to allocate the remaining US$100,000 in 2009 to enable the Secretariat to implement the Fund's Work Programme for 2009, as approved by the 3rd Meeting of TTCC (Tehran, December, 2009).

68. The Council requested the concerned authorities of the Member States to consider voluntary contributions to the TTFA Fund and the Secretariat to approach relevant regional and international institutions, the private sector and the ECO-TDB for their contribution to the Fund.

69. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the approval of IDB’s Technical Assistance Grant worth US$412,000 for the regional programme for implementation of the TTFA. It appreciated the CPR’s approval of US$100,000 from the Feasibility Fund as ECO's contribution. The Meeting asked for early signing of the TA Agreement and the setting up of the Project Management Unit. The Member States were requested to expedite nominating national focal points and consultants to facilitate implementing the Project.

70. The Council requested the Secretariat to organize a joint ECO/IRU/UNECE workshop for capacity building of the Member States on international conventions mentioned in the TTFA. The workshop may consider developing a roadmap for implementation of relevant conventions. UNCTAD, UNESCAP, and other such organizations be invited to the workshop. The Secretariat utilize the TTFA Fund for covering the expenses.

71. The Council expressed satisfaction over the enforcement of the ECO Third Party Liability Insurance Scheme (White Card), and welcomed the establishment of

the Office of White Card Council of Bureaux, with an officer seconded by Iran. Welcoming allocation from the TTFA Fund for recruitment of a Senior Expert, the Council asked for expeditious recruitment of the expert on merit. It also urged Member States to expedite nominating their National Bureaux for an early organizing the 1st Meeting of the ECO-CB. The Council recommended that the TTFA Fund be utilized to partially cover the cost of the Meeting.

72. As agreed at the 2nd Meeting of the Insurance Committee, the ECO College of Insurance would provide education and training to one student each from the Member States to enhance capacity for implementing the White Card Scheme. As recommended by the Extraordinary Meeting of the TTCC and the 2nd Insurance Sub-Committee Meeting, the RPC Meeting requested the CPR to approve US$115,000 from the Feasibility Study Fund for scholarship in two instalments for 2009 and 2010. The college would also organize capacity building programmes, workshops and training courses.

73. The Council thanked Iran for undertaking to conduct a study on ways and means to implement the maritime-related Articles of the TTFA, as decided by the 4th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Reference Marine Organizations (Tehran, February, 2008). The Meeting also welcomed Iran's offer to establish an ECO Zone in Chabahar Free Economic Area, providing on concessional conditions, land and premises for the ECO landlocked Member States. Other transit Member States (Pakistan and Turkey) were urged to take similar initiatives.

74. Pakistan stated that facilities to be offered at Gwader Port were being finalized and would be conveyed to the Secretariat shortly.

75. The Kyrgyz Republic stated that, pursuant to decision of the ECO Heads of Reference Marine Organizations, Iran was considering the allocation of 11 hectares of land to the Kyrgyz Republic in Bandar Abbas. While appreciating this measure, Pakistan and Turkey might also consider allocation of land in their ports. The Kyrgyz Republic would reciprocate the initiatives by allocating land in the Bishkek trade area. The Council recommended that the concerned member states consider the proposal and inform the Secretariat of their response.

76. The Council supported the initiatives for implementation of the Almaty Plan of Action and Transit facilitation for landlocked Countries. It supported the proposal to study two selected sea ports in each ECO transit countries (Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) to be designated for providing concessional tariffs and facilities. The Council requested the Secretariat to approach OHRLL, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNESCAP and other relevant international organizations for technical assistance.

77. The Council requested the Member States and the Secretariat to participate in the UNECE/UNESCAP's EATL Phase II project by attending the Second Session of the EATL Expert Group in Shanghai in early 2009, and the EATL sub-regional capacity-building workshop to be organized in partnership with ECO Secretariat. One of their special sessions be dedicated to the ECO Container Trains.

78. The Council appreciated preparation by the ECO Secretariat of legends of the ECO Railway and Road Transit Route maps, as well as the Railway and Road

Networks. The Meeting asked the Member States to expedite submitting their colour maps based on the legend and nominate focal points as soon as possible. The ECO Feasibility Fund and the funds available under the Joint ECO/IDB on Multimodal Transport be utilized for publishing the Map. The Secretariat would utilize the services of a reputable local cartography firm to design and print the blueprints and the final maps in adequate volumes.

79. The ECO Road Directory would be published by Turkey utilizing the ECO Feasibility Fund. The Member States were requested to help revise the Directory by filling out or updating the relevant questionnaires and returning them to the concerned authorities in Turkey through the Secretariat.

80. Reiterating the regional importance of Projects for (a) Upgrading the Capacity of Sarakhs Station in Iran, (b) Rehabilitation of Taftan–Quetta railway in Pakistan, and (c) Construction of the railway by-pass around Van Lake in Turkey, the Council requested the respective Member States to expedite placing official requests to IDB. As the work programme of some of them had already been fixed with IDB, the Meeting requested IDB to consider the above projects in addition to their routine framework of bilateral cooperation.

81. The Council noted that until the completion of the construction of railway bypass around Van Lake, Turkey would enhance measures to facilitate transiting goods and passengers on Van Lake.

82. The Council called for expediting construction of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) railway as the only missing link in north-south corridor. It requested IDB and other financial institutions to consider financing this Project. Azerbaijan and Iran would prepare the relevant Project Profiles and place official request to these institutions through ECO Secretariat.

83. Pakistan informed the council stated that feasibility study on up-gradation of the Quetta-Taftan railway would be completed in February 2009 and IDB and other financing institutions approached thereafter. Iran stated that construction of Bam-Zahedan (320 km) railway would be completed by April 2009, making it possible to link Pakistan Railways with Europe via Iran and Turkey as well as to the railways of other ECO Member States. The Council welcomed this information and recommended that the Kerman-Zahedan Railway be inaugurated on the sidelines of the 10th ECO Summit in March 2009.

84. The Council supported the decisions of the Meeting of En-route Countries of the ECO Container Train (11 December, 2008) to prepare a revised timetable and further reduce the total travel time to 7 days.

85. The Council expressed satisfaction over the participation of the People's Republic of China in the Meeting of Countries En-route the Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty Container and Passenger trains, and the 2nd Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to keep contact with China to ensure that decisions regarding connecting China to the ECO Railway projects were actualized. The Council decided to invite People's Republic of China to all transport-related Meetings of the ECO.

86. The Council welcomed the proposal of China to have Urumchi as a destination of the ECO Container Train in China. The Council recommended preparation for launching a demonstration train on Istanbul-Urumchi-Istanbul route in 2009.

87. The Council appreciated the allocation of US$60,000 to a Feasibility Study on regular operation of the ECO container and passenger trains on Istanbul-Almaty route, as recommended by the 18th RPC Meeting. Given the volume of works involved, the Meeting requested the CPR to allocate further funds, if needed, for the Project.

88. The en-route countries, and the People's Republic of China, were requested to contribute to the study by nominating their national focal points/consultants. The Secretariat was requested to follow up recruitment of an international consultant to lead the study and visit the Member States for that purpose. The Council requested the Secretariat to invite UIC, OTIF, OSJD, UNESCAP, UNECE, and other relevant international and regional organizations to participate in the Project.

89. In line with the decisions of the 9th Meeting of the Heads of Railway authorities (Astana, June 2007) and the 18th RPC Meeting, the Council welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host the 10th Meeting of the ECO Heads of Railway Authorities, in 2009. The concerned authorities in Pakistan would inform the Secretariat of the dates of the Meeting and conditions of hospitality.

90. The Council welcomed the initiative of OTIF to hold a joint workshop with ECO on Rail Transport between Europe and Asia in 2009. The Member States were requested to actively participate in that workshop.

91. The Council recommended that Secretariat officials should visit the member states en-route the train to prepare ground for implementation of the feasibility study. These visits may be completed before June 2009. The 1st Meeting of the project team be held not later than July 2009, with authorized representatives and national consultants of the Member States and the People's Republic of China attending.

92. The Council took note of the complaints of the Turkish shippers about extra costs charged by some En-route countries over and above the declared tariffs on Istanbul-Almaty Route. This issue would be followed up during the visits of the Secretariat staff to En-route countries.

93. The Council requested Turkey, Iran and Turkmenistan to expedite holding trilateral negotiations on the connection of Turkmenistan to the exiting passenger train between Tehran and Istanbul.

94. As several years had elapsed since preparation of the draft Action Plan for Revitalizing/ Operationalization of the China-Middle East-Europe-Corridor, the Meeting endorsed the decision of the Meeting of the Countries En-route the Istanbul-Almaty Train to have the Action Plan reformulated. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to do this task in consultation with the member states and the People's Republic of China. Once the reformulated draft had been circulated by the Secretariat, the Member States would provide the Secretariat with their views within two months.

The Action Plan would then be finalized according to the views received from member states.

95. The Meeting requested Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to expedite holding the Senior Officials/HLEG Meeting and the Meeting of the concerned Ministers to decide on technical, operational and other aspects of the ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Islamabad route. As decided by the 142nd CPR, the Train Project would be included in the Agenda of the forthcoming COM and the ECO Summit Meeting (Tehran, March 2009). Accordingly the Council requested the concerned member states to have the HLEG and the Ministers Meeting before March 2009, so that the results be brought to the attention of the Summit. The Meeting hoped that a demonstration train from Islamabad to Istanbul would be launched in 2009. The Meeting underlined the need to resolve the issue of gauge-difference between Iran and Pakistan.

96. The Council requested the Turkey to initiate contacts with the European authorities, in particular, Bulgaria, to facilitate having the Istanbul-Almaty Container Train and the planned Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul connected to Europe.

97. The Council recommended to the CPR to study the proposal of Kazakhstan for a Feasibility Study of the Container Train run along Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route. The CPR may consider the possibility of allocating funds for the study from the Feasibility Fund. The Study would involve participation of the National Focal Points of the concerned Member States. The Council also recommended that a meeting of the concerned authorities of the en-route countries would be held in Kazakhstan in 2009 under the auspices of this Study. This meeting might be organized back-to-back with the 3rd Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC.

98. The Council appreciated that Iran was undertaking a study on how best to implement Annex-III of the TTFA. The Secretariat was asked to expedite organizing a joint meeting with OSJD, OTIF, UIC, UNECE, UNESCAP and other relevant international organizations. The cost of the meeting be charged to the TTFA Fund.

99. The Council welcomed the proposal of Afghanistan for a Feasibility Study on a railway route from China along Tajikistan and Afghanistan, to a) Zahedan/Chabahar in Iran through Herat-Delaram-Zaranjin and b) through Iran and Turkey to Europe (in line with the Europe-Asia Transport Links Project of UNESCAP/UNECE). The Afghan authorities would convey to the Secretariat detailed information and Project Profile in due course. An Expert Group Meeting of the concerned Member States be organized to discuss details of the Project.

100. The Meeting called for expediting efforts to have a railway constructed in Chaman-Spinboldaq segment to connect the railways of Pakistan to Afghanistan.

101. Reiterating the importance of developing a transport database and Geographic Information System (GIS) on transport in the Region, the Council requested the CPR to consider utilizing the Feasibility Study Fund for that purpose. The Council welcomed the readiness of UNECE to provide ECO with necessary technical assistance. The project would help develop an integrated regional transport information system.

102. In line with the decision of the 2nd of the Road Committee of the TTCC (December, 2008), the Council requested the Member States to actively participate in the ECO-plus China Seminar on the Silk Road to be held in Tehran in the second half of 2009.

103. The Council welcomed the signing of MOU between ECO and IRU in May 2008, and called on the Secretariat to work with the Member States and IRU to actualize joint ECO/IRU activities agreed at the 2nd Road Committee Meeting (13 December, 2008) and the 1st Transit Trade Committee Meeting.

104. The Council agreed that Member States support the Secretariat and IRU in organizing its planned truck caravan projects, notably the UNESCAP Asian Highway Truck Caravan, in 2009. UNESCAP and IRU were requested to cover, within their joint Project on Asian Highway Truck Caravan, two parallel directions, one through Central Asian Republics and the Caspian Sea (Azerbaijan-Turkey) and the other through Turkmenistan, Iran and Turkey, in order to assess the comparative advantages of these alternative routes.

105. The Council strongly recommended to the Secretariat and the Member States to actively participate in decision-making meetings and other fora related to UNECE/TIR Convention. In order to project the views and protect the interests of the Member States, and as decided by the 1st Meeting of the Transit Trade Committee, a Contact Group of the Member States be set up in the framework of the UNECE/TIR bodies and meetings. The Member States were requested to convey to the Secretariat contact details of their Permanent Missions in Geneva to set up the Contact Group. Turkey and Iran were requested that their Permanent Missions coordinate establishment of the Contact Group.

106. In view of the importance of TIR convention for TTFA, the Council requested the Secretariat to include the most important TIR events of IRU and UNECE in its calendar of events for active participation. The Council recommended similar participation of the member states in UNECE events to help amend the TIR Convention according to the conditions of the ECO region.

107. Given the importance of accession to, and implementation of international conventions and agreements referred to in TTFA, the Council appreciated the offers of UNECE and IRU to help capacity building of the Member States. This would be considered under the TTFA and UNESCAP resolution 48/11 (7 UNECE agreements and conventions) and the EATL project (16 UNECE agreements and conventions).

108. The Council decided that the ECO Secretariat, IRU and UNECE develop a joint programme of action on effective implementation of the TIR Convention, within the framework of the ECO/IDB joint project on implementation of the TTFA. It would include capacity building, as well as activities and projects for promotion of TIR system.

109. As regards the status of implementation of Article 5 of the TTFA (exemption of traffic-in-transit by motor vehicles from customs duties, taxes, other levies and charges), the Council noted that, so far, only Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan and Turkey had conveyed status a report. The Meeting requested other Contracting Parties to

furnish such information not later than three months. The issue of official and unofficial payments would also be pursued by the joint working group meeting/workshop to be organized in 2009 with the collaboration of the ECO Secretariat and UNECE.

110. In line with the decisions of the TTCC and the 2nd Road Committee Meeting, the Council noted that, so far, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey had introduced their authorized bodies to endorse visa applications of drivers of vehicles and persons engaged in international transport. Other Member States were asked to nominate relevant bodies for this purpose within three months.

111. The Council suggested amending Articles II, IV of the Protocol to the Agreement for Simplification of Visas for Businessmen prepared by the EGM (August 2008) and endorsed by the 141st CPR (December 2008). In particular, the Council emphasized that introductory letters for drivers and persons involved in transit operations should be issued by recognized transport-related associations nominated by competent authorities.

112. Taking into account the technical issues involved in implementation of Article 12 of TTFA, the Council recommended organization meetings of the consular officials of the Member States', Embassies in Tehran. The findings of these Meetings be submitted to an Expert Group Meeting on Visa Simplification within TTFA, to be held prior to the 4th TTCC Meeting.

113. The Council requested the Secretariat to explore the possibility of a study tour to EU zone to familiarize with their facilitated border control procedures, as suggested by the Honorary Director General of IRF at the 2nd Meeting of the Road Committee. The visit be assisted by IRF, IRU and UNECE.

114. The Council reiterated the need for a comprehensive regional study on implementation of customs provisions of the TTFA. IDB had been requested for a Technical Assistance Grant on Customs/Transit Trade and the draft project document sent to them by the Secretariat.

115. The council decided to hold one national workshop each in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the only ECO Member States where TIR system was not applied. A regional workshop on international conventions and TIR system be held on March 10-12, 2009 in collaboration with IRU and UNECE. The national workshop on TIR in Pakistan be held on 4th March, 2009, back-to-back with the National Workshop on Multimodal Transport. The Secretariat may explore the possibility of funding these workshops from the ECO/IDB project on TTFA, TTFA Fund or other sources, including those of UNECE and IRU.

116. As decided at the 1st Meeting of the Transit Trade Committee, Turkey was requested to provide further information about training and capacity building programmes that it could offer on non-hospitality basis on implementation of the TIR.

117. As agreed at the 7th Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications, the Council requested the member states who had not yet established their National

Inter-Ministerial Committees for border-crossing facilitation and promotion of international transport to do so at the earliest.

118. The Council expressed its satisfaction on finalization of the trilateral Agreement between ECO, IDB and UNESCAP, aimed at implementation of TTFA and development of Trans Asian Railway and Asian Highway Projects in the ECO Region. The Meeting requested the ECO Secretariat, IDB and UNESCAP to sign the agreement at an early date, so that its implementation could start in early 2009.

119. The Council urged member states speeding up action on the decisions of the 7th Ministerial Meeting to establish an ECO Unit in their Ministries of Transport and Communications to ensure that decisions taken by ministers and other relevant decision-making bodies would be implemented effectively. The Secretariat would facilitate establishment of video conferences with the focal points of the Member States and the ECO Units within two months. The Secretariat, upon request from the Member States, would provide necessary equipment to the ECO Units.

120. Considering that hosting meetings of the TTCC and its auxiliary bodies was based on alphabetical rotation, the Council decided that the next Meeting of the TTCC be held in Kazakhstan. To avoid the problems arising from having the technical committees of the TTCC held in different dates and venues, the Meeting decided that the Meetings of auxiliary bodies of the TTCC be held back-to-back with the TTCC Meeting. Accordingly, Kazakhstan was requested to host the next meetings of the auxiliary bodies of the TTCC prior to the 4th Meeting of the TTCC in 2009.

121. The Council requested the CPR to allocate necessary funds to the TTFA Fund which would be utilized for partial coverage of the expenses on hosting these events. The meeting also recommended utilization of the SSF for covering the tickets of the participants in TTCC and its auxiliary bodies.

122. The Council endorsed the coverage of the expenses on the meetings of three Sub-Committees of the TTCC (12-14 December 2008) from the TTFA Fund.

123. The Council noted, with satisfaction, progress on implementation of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on Multimodal Transport, including the five national workshops in Afghanistan (July 2008), Azerbaijan (September 2008), Iran (July 2008), Kazakhstan (August 2008) and the Kyrgyz Republic (October 2008). As the Project would be closed by end March 2009, the Meeting, requested other Member States to help organize national workshops within that deadline. An International Consultant would be recruited to wrap up the findings of the Project.

124. The National Workshop on MMT in Pakistan would be held on 2-3 March, 2009. Turkey would set a date in the first quarter of 2009. The workshop in Tajikistan be scheduled for late February, 2009. The delegation of Uzbekistan was requested to expedite ascertaining suitable dates for the workshop.

125. The Council expressed satisfaction over progress on the establishment of the ECO Logistic Provider Associations' Federation (ECOLPAF). It thanked Turkey for preparing the draft Statute of the Federation and offering to host the 2nd Preparatory Meeting of ECOLPAF. The Council requested the Member States to expedite their

comments on the draft Statute. They were also requested to expedite forwarding the name and contact details of their national associations as focal points for ECOLPAF, so that the Meeting could be organized in the second half of 2009.

126. The Council thanked Iran for hosting the 4th Meeting of the HRMO, and requested the other littoral Member States to consider hosting the 5th Meeting of the HRMO in 2009.

127. In line with the decisions of the 4th Meeting of Heads of Reference Marine Organizations (Tehran, February, 2008), the Council welcomed the offer of Turkey to host a Workshop on Regional Cooperation for Maritime Training, after the 5th Meeting of the HRMO, which would finalize Long Term Programme for Maritime Training. The Council also thanked Iran for offering to carry out a regional study on ways and means for implementation of the marine related Articles of the TTFA.

128. Given the inadequate progress in the field of civil aviation, the Member States were requested to review the report of the First Meeting of the ECO Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines (Karachi, 2001) and provide proposals to improve Civil Aviation Cooperation in the region. The Meeting agreed that 2nd Meeting of the ECO Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines be held in the 2nd half of the year 2009 at the Secretariat on non-hospitality basis.

129. Pakistan conveyed its willingness to adopt the draft framework agreement on cooperation in the field of air transport prepared by Kazakhstan Civil Aviation Authority, with the exception of clause 4, which was suggested to be amended as under:

> "Access to air transportation market shall be based both on bilateral and multilateral agreements based on the principles of reciprocity in grant of capacity/frequency and gateways".

130. Pakistan proposed the inclusion of the following clause in the draft agreement.

> "To develop air transportation between member states of ECO, the Civil Aviation authorities shall recommend to the representative governments to adopt a liberal visa policy. Till liberalization of visa policy, present bilateral arrangements shall suffice".

131. Pursuant to the agreement reached in the 18th RPC Meeting, the Member States were requested to grant 50% discount in airfare to ECO Secretariat's staff and participants in all ECO meetings/events. The Member States who had not yet joined this agreement were requested to do so at the earliest.

132. Pakistan informed the Meeting that the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) would extend the same discount to officials of the ECO and delegations of Member States attending ECO Meetings.

133. The Council recommended that the Workshop on Privatization of the Postal Services be held in Iran in May 2009. The host authorities would provide local hospitality to two participants from each member states.

134. The Council noted that the "committee meeting on the technical and operational aspects of establishing linkages between the postal financial services and e-shopping facilities of the Member States", due in Ankara in November 2008, was postponed due to lack of quorum. The Meeting agreed that the said Meeting be held in Turkey upon having the circulated questionnaire filled in by adequate number of Member States.

135. The Council noted that the 5th Meeting of ECO Postal Authorities would be held in Pakistan in May 2009. The Council considered the draft logo for the joint ECO postal stamp prepared by the Secretariat, based on samples provided by Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey, on the occasion of the 10th ECO Summit (2009). The representative of Turkey informed the Meeting that the concerned authorities of Turkey had taken necessary measures to issue the stamp before the Summit Meeting. The Meeting requested other Member States to expedite issuing such stamp using the suggested logo as a basis, before the Summit.

136. The Council noted that the 14th Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunications Authorities (HTA) and the 5th Meeting of TAEFOS, scheduled for May 2008 in Tehran, could not be held due to lack of quorum. It was agreed that the HTA Meeting be held in the second half of 2009 in Tehran. The Agenda of the TAEFOS Meeting would be merged into that of the HTA Meeting.

137. The Council welcomed two proposals by the Azerbaijan within the framework of the TAEFOS Project. One was about support to the Trans-Caspian Sub-marine Fibre Optical System (Frankfurt-Baku-Shanghai). Another was that three of the key TAEFOS members, namely Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey extend preferential rates and discounts on the use of their transit channels for Euro-Asian countries for the purpose of boosting the use of the infrastructure available in the Region.

138. The Council expressed satisfaction over the increasingly enhanced relationship of the ECO with relevant international and regional organizations on transport development. In particular, the Meeting noted, that good working relations, through reciprocal participation in meetings, exchanging MoUs, and setting up joint projects, had been established with UNESCAP, UNCTAD, IDB, UIC, IRU, IMO, OTIF, UPU, FIATA, UNECE, and UNOHRLLS.

139. The Council recommended to the CPR to positively consider transport-related proposals for utilization of the ECO Feasibility Fund, as proposed by the Secretariat to the 19th RPC Meeting.

(c) <u>Energy, Minerals & Environment</u>

- **<u>Energy</u>**:

140. The Council noted with concern that the Feasibility Study on Interconnection of Power Systems of ECO Member States had to be terminated. It called on the Secretariat, in collaboration with the coordinating country, to analyse and consider the reasons that lay behind the termination of the study and also stressed on the need by

the Secretariat and the coordinating country to elucidate the lessons learnt and examine effective measures to salvage the available data.

141. The Council further recommended to the Secretariat to continue to explore power projects for possible financing by IDB and other international partners.

142. The Council reiterated that energy cooperation was among the three top priorities of ECO and important decisions needed to be taken to carry forward cooperation in that field. The Council stressed early convening of the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum and welcomed the offer of Tajikistan to host the meeting and requested Tajikistan to indicate the exact date.

143. The Council appreciated the decision of 139th CPR meeting held on 15 September 2008, that before holding the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum, a meeting of the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) be held to carefully draft Agenda of the Ministerial Meeting having considerable important matters. The Council appreciated the offer of Azerbaijan to consider hosting this meeting. Other Member States were also requested to indicate their willingness to host the HLEG on Energy and convey their proposals at the earliest to facilitate convening the Ministerial Meeting as scheduled in 2009.

144. The Council appreciated Turkey for hosting the 7th International Training Course for Energy Managers on June 16-27, 2008 in Ankara and urged other member states to convey information/proposals/offers on their activities regarding energy efficiency and conservation during the years 2009-2010. The Council was informed that the 8th International Training Course for Energy Managers will be held in 25th May-8th June 2009 in Ankara. Turkey will provide travel, accommodation and course organization expenses for one participant from each ECO member country.

145. The Council while stressing the importance of cooperation and exchange of experiences among member states in the field of refinery, welcomed the readiness of Iran to hold three workshops on 'Processing of Heavy Cuts', 'Petroleum Products' and 'Refining Processes of Petroleum Products' in 2009. The Council requested Iran to inform the Secretariat of the venue and the exact date of the above workshops.

146. The Council appreciated the cooperation extended by the World Bank (WB) for organizational and financial support to the 2nd Workshop on Regional Energy Trade in the ECO Region, held on 10-11 November 2008 in Almaty, Kazakhstan during which the Bank has shared with ECO the outcome of the study titled "South Asia: Policy Paper for Regional Energy Trade: Trading Arrangements and Risk Management in International Electricity Trade".

147. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to collect and place on the ECO Web-site relevant data about Oil, Gas and Electricity sectors of the member states. It urged the member states to regularly convey to the Secretariat the latest data.

148. The Council requested the concerned Iranian authorities to kindly renew their offer to host the 1st meeting of the ECO Working Group on New and Renewable Sources of Energy in 2009 and the Secretariat to consider Iranian proposal to partially support convening of the meeting from the ECO Special Support Fund. The Council

appreciated Pakistan's offer to hold a one day Seminar on the subject on 27 October, 2009.

149. The Council welcomed the offer of Turkey to host a Workshop on Renewable Energy Sources in September 2009 and requested Member States to take active part in the Workshop to be held in Turkey and facilitate the participation of their private sector. Turkey would provide local hospitality for one expert from each member state and the Council requested the CPR to meet their travel expenses from ECO Special Support Fund.

150. The Council took note of the establishment of an interregional Working Group on Power Trade and Interconnection led by UNESCAP and ECO, with the participation of ASEAN, SAARC, PIF, and noted that the 11th Consultative Meeting of the Executive Heads of these Sub-regional Organizations (Almaty, May 2007), adopted the Terms of Reference for the above Working Group. The Council was informed that the Secretariat was pursuing, in collaboration with UN ESCAP and other members of that Working Group, convening its 1st meeting in 2009.

- **Minerals**:

151. On the ECO Mineral Data Booklet (MDB), the Council while emphasizing the significance of provision of data, requested Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to expedite providing the latest data for publication of the second edition of the booklet, as per agreed format, to the Project Manager (Turkey) latest by 1st June 2009. If at least two more member states did not provide data, Turkey would repeal the project as the Project Manager. The Council was informed that given the extensive content of ECO Geosciences Database Project being implemented by Iran, therefore, updated editions of the ECO Mineral Data Booklet were not needed.

152. The Council requested Kazakhstan to renew its offer to host the 4th ECO Mineral Experts Group meeting in early 2009 in Astana and indicate exact dates for the meeting. Since important decisions needed to be taken to carry forward cooperation in the field of Minerals it was necessary that the ECO Mineral Experts Group meeting be held without further delay.

153. The Council thanked the Geological Survey of Iran as the Project Manager for its efforts on the implementation of projects on establishing a web-based system of unified and valid "Geosciences Database (GD)" and compilation of Mineral Distribution Map of ECO region. It also stressed the importance of cooperation of the member states in providing timely data and designation of NFPs on the project to facilitate easy and timely implementation by the Project Manager. On the request of Iran as the coordinating country, the Council requested that data for both projects be provided within three months.

154. The Council took note with appreciation of the allocation of US$ 350,000/- by Geological Survey of Iran to establish the initial phase of the ECO Geosciences Data Base. It also welcomed the idea of establishment of ECO Geosciences Regional Centre in Iran and requested the CPR to consider the issue in its forthcoming meeting, in the light of modality of establishment of ECO Regional Centres, being finalized by the CPR.

- **Environment**:

155. The Council called for accelerating implementation of the Plan of Action on Environment and recommended for its possible revision and extension by the 4th Ministerial Meeting proposed to be held in April 2009 in Islamabad. The Council emphasized the importance of intensifying cooperation in the field of environment by jointly addressing common concerns and requested the member states to take more active participation in relevant events.

156. While thanking Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for submitting their National Progress Reports (NPRs) on implementation of the Plan of Action for 2007, the Council asked the remaining member states to expedite providing their NPRs latest by the end of February 2009. The NPRs of the member states have to be submitted, in the beginning of each year, on the agreed format. The member states were requested to submit their NPRs for 2008 in time (the first half of 2009) enabling the Secretariat to prepare an integrated report for circulation to member states and to the next Ministerial Meeting on Environment (Islamabad, April 2009).

157. While emphasizing on early establishment / operationalization of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (IEST) and taking into account academic / technical aspects of its activities, the Council requested Iran as per decision of the 120th Meeting of CPR, to expedite establishing the panel which is tasked to formulate Modality for selection of the President of the Institute and relevant basic documents required." The Council also requested Iran to present nominations for the post of the President of the Institute, at the earliest.

158. The Council requested the concerned authorities of Kazakhstan to expedite indicating exact dates and venue for hosting the 2nd Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Biodiversity in the first half of 2009 as it was more than a year that they offered to host the meeting. While appreciating the offers of Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan for hosting meetings on Biodiversity in 2009/10, the Council asked them to finalize programmes of the meetings and inform the Secretariat for further action. The Council welcomed the offer of Turkey for hosting Pre-Cop (Conference of Parties) in March/April or November/December 2009 in Antalya. The Council requested the remaining member states to indicate their willingness to host meetings on Biodiversity (2008-2015). The Council also called for conveying particulars of their national focal points on Biodiversity to the Secretariat.

159. The Council took note of the outcome of the first Experts Group Meeting on Ecotourism (Ankara, 1-3 December 2008). It emphasized implementation of its recommendations. The Council also welcomed the adoption of the Plan of Action on Cooperation among ECO Countries in the field of Ecotourism. The Council asked the member states to expedite offering their willingness, to act as a Coordinating Country for implementation of the Plan of Action. With regard to the establishment of a Database on Ecotourism, the Council requested the Member States to expedite providing the concerned Iranian authorities with requisite information. It also requested the member states to offer hosting the 2nd Experts Group Meeting on Ecotourism sometime in 2009.

160. The meeting appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 2nd Seminar/Training Course on Watershed Rehabilitation in 2008 which unfortunately could not be held due to lack of quorum. The Council requested the Iranian authorities to renew their offer for 2009 and also emphasized upon the member states to actively participate in the course.

161. The Council took note of the outcome of the 5th Meeting of the ECO Working Group on Environment (WGM) held in Baku on 22-23 May 2008 and emphasized implementing its recommendations. The Council appreciated the offer of Iran to host the 6th WGM after the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Environment to be held in Pakistan in April 2009.

162. The Council was informed that the 7th issue of Bulletin on Environment was being published based on material received from Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. Due to non-contribution of material by some member states on regular basis, the 5th Working Group Meeting on Environment proposed that the Bulletin be published twice a year in order to achieve the quality of the contents. The Council requested all member states to ensure timely provision of necessary material to the Secretariat so that the next issue of the Bulletin could be published well in time.

163. With regard to the Iranian Project proposal on "Development and Harmonization of the Environmental Standards" and as per recommendation of the 5th WGM, the Council requested Iran to come up with a detailed project proposal, with budget estimate, duration, and scope of activities.

164. The Council welcomed the recommendation of the 5th WGM on Establishment of an ECO Green Industry Award to be presented bi-annually during the Ministerial Meetings on Environment.

165. The Council took note of the fact that so far only six countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Turkey) had provided the particulars of their National Focal Points (NFPs) on Environment. The Council emphasized upon the member states to provide the particulars of their NFPs and those who have already provided to keep updating them.

166. The Council thanked Turkey for establishing the E-mail Group for exchange of environmental information in the summer of 2008. The Council was informed that no member states had so far provided information as per request of Turkey as coordinator for establishment of the above e-mail group. The Council requested the member states to expedite the information.

167. The Council appreciated the offer of Pakistan to host the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Environment to be preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting, in Islamabad in April 2009. The Council requested the concerned authorities of Pakistan to finalize arrangements for the meeting and convey the exact dates. The Council also emphasized on the member states to actively take part in the meeting and confirm to the Secretariat their participation as early as possible.

(d) Agriculture, Industry and Tourism

- **Agriculture**

168. The Council thanked Azerbaijan for hosting the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture on September 8-10, 2008 in Baku and appreciated the progress achieved by the meeting.

169. The Council thanked Turkey for hosting the Donor's Conference to raise funds for the implementation of ECO-RPFS and donor institutions for their support and called on them and the Secretariat to accelerate the implementation phase of RPFS in collaboration with FAO and ICARDA.

170. The Council, as decided by the 4th Ministerial Meeting, called on Ministers for Finance of the Member States to send letters to IDB, WB and other donor institutions requesting their financial support for implementation of the RPFS. It also called on member states to consider providing funds and to facilitate securing financial assistance from the donors. The Council thanked Turkey for its pledged country-contribution through FAO Sub-regional Office in Ankara and called for its early realization.

171. The Council requested member states to offer hosting in 2009 a Coordination Meeting to follow-up the Donor's Conference. The meeting would be attended by member states, donor institutions, FAO, and ICARDA, and would work on details of contributions by the donors and the member states.

172. The Council appreciated IDB's financial assistance to various ECO programmes and projects, and requested the Ministers of Finance of the member states to formally apply to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for use of its pledged financial assistance to implement the ten national projects under the ECO-RPFS, and requested IDB to expedite the evaluation process of such applications. IDB had already approved projects proposed by Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. Projects of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan were still under evaluation. The Council requested the Secretariat to continue following up the matter.

173. The Council appreciated the progress of ECO-FAO Technical Cooperation Program on "Strengthening Seed Supply in the ECO Region". It welcomed the decision of the 4th Ministerial Meeting on establishment of the ECO Seed Association in Turkey and its operationalization by the Committee responsible for the establishment process. It appreciated Turkey's commitment to provide technical and financial assistance for the establishment of the Association. Turkey announced that it would host the 1st Committee Meeting on the Establishment of ECO Seed Association on March 2-6, 2009 in Antalya.

174. The Council noted that the 1st ECO Seed Conference and Trade Exhibition would be held in Turkey on 4-6 December 2009 and called on member states to help make it a total success.

175. The Council expressed its satisfaction at the designation of regional schemes on harmonization of seed regulations in Variety Release and Plant Variety Protection, Seed Certification and Phytosanitary / Quarantine Measures. The Council stressed the need for early finalization and implementation of these documents by member states, the Secretariat, FAO, and ICARDA under coordination of the ECO Seed Association. The Council thanked Turkey for preparing a project proposal for the implementation phase of the regional schemes.

176. The Council noted that the 142nd CPR meeting allocated US$50,000 as seed money to support the activities and programmes of the Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters Centre (ECO-RCRM). It thanked Iran for hosting the Working Group Meeting held on December 22-23, 2008 at ECO Secretariat which prepared draft statute for the centre. Member states were requested to host the 2nd ECO Heads of Meteorological Organizations Meeting in 2009 to consider the draft Statute and submit it to COM for approval. Turkey and Uzbekistan were requested to consider signing the MoU on the establishment of the Centre.

177. The Council welcomed the approval by the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture of the establishment of the ECO Centre, for Efficient Utilization of Water in Pakistan. The Council requested the CPR to consider Pakistan's proposal for a feasibility study about the Centre with a view to allocating seed money from the Feasibility Fund. It was a priority area in ECO agriculture cooperation and donors should also be approached for funding.

178. The Council noted that the Draft Document on Establishment of ECO Permanent Commission for Prevention and Control of Animal Diseases would be finalized at the 2nd Task Force Meeting in Tehran by the end of February 2009. It would be submitted to CPR for final approval by the 2nd ECO Heads of Veterinary Organizations Meeting scheduled for Turkey in the second half of April 2009.

179. The Council appreciated the signing of Agreement between the ECO Secretariat and Agricultural Extension and Education Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the utilization of US$50,000 from the ECO Feasibility Fund for the Establishment of ECO Agricultural Biotechnology Network (ECO-ABN). It welcomed the readiness of Iran to host the 1st Meeting of National Focal Points of ECO-ABN in May/June 2009.

180. The Council requested the National Focal Point of Pakistan to send regional information related to Intellectual Property Rights in biotechnology to help establish ECO-ABN and thanked Turkey for conveying draft Plan of Action for Development/Harmonization of Bio-safety Regulations to be considered by the 1st Meeting of the National Focal Points. Member states were requested to assign their national focal points for ECO-ABN.

181. The Council requested the member states to host the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in 2010.

- **Industry**

182. The Council called on the member states to offer hosting the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry, the 2nd Permanent Committee Meeting on Transfer of Technology and the 1st Steering Committee on the establishment of ECO-NAN, in 2009.

183. The Council noted that the Draft Statute of RISCAM had been finalized and was ready for submission to the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting for approval and signing. It thanked Iran for offering to host the 3rd EGM on Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology on February 1-2, 2009 in Tehran and requested active participation from member states. In view of delay in holding the Ministerial Meeting, the Council decided to re-submit the draft Statute of RISCAM to the forthcoming COM for approval/opening and then signing by Member States.

184. The Council thanked Azerbaijan for hosting the 4th Meeting of the ECO Heads of Privatization Administration and the 3rd Meeting of HLEG on Privatization and Private Sector Development in Baku in April/May 2009. Azerbaijan was requested to indicate exact dates of the meetings along with hospitality details. The Council thanked Iran for its readiness to host the 3rd Privatization Workshop in November 2009 and the 1st Taskforce Meeting on Cooperation among Stock Exchanges of Member States in September 2009. It thanked Turkey for offering to host the 1st Coordination Committee Meeting on Industrial Property Rights in June 2009, and requested member states to fill in the questionnaire prepared by Turkey. The Council called on Pakistan to indicate exact dates for the 2nd ECO Steering Committee Meeting on Entrepreneurship and SME Development.

185. Recalling the decision of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Industry to contribute more actively to the reconstruction of Afghanistan through ECO programmes as well as through bilateral projects in the field of industry, especially SME, minerals, oil and gas involving the private sector, the Council requested Afghanistan to come up with proposals to benefit fully from this offer.

186. The Council thanked Iran for hosting the 1st ECO Steering Committee Meeting on Entrepreneurship and SME Development held on 14-15 January, 2008, in Tehran and welcomed agreed project proposals, namely the establishment of ECO SME Fair (Iran), establishment of Digital Information Exchange Network (Pakistan) and holding training workshops (Turkey). Pakistan was requested to prepare its proposal on the establishment of the network, Turkey to convey exact dates of training workshop on KOSGEB best practices in the second half of 2009 and all member states except Afghanistan and Turkey, to convey their views on Iran's proposal on SME Fair by the end of April 2009.

187. The Council requested the member states (except Azerbaijan and Iran) to fill in the questionnaires prepared by Iranian Industrial Development Research Organization (IDRO) to be used for the establishment of Technology Transfer Centre and (except Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) to nominate focal points on technology transfer and management. Since the website of ETT had been launched, member states were requested to enter their relevant data in the website to make it

more useful. The Council requested Iran to prepare project proposals (Phase 1&2) for submission to CPR for allocation of US $ 50,000/- from the Feasibility Study Fund.

188. The Council thanked Iran for hosting the 1st Taskforce Meeting on establishment of ECO Nanotechnology Network (ECO-NAN) on 21-22 May, 2008 in Tehran. The Council noted that the establishment of the ECO Nanotechnology Network had been approved by CPR and US$50000 allocated it from the Feasibility Fund. The Council appreciated Iran's country contribution of US$100,000 to ECO-NAN. It requested member states (except Iran and Turkey) to convey their country profile to the Secretariat at the earliest and fulfil other activities envisaged in the Work Plan.

189. The Council welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan for Establishment of ECO Representative Office for Development of Science and New Technologies and related activities in Almaty and recommended that a task force comprising Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey and the ECO Secretariat work out project proposal, first to be developed by Kazakhstan. The Taskforce would take into account relevant ECO initiatives like ECO Technology Transfer Centre, ECO Nanotechnology Network and ECO Science Foundation. The outcome of the Taskforce meeting would be submitted to the COM.

- **Tourism**

190. The Council thanked Iran for hosting the 1st Ministerial Meeting on Tourism on 20 October 2008 in Tehran and welcomed the outcome of the meeting.

191. The Council noted with appreciation the approval of the Plan of Action on Tourism and the Modality for the establishment of the ECO Tourism Promotion Fund by the Ministerial Meeting.

192. The Council expressed its thanks to Afghanistan for offering to host the 1st working group meeting on revival of the Silk Road in Mazar-e-Sharif in 2009 and called on member states to participate in it actively.

193. The Council thanked Turkey for offering to host the 2nd Ministerial Meeting and 4th HLEG meeting on Tourism in first half of October 2009.

194. The Council thanked the ECI for preparing the questionnaire for the ECO Tourism Guidebook, and appreciated the generous pledge by Iran to cover 80% of the cost of printing the Guide Book. Member states, except Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan, were requested to provide the requisite information for the completion of the guidebook at the earliest. The Council also requested ECI to expedite the preparation of the Guidebook.

(e) Human Resources & Sustainable Development

195. The Council deliberated in detail on issues on the agenda of the Human Resources and Sustainable Development Directorate (HRSD) including Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), health, natural disasters, drug control and cooperation

among the Interior Ministries of Member States. All the member states reiterated their commitment to achieving these goals and objectives. The main points agreed upon are given as below:

- **Human and Sustainable Development:**

196. The Council appreciated the offer of Iran to host the 3rd HLEG on Human Development and MDGs implementation in the first half of 2009. As per recommendation of the 2nd HLEG meeting, the third meeting would focus on health-related MDGs. The Council took note of the announcement made by Turkey and Pakistan to participate in the meeting and urged other Member States to confirm their participation in the meeting and provide their proposals/ comments.

197. Further to the request made during its previous meeting, the 19th RPC meeting underlined the need to prepare a comprehensive regional report on health related MDGs i.e. MDGs 4, 5 and 6. The Council also welcomed follow-up action by the Secretariat with UN Agencies to benefit from the expertise of a consultant to prepare such a report. The report would cover current trends, success stories and bottlenecks, if any. It would also encompass best practices of member states, international and regional organizations and recommend appropriate activities and projects. The report might also contain workable recommendations and guidelines for future course of action and cooperation among the member states. The consultant would also make trips to selected ECO member states to get a clear picture of the present situation of the issues for preparing the requisite report.

198. Giving the fact that consultant's report would rely on information provided by member states, the meeting strongly recommended to their concerned authorities, particularly those working in health ministries, to positively support the consultancy and cooperate with the Secretariat in providing necessary information for preparation of a comprehensive report.

199. The meeting appreciated UNICEF's readiness to support the above consultancy. It urged the Secretariat to finalize issues at the earliest and emphasized that the report could be submitted to the third HLEG meeting on MDGs. The meeting also strongly recommended to the CPR to allocate, if necessary, some complementary fund from ECO Feasibility Fund to prepare such a report.

200. The Council noted that some Member States (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Turkey) had introduced their national focal points on human development and MDGs and urged the remaining Member States to kindly expedite introducing their national focal points. Taking into account the decision of the 2nd MDG and the 18th RPC meetings, member states were requested either to update their focal points or introduce new focal points for health related MDGs.

- **Health**

201. The meeting appreciated the interests shown by Iranian health authorities in expanding regional cooperation in health fields and requested the active support and participation of other member states.

202. Welcoming the increased cooperation in the field of health in recent years, the Council supported the Secretariat's proposal to hold the 1st ECO Health Ministers meeting and requested that one of the member state offer hosting it during 2009 or the first half of 2010.

203. The Council noted that regional cooperation in pharmaceuticals was an important priority in the health sector. There was a need to pay more attention and share relevant expertise and experiences. The Council welcomed Pakistan's offer to hold the 2nd High Level Experts Group meeting on Drug (Pharmaceutical) Regulatory Authorities in the 3rd quarter of 2009. All member states must actively participate in it.

204. The Council requested concerned Iranian authorities to kindly provide a fresh date for the ECO Workshop on Pharmacovigilance, which was first scheduled for 10-12 November 2008 in Tehran but, had to be postponed due to lack of quorum. The Council requested the Secretariat to approach the relevant international organizations for their financial support for the event.

205. The Council welcomed the proposal of Iran's health authorities to host the workshop on "Drug Quality Control" on 21-23 February 2009 in Tehran. It requested member states to confirm their participation in the workshop at the earliest. The Council requested the Secretariat to approach relevant international organizations for their financial support for the event.

206. The Council also asked member states to offer hosting relevant events on pharmaceutical cooperation particularly on Drug registration and licensing; Counterfeit Medicine; Current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) as proposed by the first ECO High Level Drug Authorities Meeting held in Tehran on 13-15 November 2007.

207. Further to the recommendation of the 1st meeting of Drug Regulatory Authorities, the Council appreciated nomination of focal points on pharmaceutical cooperation from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey. It requested the remaining four member states to kindly expedite nominating their focal points. The meeting also called on these focal points to attend relevant meeting/s.

208. The RPC meeting also asked concerned authorities of the member states to provide their views on the details of proposal of the 1st meeting of Drug Regulatory Authorities to establish a "Drug Regulatory Network" for exchanging information among the national focal points and relevant authorities of member states. The meeting emphasized that a modality may be prepared by one of member states in which all particulars of such proposals including structure, objectives, activities, and budget issues be clarified. This document may be submitted to the next relevant meeting for approval.

209. The Council took note of the readiness of Iran to prepare the framework of the Web page as a part of the whole network and send it to the Secretariat for circulation among the member states. The meeting also asked the Secretariat to consider utilizing the ECO Feasibility Fund to provide seed money and approach international organizations as well.

210. Considering the positive feedback from member states during the first Study Tour for health authorities of member states (9-12 December 2007, Tehran), the Council encouraged member states for continuation of this kind of activities. The meeting welcomed the readiness of Turkey to conduct the second Study Tour in the first half of 2009 and requested relevant Turkish authorities to provide detailed information for this event. The ECO Secretariat was also instructed to approach relevant international organizations particularly UNFPA to secure their support for such activities.

211. The meeting welcomed the Iranian proposal for establishing the Health Tourism Network of ECO member states including the participation of the private sector and relevant NGOs. The meeting also took note of the Iranian proposal to hold the first meeting on this subject focusing on health and medical education by the second half of the year 2009.

212. Further to holding the first Study Tour for ECO health authorities in 2007, the meeting appreciated Iranian readiness to hold a course on Master of Public Health (MPH) for empowering health authorities of ECO member states in 2009/2010. Detail information would be conveyed accordingly. The meeting recommended other member states to arrange similar activities, as well in order to promote the health management capacities of the member states.

213. The meeting welcomed the offer of Iranian health authorities to organize a regional workshop on "Women and other Health Volunteers" for ECO member states in Tehran by early 2009 in cooperation with Hamyaran, an Iranian NGO Development Resource Centre active in the field of health. The proposed workshop is aimed at sharing Iranian experience on reproductive health particularly women health volunteers with other member states and help drawing action plan based on their own needs. Detailed programme of the workshop and exact date may be conveyed by early February 2009. It requested member states to confirm their participation in the workshop.

214. The Council appreciated organizing the first meeting of ECO Heads of Blood Transfusion Organizations on 23-24 June, 2008 in Tehran hosted by Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization. The Council while acknowledging the importance of improving blood transfusion standards and availability of safe blood and blood transfusion systems in the region endorsed the report and underlined the recommendation of that meeting to establish the "ECO Blood Transfusion Services Network" and also main priority areas determined within the context of blood transfusion services for future cooperation. These would include Voluntary donors' recruitments programs; Blood safety; GMP in blood banks; Incorporation of IT and Automated Screening in blood transfusion system; Procurement collaboration (Blood bags and equipments); Hemovigilance and Collaboration in Plasma Industry.

215. The meeting also expressed satisfaction with the follow up made by the Secretariat to materialize provisions of the above meeting and asked all member states to provide the requested information as adopted by the said meeting.

216. The Council appreciated draft proposal prepared by Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization for explaining the aims, objectives and work of the "ECO Blood Transfusion Services Network", and asked member countries to provide their views/comments on the draft proposal at the earliest so as to make it possible to realize the network. The Council also welcomed Iran's readiness to allocate up to one fourth of the total required budget for establishment of the said network. It also requested ECO Secretariat to consider utilizing ECO Feasibility Study Fund and approaching relevant international organizations for securing the remaining costs.

217. As per recommendation of the first ECO meeting of Heads of Blood Transfusion Organizations, the meeting requested member states (except Iran and Pakistan) to expedite nominating their focal points on blood transfusion cooperation, giving all relevant particulars, including Name, Position, Tele, Fax, and E-mail addresses at the earliest.

218. The meeting welcomed the kind offer of Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization to host two workshops on "Voluntary Donor Recruitment" and "Quality System in Blood Transfusion" on May or June 2009. Since Iran would provides up to one third of the cost for the workshops, the ECO Secretariat may approach international organizations to cover the remaining costs. The Council encouraged member states to confirm their participation on the proposed events.

219. The Council urged all member states, except Iran, to propose activities on other priority areas as approved by the blood transfusion meeting. These would include; Blood safety; GMP in blood banks; Incorporation of IT and Automated Screening in blood transfusion system; Procurement collaboration (Blood bags and equipments); Hemovigilance and Collaboration in Plasma Industry.

220. The meeting also welcomed the offer of Turkey to host the Second Meeting of the Heads of Blood Transfusion Organizations/Authorities of ECO Member States in April 2010 and requested the relevant Turkish authorities to provide hospitality details of the meeting.

221. The Council while emphasizing the importance of the cooperation and contacts among municipalities of ECO member states through existing fora such as "Asian Mayors Forum" which held its first meeting on 19-20 November, 2008 in Tehran, proposed member states to consider hosting ECO Mayors Meeting in 2009/2010 and inform the Secretariat of their views.

- **Cooperation on Natural Disaster Management**:

222. The Council appreciated efforts by the Secretariat to promote regional cooperation with respect of disaster risk reduction including holding the Third ECO Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Tehran), Press Conference on the "Global Campaign on Hospitals Safety" (ECO Secretariat), the Workshop on the Global Assessment Report (GAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction (ECO Secretariat), during year 2008.

223. The Council endorsed convening of the following meetings in 2009:

- The Fourth ECO Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Tajikistan);
- Symposium on Drought Management (Iran);
- Workshop on Climate Change and Natural disaster (Iran);
- Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Implementation of the Third ECO International Conference recommendations (Afghanistan);
- Workshop on Promotion of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for Media (venue to be determined later).
- The Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk reduction titled " Disaster, Poverty and Vulnerability (Geneva) and
- Meeting with the OECD on the issue of the School Earthquake Safety (France)
- Regional Seminar on Cooperation on Disaster Risk Management (venue to be determined later)

224. The Council welcomed the offer of Afghanistan to host an Expert Group Meeting on implementation of the recommendations made by the Third ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Reductions, in the second half 2009.

225. The Council while appreciating the Natural Disaster Management Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Third ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management (Tehran, 2008), welcomed the offer of the Republic of Tajikistan to organize the Fourth ECO Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Dushanbe in 2009 and urged all member states to actively participate in the meeting.

226. The Council emphasized the need for enhanced regional cooperation on Natural Disaster Management, in particular establishing Early warning system, exchange of information, experiences and practices among member states. The Council instructed the Secretariat to follow the matter through relevant meetings and bodies of ECO.

227. The Council welcomed preparing the draft Statute of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters in Mashhad commending the Iranian Metrological Organization for its efforts for operational this Centre, requested all member states to participate in the meeting for considering and finalizing the Statute.

228. The Council while referring to the MoU between ECO and UN/ISDR as a legal basis for cooperation of two organizations, appreciated efforts to formalize a working plan comprises areas of cooperation including support for implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) at local, national, and regional levels.

229. The Council also urged full realization of the main objectives of the "Global Campaign on Hospitals Safety ", and requested all member states to take necessary measures to make sure that hospital and health services are able to function in case of emergencies and disasters.

230. The Council took note of continuation of cooperation between ECO and UN/OCHA to promote regional cooperation to strengthen disaster preparedness,

support member states and appreciated the efforts made by UN/OCHA for holding another two meetings in the year 2009 namely "Symposium on Drought Management", and Workshop on "Climate Change and Natural Disasters".

231. The Council also appreciated cooperation between ECO Secretariat and IOM on the issue of Post Disaster Recovering Programmes.

- **Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU):**

232. The Council requested the member states to continue sending their country reports and statistics on drug control in hard copy and through the computerized network of DCCU.

233. The Council requested member states (except Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan) to expedite sending information to the Secretariat for preparation of a legal document for regional cooperation on drug control so that the same could be prepared by the Secretariat. This was also mentioned in the Follow-up report of the Second Interior Ministers' Meeting, issued by the Secretariat.

234. The Council expressed appreciation for the valuable cooperation extended by the Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC) to the DCCU and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to organize training courses for Member States, such as "Law Enforcement on Drug issues" re-scheduled for 15-19 June, 2009 and requested Member States to actively participate in the said training programme.

235. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to organize a workshop namely "Train the Trainers Course" (Narcotic & Custom Officers) in June 2009 and requested Member States to actively participate in the workshop.

236. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize a workshop on Drug Concealment Methods for Anti Narcotic Forces of Member States by 2009 and requested Member States to actively participate in the workshop.

237. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug Control (April, 2008) at Tehran and requested Member States to provide full support for implementation of the revised ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control as recommended by the EGM since it was also approved by the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers Meeting (Ashgabat, 2008).

238. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for establishing the Regional Training Centre for Drug Demand Reduction. It further welcomed the offer of Iran to host two workshops namely (i) Drug Demand Reduction for Psychologists and (ii) Addiction Treatment for Physician in 2009. Iran was requested to provide exact dates and hospitality details of the workshops.

239. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting on Drug Control in Pakistan and requested the host authorities to indicate exact dates and hospitality details for the meeting.

240. The Council took note of the decision of 2nd Interior Ministers Meeting regarding enhancement of the capacity of DCCU and for that purpose changing the name of Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) to that of Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (DOCCU). The Secretariat was requested to include this item in the agenda of the forthcoming Council of Ministers Meeting.

241. The Council expressed satisfaction for expanding cooperation between ECO and European Commission and particularly signing of the MoU on 3rd February, 2009 for implementation of the project titled "Fight against Illicit Drug Trafficking from/to Afghanistan" with ECO Member States and requested the Secretariat to facilitate active implementation of Project Document with the EC.

- **Follow-up to the decisions of the 1st and 2nd ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting**:

242. The Council expressed satisfaction for expanding cooperation between ECO and International Organization for Migration (IOM) including signing of the MoU on 27th January 2009. It also welcomed the readiness of IOM for organizing the Meeting of Experts for preparation of a plan of cooperation against human trafficking and illegal migration.

243. The Council appreciated the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 1st High Level Expert Group Meeting on Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes in 2008 in Ankara. The Council also took note of the Joint Regional Strategy prepared by the said meeting and requested member states to expedite implementation of the decisions mentioned in the Strategy.

244. The Council noted with appreciation holding of the 2nd Meeting of ECO Interior Ministers in Ashgabat in 2008 and requested Member States to expedite follow-up action on the Report for implementation of the decisions of the meeting. As a follow-up to the decision of the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting, the Council appreciated nomination of focal points for cooperation in the field of (i) Drug, (ii) Terrorism, (iii) Organized Crime, (iv) Human Trafficking and (v) National Coordinator by Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. It requested remaining six member states to kindly expedite nominating their focal points, giving all relevant particulars, including Name, Position, Tele, Fax, and E-mail addresses at the earliest.

245. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran for organizing 1st meeting of National Coordinators in Tehran subject to receiving nomination of seven National Coordinators from the Member States.

246. As per the decision of the 2nd Interior Ministers Meeting to establish a data bank regarding Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime in the Secretariat, the Council requested member states to expedite sending relevant data to the Secretariat at the earliest.

247. The Council appreciated the kind offer of Republic of Turkey to host the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Interior Ministers in mid-October, 2009 in Turkey and requested the host authorities to indicate exact date and hospitality details for the meeting.

248. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Combating Trans-national Organized Crime for evolving a Plan of Action in the first half of 2009 and requested the host authorities to indicate exact date and hospitality details for the meeting.

249. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the First Meeting of Border Commanders of ECO Member States in cooperation with the IOM re-scheduled to be held on 2-3 March, 2009 and requested member states to actively participate in the said meeting.

250. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Terrorism in March 2009 and requested the host authorities to indicate exact date and hospitality details for the meeting.

251. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to organize the 1st Annual Meeting of Chiefs of Police of ECO Member States in 2009 and requested the host authorities to indicate exact date and hospitality details for the meeting.

252. The Council encouraged member states to consider hosting the 2nd High Level Experts Group Meeting on Combating Drug, Terrorism and Organized Crime.

(f) Projects, Economic Research and Statistics

- **Projects**

253. The Council agreed that the Economic Cooperation Strategy for the ECO Region needs revision in the light of current global developments and progress made by member states since 2002, as well as the priorities set in the ECO Vision-2015.

254. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's renewed efforts to utilize the ECO Feasibility Study Fund (FSF) to finance projects in priority areas of trade and investment, transport and communications, energy, agriculture, minerals and economic research. In view of the need to strengthen monitoring of ECO projects, it endorsed the proposal to amend the ECO Functional Methodology in regard of utilization of the ECO FSF in order to ensure greater transparency and equitable participation of Member States and suggested that the matter be further considered by CPR. Special emphasis was put on establishing a project monitoring unit to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation.

255. The Council agreed to extend the ECO's Plan of Action (2003-2007) for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan, until a new Plan of Action could be finalized. The Council requested the Government of Afghanistan to speed up the communication process in response to the inquiries of the Secretariat so that it could proceed with implementation of the relevant reconstruction projects well in time. The concerned Afghan authorities might expedite final estimate together with necessary justification for the budget increase as well as draft bidding for the project of Maternity Hospital of Faryab Province so that it could be submitted to the CPR for final approval. They

also nominate a focal point to coordinate arrangements needed for concluding the final contract on construction of a School and a Health Care Centre in Bamiyan Province.

256. Iran deposited US$ 1,000,000 to the Fund while Pakistan and Turkey pledged US$ 5 million each. Out of the pledged amount, Pakistan and Turkey, so far, have deposited US$ 1 million and US$ 400,000 to the Fund respectively. Azerbaijan has also deposited US$ 150,000 to the Fund. The Council, while appreciating their contribution, asked Pakistan and Turkey to process more transfers from their pledged amounts to the Fund. It also requested the other member states to make financial contributions to the Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan enabling the Secretariat to initiate more reconstruction projects.

257. The Council, as per the mission report of the Secretariat, welcomed the completion of nearly 50% of total physical construction of the Project on Deh Mazang Public Park and maintenance of Kabul Zoo worth US $ 1.3 million. The first and second instalments of US$ 325,000 and US$ 390,000 were paid to the implementing agency (Afghan Construction Company) in May 2007 and October 2008 respectively. The Council called on the Afghan authorities to ensure that the implementing agency meets all the requirements of the contract for early completion of the project.

258. The Council requested that Secretariat further strengthen its cooperation with such international donors as the World Bank, IDB, FAO, UNIDO, UNECE, EBRD and ECO Trade and Development Bank to obtain funds and technical support for various ECO projects and programmes.

259. The Council appreciated that the Secretariat developed an electronic questionnaire for the ECO Roster of Leading Experts and Consultants, which is now available on the ECO Website for the electronic inputs to be provided by Member States. The Council noted that, while undertaking ECO projects and programmes, prime preference would be given to the experts and institutions to be listed in the ECO Roster. The Council requested that Member States keep their respective lists updated.

- **Economic Research and Statistics**

260. The Council welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan to host the 2nd Meeting of ECO Heads of National Statistical Offices in June 2009 in Astana. The Council requested the relevant authorities of Tajikistan to consider the possibility of holding the 2nd HLEG Meeting of National Statistical Offices of ECO Member States in 2009. The Council requested Kyrgyz Republic to determine the date of hosting the 7th NFPs Meeting on Economic Research and Statistics during 2009, which was offered at the 6th NFP's Meeting (Ankara, 17-18 November, 2008) and requested the Member States to forward their proposals for drafting the agenda of the respective meetings. The Council welcomed the invitation of Kazakhstan to the Euro-Asia Economic Forum at the level of Ministers of Economy of ECO Member States to be held in Astana on 11-12 March, 2009.

261. The Council expressed its thanks to Iran for its readiness to host a Seminar on National Accounts in mid-May 2009, and a Training Workshop on Maintaining the

Geological Sciences and Information Data Base in mid-April 2009. Iran requested the Member States to send their views, comments and needs on the topic of National Accounts to the Secretariat by the end of February, 2009. Turkey offered holding a training workshop in 2009 on economic research topics identified by the Member States. The Council appreciated the offer and requested Turkey to intimate the exact date and venue of the workshop to the Secretariat.

262. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's efforts in publishing, posting and disseminating the ECO country-specific statistical bulletins region wide. In this regard, the Council thanked Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Turkey for their inputs and requested those Member States, which statistical bulletins have not been prepared yet, to provide these to the Secretariat at the earliest.

263. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's efforts in reviewing and updating the ECO Countries Key Indicators. It noted that these were based on commonly agreed statistical indicators to present the most updated and full economic, financial, and social data.

264. The Council noted with satisfaction the issuance of the ECO Annual Economic Report for 2006-2007, distributed among the Member States in December 2008. It urged the Member States to kindly provide the necessary inputs for the next issue of the Report to enable its issue by end of the 1st quarter of 2009. The requested input data should include country reports as well as official statistical data to be filled in the forms circulated by the Secretariat in 2008.

265. The Council recommended that the Secretariat continue preparing reports/papers/surveys relating to ECO's regional economic development for its various meetings, News Bulletins and Website. The Council noted that technical and financial assistance of international donor organizations and the ECO Feasibility Fund be utilized to that end.

266. The Council appreciated the report of the 6th NFPs Meeting on Economic Research and Statistics held in Ankara (18-19 November 2008), highlighting the need to coordinate project implementation in economic research. The Council endorsed the following research themes for formulating the project proposals: "Alternative Energy Resources in ECO region"; Competitive Goods and Services in ECO region", "Prospects of Intra-trade in ECO region", Coordinating country-Kazakhstan; "Economic Management Modelling in ECO countries", Coordinating country – Pakistan; "Comparative Study on the Linkage between Energy Consumption and Population Dynamics in the ECO Countries: a new view toward MDGs, Coordinating country-Iran. Republic of Kazakhstan proposed the following new research themes: 1) the Development of Models and Strategies of Economic Management in ECO member states, and 2) the Status and Perspectives of ECO member states Economic Development.

267. The Council reiterated the request of the 18th RPC to establish ECO's Statistical Network and noted that since no objections were made by Member States to the proposal of the Iran as of the end of December 2008, the website developed by

Iran's Statistical Centre providing an access to all Member States, may be used as ECO's common statistical network subject to approval by CPR.

268. As mandated by the 18th RPC, the Secretariat is ready to convene the First Meeting of Senior Researchers of ECO Member States to streamline the ongoing and future ECO-led research in Member States' economic research institutions. It proposed that funding for such first meeting be drawn from the ECO Special Support Fund (SSF.) The Council expressed its appreciation to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its willingness to streamline the economic research activities.

269. The Council reiterated its earlier request to the Secretariat to publish the first pilot issue of the ECO Economic Journal. In this regard, it urged Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which had not yet nominated their candidates for the Editorial Board, to do so, at earliest. The Council endorsed the terms of reference for the ECO Economic Journal and requested its final approval by the CPR. Turkey and Kazakhstan recently conveyed the names of the candidates and Pakistan promised to expedite its respective nominee to the Editorial Board of the journal.

270. The Council, recognizing the importance of the timely implementation of ECO projects and programmes in the field of economic statistics and project research, requested Member States to nominate a researcher for secondment at the Secretariat. The incumbent would maintain and improve the ECO statistical database and project monitoring system.

271. The Council noted with satisfaction the cooperative efforts of SESRIC, FAO, UNESCAP, IDB and UNECE in sustaining dynamic cooperation among National Statistical Offices in the region and requested the Secretariat to integrate its efforts in the field of training, capacity building and statistical data sharing. The Council appreciated IDB's proposal stated at the 1st Meeting of National Statistical Offices (18-19 January 2008, Tehran) regarding its commitment to cooperate with ECO in statistics and welcomed IDB's further actions to focus on the needs based capacity building of Member States, after ECO had identified 1-2 training courses as well as the countries, which would benefit from these trainings.

272. The Council noted with satisfaction the Secretariat's initiative to consider the FAO's potential technical assistance in establishing ECO's statistical database on agriculture. It also noted the possibility of establishing a joint working group of National Statistical Offices of ECO and SESRIC. The Council endorsed transportation cost of up to US$750 per participant of ECO's three non-UNECE members such as Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, in joint ECO-UNECE events be expedited from the SSF.

273. Upon Azerbaijan's suggestion, the Council requested the Secretariat to issue a Comprehensive Summary of ECO Member States' country profiles during 2009, to comply with reviewed international practices.

274. The Council noted the need to use the ECO SSF for the ECO meetings in statistics, projects and economic research to comply with the previous practices.

275. The Council adopted the Calendar of Events/Meetings of the PERS Directorate for 2009-2010.

(g) Inter-Regional ECO Activities:

(i) ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions:

276. The Council reiterated its earlier recommendation that the non-signatory Member States should sign the Charters of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Institute and requested the signatory Member States to ratify the Charters at the earliest.

- **ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)**

277. The Council appreciated the activities undertaken by the ECI during 2008 and urged ECI, to extend its activities to the entire ECO region, in particular expand its programmes in member states that contributed to its budget.

278. The Council stressed the need to further activate the Institute in mandated fields and additional areas of interest to Member States. It suggested a more realistic and pragmatic approach to carry forward ECI activities particularly in the area of electronic Media.

279. All concerned Member States were requested to take necessary steps to ensure timely remittance of their contributions to ECI's budget.

280. In order to strengthen institutional linkages between ECI and the decision-making bodies of the ECO, the Council recommended to the CPR to consider establishment of a Committee of Representatives of ECI Member States to meet regularly to consider and decide issues relating to ECI on behalf of BOT. Pending the establishment of the committee, the Council requested the CPR to deliberate ECI matters on bi-monthly basis.

281. The Council appreciated the decision of HLEG meeting endorsed by the 3rd BoT meeting in Islamabad regarding establishment of an ECO Cultural Trust Fund. The Council appreciated Iran's generous contribution of US$ 2 million and requested the concerned Member States for similar support.

282. Following the 1st ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism held in Tehran, October 19 - 20, 2008, the Member States were given three month time to complete and return the questionnaire prepared by ECI for publication of the first ECO Tourist Guide-Book. The Council urged Member States to complete and return the information in English, including supportive documents (photos, maps, drawings, etc). The Council urged the ECI to expedite publishing the final version of the ECO Tourism Guide book.

- **ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB)**

283. The Council appreciated that ECO Trade and Development Bank had commenced its operations. For member states to take full benefit of the Bank's operational products, the Council urged all non (bank) Member States to join the Bank as early as possible.

284. The Council emphasized expeditious setting up of the ECO-TDB Representative Offices in Iran and Pakistan.

285. Taking into account the bank's requirements for accurate, reliable and updated data on economic, industrial and trade sectors, the Council requested ECO member states to identify focal points to address the bank's requirements.

- **ECO College of Insurance (ECO-CI)**

286. The Council requested the College of Insurance to circulate necessary information to the Member States and the ECO Secretariat regarding academic sessions, general information, recognition of degrees within the region and outside, linkages with the regional and extra regional institutions as well as scholarship programmes offered to students from member states. The Council recommended that the website link of the ECO College of Insurance containing the above information be placed on ECO website for easy accessibility by member states.

287. The Council requested Member States to send their best students to the ECO College of Insurance and to fully avail the 10 graduate/under-graduate scholarships offered by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Council recommended to ECO College of Insurance to avail/obtain funding from IDB scholarship fund for providing further scholarships to students from ECO Member States.

288. The Council recommended that the BoT of the ECO College of Insurance be constituted expeditiously in accordance with the new statute adopted by the 17th COM and urged the member states to recommend prominent academician for the BoT.

289. The Council recommended that ECO College of Insurance organize short-term training courses and workshops in the field of Insurance and Actuarial Science and seek funding for organizing these courses and workshops from IDB, other IFIs and donor agencies.

- **ECO Consultancy and Engineering Company (ECOCEC)**

290. The Council noted the absence of the representative of ECO-CEC from RPC deliberations and called on the Secretariat to ascertain the causes of the absence and inform the CPR.

291. The Council called on Member States to accord priority to ECO-CEC while awarding contracts for projects financed from ECO resources.

- **ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI)**

292. The Council appreciated the proposal for establishing ECO-CCI Women Entrepreneurs Network by setting up a new website, during the first half of 2009, and urged Member Sates to extend full cooperation to the ECO-CCI.

293. The Council noted with appreciation the establishment of five ECO-CCI Committees on Trade Facilitation, Industrial and Investment Cooperation, Transportation, Tourism and Arbitration and requested Member States to extend invitations to these Committees for participation in relevant meetings.

294. The Council noted with appreciation the launching of the ECO CCI. The Website (www.ecocci.com) and the integrated Trade Portal.

- **ECO Science Foundation (ESF)**

295. The Council urged concerned Member States to convey their comments/approval of the draft Rules of Procedures, Staff Regulations as well as budgetary formula prepared by the ad-hoc Secretariat of ECO Science Foundation within two months of the RPC.

296. The Council urged Pakistan to announce dates for holding the inaugural meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ESF in the second half of 2009.

297. The Council appreciated Iran and Pakistan for pledging US$ 100,000 and US $ 1 million respectively to the ECO Science Foundation Fund and requested other Member States to make financial contributions to the Fund. The Council also requested the ECO Secretariat and the ad-hoc ESF Secretariat to approach international donor agencies and IFIs, including IDB, for funding the foundation and its activities.

- **ECO Educational Institute(ECO-EI)**

298. The Council welcomed that ECO Educational Institute was in the final stages of being set up and the Republic of Turkey would host the First meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ECO-EI in 2009 preceded by an Experts Group Meeting.

(ii) International Relations

299. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretariat to promote relations with international and regional organizations and UN bodies and urged further enhancement of relations to get more support, technical and financial, for ECO projects. The Council urged member states to support the Secretariat on ongoing projects/programmes with international/regional organizations.

300. The Council noted with appreciation the adoption, with consensus of the Resolution on ECO-UN Cooperation by the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly in December 2008.

301. The Council appreciated the enhancement of ECO's cooperative relations with the FAO and UNIDO and the appointment of their Representatives in Tehran as Permanent Representatives to the ECO Secretariat.

302. The Council welcomed the signing of MOU between ECO and the Conference on Interaction and Cooperation in Asia (CICA) and urged the Secretariat to finalize the work programme for enhancement of cooperation as mentioned in the MoU.

303. The Council noted with appreciation the reactivation of relationship with the World Economic Forum/Davos and emphasized arranging ECO events on the sidelines of the WEF on priority areas such as Transport, Trade, Energy and Environment.

304. The Council endorsed Model B of the draft Modalities for the Establishment of ECO Regional Centres, prepared by the Secretariat, ***(Annex-V)*** and forwarded it to the CPR for final approval at its next meeting.

Agenda Item No.7
The ECO Calendar of Events for 2009-2010

305. The Council took note with appreciation of the report of Secretariat on the implementation of Calendar of Events for 2008-09 on the basis of which the rate of implementation of calendar for the events having exact date and venue reached 82 percent as against 74 percent in 2007. It was also acknowledged that the average number and level of participation of member states in various ECO meetings have been increased.

306. The Council while emphasizing the need for continuation of upward trend in the implementation of the Calendar of Events, approved the ECO Calendar of Events for 2009-2010 ***(Annexure-VI)*** with the following observations:

i) As per decision of the 17th COM meeting, each member state should host, at least, two ECO meetings a year from the first priorities in the calendar. The Council asked the Secretariat to follow-up implementation of this decision.
ii) The date and venue of all meetings/events would be fixed within three months of the 19th RPC meeting.
iii) In order to avoid rush of events towards the end of the calendar year, the member states might plan the activities evenly throughout the year. If the date and venue of the meetings/events in the calendar were not determined by October, these should either be shifted to the next year or dropped from the calendar with the approval of the CPR.
iv) The Secretariat should establish a close relationship with NFP's in different sub-sectors well in advance of meetings so that the requisite documents/working papers and necessary information about events/meetings could reach them in time, keeping in picture the respective Missions of the member states in Tehran and the MFA of Iran.

Agenda Item No.8
Any other business.

307. Expressing sympathy for the defenceless citizens of Gaza in Palestine and urging the world community to provide humanitarian aid to the warn-torn people in order to avert a human catastrophe, the 19th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council recommended to the Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO to allocate US$ 50,000/- from the ECO Feasibility Study Fund to provide Gaza people with food and medicine.

Agenda Item No. 9
Date and Venue of the next Meeting.

308. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 20th RPC meeting in January, 2010. Exact dates will be communicated through diplomatic channel.

Agenda Item No.10
Adoption of the Report.

309. The Report of the 19th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No.11
Vote of Thanks

310. On behalf of all the participating delegations, the Council expressed its appreciation and thanks to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for making excellent arrangements for this important meeting.

311. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council thanked the Chairmen of various Review Committees for successfully conducting the business of their respective Review Committees. It also appreciated the efforts made by the Secretary General and his staff for preparing comprehensive Working Papers and other documents for the Council.