



Report of the 2nd Meeting of ECO Ministers of ICT

(Baku, 5th December 2017)

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The 2nd Meeting of the Ministers of the ICT of the ECO Member States was held in Baku on 5th December, 2017. The Meeting was attended by high level delegations from the ECO Member States, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan. The ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by the Secretary General attended the meeting. A high-level delegation from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC) also attended the Meeting. The list of the participants is placed at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No.1

Inauguration of the Meeting

2. His Excellency Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, Secretary General of ECO, expressed sincere thanks to the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting this important meeting in Baku and for the excellent arrangements. Welcomed all distinguished Ministers and other esteemed high-level delegations to the 2nd ECO ICT Ministerial and thanked for their valuable participation. Expressed confidence that under the able stewardship of Mr. Ramin Guluzade, the Honourable Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of Republic of Azerbaijan, the meeting will achieve its aspired goals. Expressed hope that this long-awaited ministerial meeting will provide the valuable opportunity of having distinguished Ministers and also high-level ICT officials of ECO region with a view to provide them with a progress report and seek their guidance on the way ahead. Further he stated that this meeting will consider and decide on the report of the Senior Officials Meeting, held on 4 December, 2017, on how to proceed to the Strategy and Plan of Action of ECO ICT Sector. The Strategy and Plan of Action have been prepared based on the observations and recommendations of the studies conducted with the assistance of ITU, as the implementation status of the mandates provided by the 1st Ministerial Meeting to comply with the ECO Vision 2025 which was approved in the course of the ECO Summit, held early 2017 in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Secretary General expressed gratitude to the Secretary General of ITU and his dedicated staff, especially Mr. Brahima Sanou, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau and Mr. Kemal Huseinovic, Chief, Infrastructure Enabling Environment and E-Applications who have spared no effort to support ECO. A copy of the statement is attached as **Annex-II**.

3. His Excellency Mr. Ramin Guluzade, Honourable Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, welcomed the participants to Baku for 2nd Ministerial Meeting on ICT. He informed about different projects of regional importance put in place, e.g. Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan pipeline, the new railway “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars”, inaugurated recently in October, 2017 which connects Europe and Asia. He further stated that the Government of Republic of Azerbaijan is investing in North-South transport corridor in collaboration with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, namely construction of Rasht-Astara railway segment to complete the “missing link” along the Corridor. The Hon’able Minister referred to Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) as a major project in the field of ICT connecting Asia and Europe. He further stated that

communication has become one of the top priorities of the government of Azerbaijan. He informed that a presidential decree has been approved for ICT development. He stated that in order to enhance the productivity of SMS an application has been setup. He expressed with satisfaction that Azerbaijan was ranked 65th place among 176 countries in the development of ICT by ITU. Informed that 80% population of Azerbaijan is active user of internet. He called for the need of multilateral agreements in order to increase cooperation among ECO members in ICT. At the end he expressed hope that this meeting will serve as a platform in increasing cooperation among ECO member states in the field of ICT.

4. Mr. Zhao, Secretary General of International Telecommunication Union (ITU), thanked the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for providing opportunity to participate in the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on ICT. He stated that ITU and ECO are very important partners and have been engaged recently in preparation of two studies. First study was to identify the needs for development of ICT and Telecommunication infrastructure connectivity, policy and regulation regimes and ICT services in the ECO Member States. The second study focused on information society services, assessing the level of adoption of ICT in the fields of education, health and agriculture. He informed the meeting that this study has revealed that four out of 10 ECO member states have approved national e-health strategy and two member states have approved national e-learning strategy. However, none of the ECO countries have approved e-agriculture strategy. He strongly recommended that ECO country may continue to strategically apply ICT in digital economy. The Secretary General informed the meeting that FAO has signed an agreement with ITU in September, 2017 in New York, in order to strengthen cooperation and seek expertise of the latter. He also mentioned that in ITU conference, held in October in Buenos Aires, the UN Secretary General termed ICT as a powerful tool to achieve every single Sustainable Development Goal. He further stated that it is our collective responsibility to provide benefits of ICT to all segments of the society. He termed the ECO vision 2025 as a new roadmap for future cooperation among ECO member States for inter-regional connectivity, especially in terms of telecommunication. He underscored that ECO is strategically important to connect Asia and Europe and north to south. He termed ICT as the backbone of digital economy. At the end the Secretary General expressed intention to further deepen cooperation with ECO Secretariat and ECO member states.

Agenda Item No.2

Statements of Ministers/Heads of Delegations

5. H.E. Mr. Javad Azari Jahromi, the Honourable Minister of Communication & Information Technology, Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed gratitude to the government of Republic of Azerbaijan for warmest hospitality and hosting the 2nd ICT Ministerial meeting. The Hon'able Minister also appreciated hard work of ECO Secretary General for providing excellent analysis and report for approval of the Ministerial meeting. The Hon'able Minister stated that this Ministerial meeting has provided an opportunity to get acquaintance with indigenous capabilities and products of the ECO region. He further stated that this meeting also provides us the opportunity to join hands to plan bilateral, multilateral and region cooperation for joint product design and manufacturing, joint service offering and joint network planning and development. The Hon'able Minister while highlighting the importance of ECO region emphasized that the total population of ECO region is approximately 500 million and total GDP of ECO region exceeds 5 trillion US\$. He emphasized upon the need to strengthen regional cooperation towards broadband digital economy. He stated that Iran is ready to act as focal point

in achieving goals mentioned under pillar 6 and 7 of the action plan of strategy document. He emphasized that a detailed framework is required for each pillar and expressed readiness to cooperate with ECO in this regard. A copy of the statement is attached as **Annex-III**.

6. H.E. Mr. Ahmet Arslan, the Honourable Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs, and Communications, Republic of Turkey paid gratitude to the government of Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting the event. He expressed appreciation for ECO Secretariat for producing comprehensive strategic document. He dilated upon that joint infrastructure projects and improving trade between countries is essential for the prosperity of ECO region. He emphasized upon exchange of knowledge/expertise on ICT between ECO member states. He highlighted the recent developments in the field of ICT in Turkey. He further informed the meeting that in 2017 the Government has allocated 94.3 billion Turkish Liras for information and communication technologies. He informed that there are approximately 77 million mobile subscribers in Turkey. He informed that the Law on universal services to avoid digital divide has been promulgated. He also stated that the government has equipped schools with broadband internet connection. The Government has delivered 10,000 devices to visually impaired people. He stated that Turkey is one of the first countries to take measures on cyber security and has established a cyber security council for this purpose. He underlined the great importance of TASIM project in the context of ICT and expressed Turkey's satisfaction with the project. He pointed out that fiber network between countries of the ECO region is very limited and has low bandwidth. He termed TASIM is the key to solve these problems. He also expressed hope that TASIM will increase e-trade volume among counties in the ECO region, which is one of the important goals of the 2025 strategy paper.

7. Mr. Nurudin Mukhitdinov, the Director General of Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications thanked ECO Secretariat for inviting RCC for this meeting and informed the meeting RCC is taking actions on establishing information society in CIS countries. He highly assessed regular exhibition of Bakutel being organized by the government of Azerbaijan sharing developments in ICT sector.

8. The representative of Republic of Kazakhstan informed the meeting that Digital Kazakhstan programme has been designed for the period 2018-2022. The programme includes five main directions: digitalization of economic sectors; transition to a digital state; implementation of the digital Silk Road; development of human capital; and creation of an innovative ecosystem.

Agenda Item No.3

Consideration of the Draft Report of the SOM

9. Mr. Elmir Tofiq oğlu Velizadeh, Deputy Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting held on 4th December, 2017 gave an overview of the proceedings of SoM, important recommendations and draft of Baku Declaration.

Agenda Item No.4

Adoption of the Report/Outcome Document

10. The meeting adopted the report as drafted by the SOM meeting, held on 4th December 2017. The Meeting also adopted the Baku Declaration with slight amendment. The Meeting mandated the ECO Secretary General to assure effective implementation of the decisions of the Ministerial Meeting as reflected in the Baku Declaration and the Report of the Meetings. A copy of the SOM report and the Baku Declaration are attached as **Annex-IV & Annex-V**, respectively.

Agenda Item 5

Vote of Thanks and closing of the Meeting

11. Under this Agenda Item, the participating delegations expressed their profound appreciations to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for excellent arrangements for the Meeting and exemplary hospitality extended to the participants. The delegations appreciated the ECO Secretariat for efficiently organizing the Meeting.

12. The Chairman announced closing of the meeting.
