

**Statement by Ambassador Khusrav Noziri,
Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization
at the 13th Governing Board High-Level Meeting
Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM)
*Tehran, February 23, 2023***

**Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,**

I am privileged to represent the Economic Cooperation Organization in this important meeting. I express my profound gratitude to the host authorities for inviting me and making excellent arrangements to facilitate the participating delegates in the splendid city of Tehran. I would also like to thank the management of the Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) for providing necessary assistance to organize this vital event.

The establishment of Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) at Tehran in 2002 is historic and a milestone achievement under a joint initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the UNESCO.

As we are well aware, the sustainable water management is essential to conserve and protect the existing water resources which are limited on the earth. To meet such a benevolent goal, the extensive water partnership is highly recommended with a view to making fair distribution of water resources for our joint welfare, wellbeing and co-existence without compromising the sustainability of central ecosystems.

We appreciate the efforts, activities and achievements of the RCUWM in promoting and facilitating the relevant studies, researches, projects & programs, capacity building, partnerships and networking at regional and international levels. However, given the sensitivity of growing water issues coinciding with the problems emanating from, inter alia, over-population, climate change and environmental challenges, the RCUWM role is becoming increasingly crucial for efficient water management in the region.

Distinguished Participants,

Let me recall that the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is one of the oldest intergovernmental regional economic forums, bearing ten member countries under the umbrella of its cooperative framework. Expanding over 8 million square kilometers of land, connecting the north to south, south and east to the west, Asia to Europe and Eurasia to the Arab World, the ECO Region shelters almost half a billion inhabitants.

The founding and fundamental goal of the Organization is to promote supportive working conditions and create conducive environment for collective progress and prosperity in the region. Relevantly, the Organization is engaged in a variety of activities, diversifying the areas and scope of its cooperative agenda for an inclusive and multifaceted regional development.

The optimized utilization of natural resources, especially water, remains on top of ECO agenda of regional cooperation. The ECO Member States have long been collaborating on water management issue. We are also in process of establishing the ECO Center of Excellence for Efficient Water Utilization for Agriculture, expecting early and favourable outcomes to this end.

Based on the ECO Vision 2025 and in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the ECO is ardently pursuing its development targets through the adoption of prescribed standards and criteria to improve the relevant regional infrastructures. Within this context, we are trying to ensure consolidated and effective national and regional policies in close coordination with and participation of all ECO Member States, as well as in collaboration with our regional and global partners.

The ECO believes in an integrated, well-coordinated and harmonized approach for governance of regional water resources. We support all those initiatives which are aimed at efficient and optimal water utilization, given the fact that the water remains all-time's greatest need and requirement for the continuity of our existence. In this regard, the ECO Secretariat welcomes the RCUWM and any proposals to work on joint regional projects, programs and mechanisms for developing an integrated system to ensure efficient water management in the region.

In conclusion, I am confident that this interactive and thoughtful gathering would yield productive outcomes for making further advancements as per aims and objectives of the RCUWM.

Thank you all.