



**Statement of the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri
at the Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Transit Cooperation
among Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan,
Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan
Tehran, Iran, 9 October 2022**

**Your Excellency Mr. Rostam Gasemi,
Minister of Transport and Urban Development of the Islamic
Republic of Iran,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Having the pleasure and privilege to attend this very important Ministerial Meeting, I am sincerely grateful to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for inviting and giving me the opportunity to speak on the important issue of transit and transport regional cooperation.

It is very heartening to see the esteemed Ministers of Transport of the Region have gathered here to take further steps for enhancing and strengthening connectivity in the Central Asian region. This momentum particularly in our Region encourages us to work harder on the existing initiatives and projects of connectivity in the ECO that contributes directly to the declared targets of this important Meeting.

Taking into account the growing importance of regional transport and transit cooperation, 2022 has been announced by ECO as a Year of Strengthening Connectivity at the suggestion of the honourable President of the Republic of Uzbekistan made during the last 15th ECO Summit held in Ashgabat on November 28, 2021.

The emerging challenges of the Era of Pandemics cannot be overcome without collective and regional cooperation, particularly strengthening integrated regional markets and supply chains and promoting transport and digital connectivity.

The connectivity policy of ECO has always prioritized Corridor Approach over isolated initiatives and in developing the infrastructure, inter-regional and international connectivity has been a guiding principle. In this connection, infrastructure development has remained one of the main priorities of the Organization and, to this end; various regional and inter-regional connectivity projects have been successfully implemented, namely:

- Completion of missing links and establishment of Almaty - Bandar Abbas and Almaty - Istanbul Rail Corridor;
- Establishment of Kazakhstan - Turkmenistan - Iran Railway Corridor;
- Completion of missing links and establishment of Islamabad - Tehran - Istanbul (ITI) Rail and Road Corridor;
- Establishment of the Kyrgyz Republic - Tajikistan - Afghanistan - Iran Road and Rail Corridor;

The two following road corridors are also in the initial phases of establishment within the ECO framework:

- Kyrgyz Republic - Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan - Iran Road Corridor (KUTI);
- Tajikistan - Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan - Iran - Turkiye Road Corridor (TUTIT).

The ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) is the main regional legal instrument that covers almost all components of transport and regulates the cooperation of the Member States through its Coordination Council and the technical committees.

Apart from the studies on the specific corridors, I deem it appropriate to inform this august house that the Secretariat has also conducted two major studies titled “ECO Railway Network Development Plan” and “ECO Road Network Development Plan” that have identified all regional connections as well as missing links in the ECO region with estimation of investment needs. These studies are ready for consideration of the international financial and aid institutions as well as banks for possible investment and development assistance.

The study projects, conducted by the ECO Secretariat, have sorted out the opportunities, challenges and bottlenecks of connectivity in the region and provided a pool of knowledge and bankable data for the international community.

Excellences,

I am confident that outcome of the deliberations in this Meeting will effectively contribute to better understand the global progress towards sustainable transport and connectivity for Central Asia and also help us plan a better and prosperous future.

In conclusion, I would like to, once more, express my gratitude and appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting and making necessary arrangements for successful organization of this important Ministerial Meeting.

I thank you all for your attention.