

**Statement of Amb. Khusrav Noziri, the ECO Secretary General
at the 25th Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers
*UN HQ, New York, September 21, 2023***

**The Honourable Chairman,
Your Excellency Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Honourable Ministers and the Heads of Delegation,
Distinguished Participants,**

Good afternoon,

It is an exceptional privilege and honour for me to join you at this 25th Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in New York.

As you are kindly aware, this informal interaction, which is organized every year on the sidelines of UNGA Sessions, remained interrupted due to the COVID-19 outbreak in December 2019. However, after a 3-year pause, we have been able to organize this important meeting with strong ambition and mutual efforts of the Member States that have been very kindly facilitated by the Republic of Azerbaijan as the current ECO Chair.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Bayramov and his entire team in Azerbaijan and here at the UN for organizing this meeting under an immense pressure and busy schedule. Moreover, I am highly grateful to all the Honourable Ministers and the Heads of Delegations for ensuring their participation in the meeting despite their hectic and busy program.

Excellencies,

In recent years, the role and visibility of ECO have appreciably enhanced, especially in the regional and global context of issues and developments. To this end, I am grateful to all our Member States for their increased interest in ECO and support to the Organization for achieving greater regional integration. I would like brief you on some of our important activities being made to implement our mutually development economic agenda.

Particularly this year on our agenda, we have several important and high-level events. Held on January 24 in Tashkent, the 26th Meeting of the Council of Ministers witnessed an all-inclusive participation of honorable ECO Foreign Ministers. The event yielded some quite productive outcomes, including the Tashkent Communique as a strategic document aimed at providing continued guidance and directions to the Organization. We at the ECO Secretariat are working to ensure smooth implementation of COM decisions and recommendations through a policy-based and an action-oriented plan.

I further avail this opportunity to recall that the Republic of Azerbaijan is set to host and organize the 27th COM Meeting on October 10 in Shusha. We, in close collaboration of our Member States, are in process of preparing the event's outcome documents, including, inter alia, the Draft Shusha Declaration to be considered for adoption by COM. The meeting in Shusha will provide us another opportunity to have our Honourable Ministers gathered once again, leading the Organization towards more progress and development.

Besides, the 16th ECO Summit is scheduled for November 9, 2023 to be hosted by the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. The biennially organized Summit event provides us a unique opportunity to receive invaluable guidance of ECO Heads of State/Government in connection with consolidating the ECO aims and objectives based on our shared regional values and interests.

Other significant sector-wise interactions in 2023 include some important ministerial events. The 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Information and Communication Technology, the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Health and the 4th Meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General have already been successfully held this year. In addition, tomorrow Baku will host the 6th Meeting of Council of National Library Directors and our 5th Ministerial Meeting on Tourism is scheduled for October 5 in the Ardabil city of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the ECO Tourism Capital for 2023. Moreover, the ECO Ministerial Meetings on Transport, Finance, Environment, Energy, Disaster Risk Management and Agriculture are also scheduled to be organized in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Excellencies,

Under the chairmanship of Azerbaijan led by His Excellency Bayramov, the ECO proclaimed 2023 as the “Year of Green Transition and Interconnectivity” in the region. The concept of year-wise titling in the ECO has been quite effective and encouraging to help create more conducive and supportive working environment in the region, especially in the pursuit of our broader objectives in trade, transit transport, tourism, energy, economic growth and social welfare sectors.

The Secretariat has an increased focus on further acceleration of our regional development efforts. To this end, we maintain our commitment, consistency and progress, with special consideration to ECO’s action-based and project-oriented approach in line with the aspirations of ECO leadership.

A significant progress has been achieved towards the implementation of different ECO projects and mutually agreed legal frameworks; in particular, the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), ECO Agreement on Protection and Promotion of Investment (APPI), ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), ECO Regional Electricity Market and ECO Clean Energy Center, as well as a number of other important initiatives taken to address challenges in agriculture, food security and building resilience against natural disasters.

In addition, and given the fact that our region has a huge but untapped tourism potential in terms of historic and natural landmarks and many UNESCO heritage sites, some important programs and projects to boost the quality and infrastructure of regional tourism have been developed. An updated detail of our programs and activities will be presented in my annual report to be submitted to the 27th COM in Shusha.

Here I am pleased to recall that on August 25, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, by consensus, a revised biennial resolution on “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization”. The document is composed of, inter alia, a comprehensive vista for strengthening ECO cooperation with the UN system aimed at supporting the ECO progress in certain regional development sectors.

This year is also special for us as it marks the 30th Anniversary of the ECO-UN relationship and the ECO Observer-ship in the UN General Assembly granted in October 1993.

I would also like to recall that tomorrow on September 22, at this same venue and time, the 15th ECO-ASEAN Joint Ministerial Meeting is scheduled. The most awaited event, last held in 2014, will discuss and take into the fresh prospects of ECO-ASEAN cooperation, along with a Framework of Cooperation to be finalized soon between the two Organizations. The outcomes of this meeting are also expected to fuel our deeply desired objective for enhancing ECO visibility in the global landscape. We look forward to the kind participation of all our Honourable Ministers in this important meeting, making it an inclusive success.

Before concluding, I reiterate my gratitude to the Republic of Azerbaijan for organizing the informal meeting of our COM as well as for making arrangements to convene ECO-ASEAN tomorrow's event.

Thank you for kind attention.
