

Statement by
Ambassador Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General
at the 15th Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
September 22, 2023, UN HQ, New York

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Excellencies,

It is indeed a matter of great honour to address the 15th ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting which we have been finally able to organize after almost a nine-year interval.

I extend my deep felicitations and sincere gratitude to the honourable Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Lao People's Democratic Republic for reactivating and convening this important ministerial interaction.

I would also like to thank all the Honourable Ministers and the Heads of ECO-ASEAN Delegations, who have very kindly become part of this significant Forum despite their very hectic and busy schedules in New York.

This meeting is the fifteenth in series as the ECO-ASEAN Representatives held their last (14th) Joint Ministerial Interaction in 2014. We have gathered here to resume the pending deliberative process on ECO-ASEAN cooperative relations and the prospects of some joint activities and engagements based on the MoU signed by our two Organizations in 2006.

Excellencies,

Let me briefly recall that the ECO Region shelters almost half a billion inhabitants and expands over 8 million square kilometres of land, connecting the north to south, south and east to the west, Asia to Europe and Eurasia to the Arab World. Composed of some Caucasus, South, West and Central Asian countries, ECO is one of the oldest inter-governmental organizations. ECO, a diverse region, is profuse in natural and human resources, with 74 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

ECO has been engaged in some significant activities to promote regional cooperation and secure its development objectives, especially in trade & connectivity, energy, tourism, economic growth and social welfare sectors. Substantial progress has been achieved in these areas; 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 natural disasters.

Though our region is witnessing a very supportive progress in different areas and sectors, it needs to be further integrated especially in terms of trade and connectivity through creating strong intra- and inter-regional linkages for an accelerated, shared and sustainable economic growth and development.

Excellencies,

Bearing the efficacy of multilateral activism in mind, we are strongly determined and committed to promoting and expanding ECO's cooperative relations with its global partners. Relevantly, ECO attaches great importance to its partnership with ASEAN, looking forward to further consolidation of ties between the two Organizations. ECO considers ASEAN an inspiring and successful model of regionally integrated and globally active socioeconomic diplomacy.

ECO and ASEAN are mutually required to refresh and refuel their cooperative partnership, reviving some past experiences such as holding Joint International Trade Workshop, Tourism and Business Forum(s), launching professional exchange programmes, etc. In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed between our two sides years ago in 2006 needs to be updated with the inclusion of some more comprehensive and common economic approaches.

I am glad to note that the ECO and ASEAN Secretariats after long deliberation have finalized a Framework of Cooperation to implement the said MoU and submitted this important document to this Joint Ministerial Meeting for its adoption.

Here, I would like to recall that a previously scheduled meeting between ECO-ASEAN Tehran-based Ambassadors was postponed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We propose the revival of this meeting in Tehran as well as also in Jakarta for regular and smooth facilitation of ECO-ASEAN joint development initiatives.

Last but not least, a reciprocally granted full access to ECO-ASEAN websites can enable both sides to examine and study each other's projects, plans and activities, enlightening them about their exclusive exposures, skills and knowledge.

While reiterating my sincere gratitude to the ECO-ASEAN Chairing Countries for organizing this important event, I thank again all the respectable Heads and the Members of their delegations for kindly attending this meeting. I believe that our joint commitment and continued endeavours towards the consolidation of ECO-ASEAN partnership will secure more productive and mutually desired outcomes.

Thank you.