

**Remarks of the ECO Secretary General**  
**Amb. Khusrav Noziri on the occasion of ECO Day**  
*IPIS, Tehran, 11 December 2022*

**Your Excellency Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran,**  
**Distinguished Permanent Representatives of the ECO Member States,**  
**Excellencies, Ambassadors, Colleagues,**  
**Dear Guests,**

**Good Evening,**

It has been always a pleasure, privilege and honour to welcome you on the ECO Day celebration that actually falls every year on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

A while ago, I have received the message of felicitations extended by Honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran H.E. Dr. Ebrahim Raisi on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ECO Enlargement. I acknowledge His Excellency's kind message with deep respect and appreciation.

Extending my earnest gratitude to all the eminent guests for gracing this event and our festivity, I congratulate the esteemed ECO Member States and their distinguished Permanent Representatives for the permanence of their collaboration, unity and integrative approach as well as relentless support to the agenda of the Organization at CPR and all other relevant forums.

The gathering on this year's remembrance of the day is quite special for us as 2022 is marking the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ECO Enlargement that took place in the early 1990s. This was the time when the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as five Central Asian countries, including the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan joined the Organization and were warmly welcomed to the ECO family by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Türkiye.

This important development, reflected in the Treaty of Izmir - the founding document of the ECO, not only increased the membership of the Organization but also expanded the umbrella and scope of cooperation in the region.

Over the period, ECO has grown into a family and stood as a full-fledged regional organization with various regional institutions, affiliated bodies and three specialized agencies, including the ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Institute.

The establishment of ECO Trade and Development Bank in 2005 as financial arm of the Organization has been among the major achievements towards supporting trade and investment activities in the region. The Organization is keenly looking forward to Member States who have yet to join this important regional institution in the best of our collective interest.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

The ECO Region shelters more than half a billion inhabitants and expands 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. Composed of some Caucasus, South, West and Central Asian countries, ECO is one of the oldest intergovernmental organizations. Total GDP of the region in 2021 stands at 1,7 trillion US Dollars.

Based on the principle of prosperity through connectivity and collaboration, main areas of cooperation determined by member countries to achieve social and economic development under ECO Vision 2025, include trade, transit transport, tourism, energy, economic growth and sustainable development as well social welfare in the region.

ECO has taken significant steps forward particularly in a bid to enhance regional trade and connectivity. A notable progress has been achieved to this end. Our special focus is to ensure the implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) for doubling intra-regional trade, and the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) for promotion and protection of investment in the region.

Moreover, the commercialization of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) Corridor, operationalization of Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Cargo Train, launching of Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Corridor, operationalization of ECO-ITI Road Corridor, establishment of rail and road network from Almaty to Istanbul and Bandar-Abbas, railway line between Afghanistan (Mazar-e Sharif) and Uzbekistan, and increasing number of Border Crossing Points among Member States have been milestone achievements since the enlargement of ECO.

Apart from that, ECO is involved in and working on several other important sector-wise initiatives that can play very effective role in joint socioeconomic development of the region.

These projects include (i) Regional Payment System; (ii) ECO Clearing Union; (iii) ECO Clean Energy Center; (iv) ECO Regional Electricity Market; (v) ECO Tourism Action Plan; (vi) Regional Consultation Mechanism for technical cooperation on communicable diseases; (vii) Regional Capacity on Intra-Regional Trade of Pharmaceuticals; (viii) Enhancing Capacity in the member countries to scale up disaster management framework for cascading risks and (ix) ECO Regional Program for Food Security for enhancing regional standardization cooperation.

## **Excellencies,**

Allow me to recall that, like other regions, ECO also underwent the impact of COVID-19 during 2020 and 2021, witnessing almost a halt in every field of activity. However, our oneness and continued exhibition of harmony steered us through the floundering time of crisis. We have gradually embarked on the process of recovery and recaptured the derailed momentum to gain on our ambitious targets set forth in the ECO Vision 2025 and the Treaty of Izmir.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the genuine efforts, actions, and contributions made by all of our Member States to support the Organization.

I also extend my sincere thanks to our present and past members of staff, as well as all distinguished previous Secretaries General, especially Ambassador Askhat Orazbay and my predecessor Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour who are kindly with us to grace the Day with their elegant presence. Their dedicated efforts and significant contributions for making the ECO an effective regional economic platform are acknowledged with deep appreciation.

I further avail this opportunity to felicitate the Republic of Uzbekistan for country's successful chairmanship of the ECO in 2022, and declaring the year as "Year of Strengthening Connectivity" in the region. The idea was amazingly impressive that appeared to lead us to a regular concept of year-wise titling in the ECO.

As the alphabetical rotation of ECO Chairmanship is completing this year, the Republic of Azerbaijan is kindly set to assume the Chairmanship of Organization for 2023, proclaiming the next year as the "Year of Green Transition and Interconnectivity". We warmly welcome Azerbaijan to lead the Organization in 2023 and believe that the ECO will make further advancements under their guidance.

Moreover, the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) and 33<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) will be taking place in the upcoming month of January. Both events are quite important and believed to secure more productive outcomes as per decisions of 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COM, and declarations made during 15<sup>th</sup> Summit within Ashgabat Consensus for Action.

### **Distinguished Guests,**

Given the shrinking space and competitive conditions across the globe, moving on with individual approaches and ideologies seems to achieve no sane aims. Promotion of multilateral cooperation is a key to ultimate success within the concept of regionalism. Getting where we aim and look for is very much linked up to our infinite integration.

Within this context, the ECO is also determined to promote its inter-regional and global relations. The commitment to enhance worldwide visibility of the ECO is reflected in our actions taken and being taken to

expand the international cooperative network of the Organization, making the existing partnerships more active and vibrant, as well as knotting some fresh ties with regional and international organizations, specifically the United Nations and its various agencies.

Our sustained endeavours and intact attention, with kind cooperation, assistance and guidance of the Member States, will keep us on track and drive us to the vital path of development, ensuring the accomplishment of our perceived targets in special consideration of ECO project-oriented and result-based approach.

I am also excited to announce that on this festive occasion, the Organization has released a Special Chronicle to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ECO Enlargement that prominently covers articles by honourable Foreign Ministers of the Member States. This exclusive edition is available here and can be obtained from the reception.

Before closing my remarks, I once again extend my sincere gratitude to the honourable Chief Guest and all other eminent participants for their kind presence and making the Day more eventful.

I would also like to acknowledge the commendable support of the Islamic Republic of Iran being host of the ECO Secretariat, and the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS) to provide this wonderful venue for organizing our event.

We have also arranged a Photo Exhibition to reflect some historical sequence and memories of the Organization. You are kindly invited to glimpse the ECO chronological pictures displayed here to make the evening more interesting and memorable.

Thanks for the kind attention.

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