



**Remarks by
ECO Secretary General Amb. Khusrav Noziri
On the ECO Day Occasion
*November 28, 2023, ECI, Tehran***

**Excellencies,
Distinguished ECO Representatives,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good Evening,

I warmly **welcome you all to our festive ECO Day** celebration. We organize this special gathering every year to mark and cheer the inception of the Economic Cooperation Organization on November 28.

On this joyful occasion, I extend my deep gratitude to all our esteemed **member countries - Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan** and their eminent representatives. I thank the Member States for their strong commitments to ECO and its mutually developed agenda for securing greater regional economic integration through closer cooperation at every regional and global forum.

The **Year 2023** has been notably important for us as we organized the 26th and 27th Meetings of ECO Council of Ministers in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, respectively, and the 16th ECO Summit in Tashkent along with many other significant events and activities.

The COM and the Summit meetings proved to be successful, yielding substantially productive outcomes to furthering and fostering regional cooperation in all socio-economic spheres. We were particularly pleased to see during the **16th ECO Summit** on 9th of November that our Member States are strongly committed to the mandate and goals of the Organization, and appreciate ECO as a relevant and valuable instrument for strengthening cooperation and collaboration in various sectors throughout the region.

Excellencies,

Since a comprehensive documentary on ECO and its activities has already been played, allow me to **briefly underline some of our current sectoral affairs.**

ECO has taken significant steps forward particularly in a bid to enhance **regional trade and connectivity**. Our special focus is to ensure the effective implementation of our most important legal frameworks, namely, the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) for doubling intra-regional trade, and the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) to attract investments to the region and enhance our share to global trade.

I believe that next year will mark a milestone towards achieving these goals with Iran taking over the chairmanship of the Organization in 2024 under the theme of “**Year of Enhanced and Resilient ECO Region through Expansion of Intra-Regional Trade**”.

As regards connectivity, our joint intention is to **develop and improve ECO transport road and rail corridors as well as enhance maritime and air connectivity in the region**. We believe that the recent designation of Samarkand and Gabala international airports as ECO Air Hubs will play important role in expanding air connectivity in our region.

Dear Guests,

Clean energy for green environment remains one of the most prioritized areas of cooperation in ECO, following our own ECO-friendly commitments as well as the global climate resilience efforts. With this positive approach, ECO declared 2023 as the “**Year of Green Transition and Interconnectivity**” in the region under the current Chairmanship of Azerbaijan.

The establishment of **ECO Clean Energy Center** jointly with UNIDO in Baku is a significant step towards enhancing regional cooperation for energy security and exploitation of renewable energy for sustainable development, along with our efforts to establish **ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM)** for efficient energy-based integration of the region.

I would also like to emphasize the significance of **High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation** with participation of international scientists and experts. Established on the initiative of Uzbekistan, this important forum will support us in addressing our climate-related issues and challenges.

Distinguished Participants,

ECO region is a home to great historic and natural landmarks, alongside 86 UNESCO declared world heritage sites. For maximum utilization of our tourism resources, we have developed important programs and projects to boost the quality of regional tourism by enhancing travel facilitation, services quality and multi-seasonal products. An **ECO Tourism Action Plan** has been designed in this regard.

In addition, the concept of **ECO Tourism Capitals** has been quite successful. So far, six cities of the region have been selected as ECO Tourism Capitals, including the Dushanbe City of Tajikistan (2020-2021), the Sari and Ardabil Cities of Iran (2022 and 2023), the Shahrizabz City of Uzbekistan (2024), the Erzurum City of Türkiye (2025) and the Shusha City of Azerbaijan (2026).

Excellencies,

We are strongly committed to deepening our ties with other regional and international organizations to ensure an accelerated accomplishment of our mutual development goals. In this context, a biennial **resolution on UN-ECO Cooperation adopted by UNGA** on August 25, 2023 will augment ECO's multidimensional relations with UN and its various Specialized Agencies. Let me recall that ECO has successfully completed 30 years of its observer-ship in the United Nations General Assembly, which was granted in October 1993.

Within the scope of expansion, I would also like to underscore the **significance of our Specialized Agencies**, including ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran, ECO Educational Institute in Ankara and ECO Science Foundation in Islamabad which always remain proactive in promoting our agenda of multifarious cooperation.

In this connection, I would like to welcome H.E. Dr. Saad S. Khan, who has recently joined ECO family in his capacity as the **new President of ECO Cultural Institute**. I wish him the best.

Established in 2005, **ECO Trade and Development Bank** is the financial arm of the Organization. We are making efforts to materialize and implement important regional development projects through our Bank.

Excellencies,

The **divine bond of affinities naturally connects the people of our region**. Their common cultural, historical and geographical values present a great source which can be exploited for our shared progress and sustainable development. ECO provides us a unique opportunity to work together for improving our present and building our future as a convoy of nations.

Having the constructive approach and continued support of our member countries, the Organization will not only expand but also **stand as a more effective, relevant and vibrant regional economic forum**, plowing ahead with its founding aims and objectives.

Finally, I would like to recall that ECO has been successfully maintaining a tradition of rewarding outstanding research work and achievement by biennial presentation of **ECO Awards** in the fields of 1) Economics; 2) History, Culture, Literature and Fine Arts; 3) Science and Technology; 4) Education; 5) Agriculture

and Environment. Recently during the 16th ECO Summit in Tashkent, these awards were presented to the eligible winners from the Member States.

While congratulating all the winners, we are privileged to have with us today, **Dr. Tayebe Mesbahzadeh** who is amongst this year's winners of our prestigious Award in the field of Agriculture & Environment. I invite her kind pleasure to come and receive the Award.

Distinguished Participants,

I avail this opportunity to deeply **appreciate all members of ECO Secretariat Staff** who always exhibit strong dedication and commitment to ensure smooth functioning of the Organization.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for providing unwavering support and facilitating us, as host of the ECO Secretariat. **Сипоси фаровон ба Эрон** - кишвари мизбон барои фароҳам овардани тамоми шароити мусоид чихати таъмини фаъолияти самарбахши Дабирхонаи Созмони ҳамкории иқтисодӣ дар Техрон.

I **thank all respectable guests** who have kindly graced this joyous occasion with their valuable presence and made the ECO Day more lively and colorful. I wish everyone a pleasant and fruitful evening in the ever busy but ever so beautiful Tehran.

While concluding my remarks, I have the honour to **invite you all to our photo exhibition and refreshing cocktails.**

Thank you.