

**Opening Remarks by  
ECO Secretary General Amb. Khusrav Noziri  
at the ECO-IOM Workshop “Combating Trafficking in Persons  
and Human Smuggling in the ECO Region”  
Tehran, ECO Secretariat, July 29, 2024**

**Ms. Ugochi Daniels, IOM Deputy Director General of Operations,  
Ms. Yummiko Ishikawa, UNRC a.i. in Iran,  
Ms. Lalini Veerassamy, IOM Iran Chief of Mission,  
Distinguished Participants,**

It is a privilege for me to address the opening session of this important international joint workshop on “Combating Trafficking in Persons and Human Smuggling in the ECO Region”.

First and foremost, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our guests from Member States and UN bodies who have joined us for this joint event.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their collaborative efforts in making this workshop possible.

**Distinguished Participants,**

According to the ECO Vision 2025, our goal is to establish regional law enforcement and police organizations/mechanisms to coordinate and support national, regional and international efforts in combating illegal drugs, human trafficking and other trans-regional organized crimes.

In alignment with this objective, ECO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2009. This MoU focuses on enhancing migration management expertise across the ten ECO Member States, which are also members of the IOM. Our MoU aims to:

- Strengthen cooperation mechanisms for labor migration;
- Reduce irregular migration;
- Raise public awareness of migration, health issues, and human trafficking;
- Initiate counter-trafficking activities;
- Promote voluntary return and reintegration options for migrants;
- Improve legal and policy frameworks;
- Support intergovernmental dialogue.

## **Dear Participants,**

Migration has always been a major concern for humanity and a key issue on the global policy agenda. It generates significant economic, social and cultural implications for both origin and receiving countries, making it a development challenge for nations worldwide.

International economic disparities, poverty, environmental degradation, the absence of peace and security and human rights violations significantly impact international migration.

According to the latest figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for 2020, there were approximately 281 million international migrants worldwide, representing 3.6% of the global population. This marks a 27% increase compared to 2010. Furthermore, this number continues to rise every day.

ECO region faces migration challenges similar to those seen around the world. Frequent changes in political, social, economic and environmental conditions have made the region both a source and a destination for many migrants.

Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Iran are key ECO Member States that serve as major destination, transit and origin countries for migrants in the region, whereas, Afghanistan remains a primary origin country from our region.

According to UN DESA data on migration stock in 2020, the ten ECO Member States collectively host around 18 million migrants, accounting for 6% of the global migrant population.

## **Dear Participants,**

Today, we will hear from the IOM about the trends and scope of trafficking in persons and human smuggling in the ECO region, including some success stories and best practices. Additionally, several Member States will share their experiences in combating these issues.

I am confident that the outcomes of this workshop will help us better understand the root causes of migration in the ECO region and provide new perspectives on tackling trafficking and smuggling. The exchange of experiences among Member States will be particularly valuable.

I want to emphasize that migration is a global issue that requires coordinated efforts to address its negative effects. ECO remains open to collaborating on migration-related activities with both our Member States and international partners like the IOM.

In closing, I thank you all once again. I am confident that our continued efforts will be both productive and in harmony with our shared goals.

Thank you.