



**Statement by**  
**ECO Secretary General Ambassador Khusrav Noziri**  
**at the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities,**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Railway Committee of the Transit Transport**  
**Coordination Council (TTCC)**  
Tehran, May 20, 2024

**Excellency Mr. Salehi, Honorable Deputy Minister of Transport and Urban Development and President of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Honorable Railway Officials of ECO Member States, Distinguished Heads and Representatives of International Organizations, Ladies and Gentlemen,**  
**Assalamu Alaikum,**  
**Good Morning,**

I extend a warm welcome to all participants attending the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities and 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Railway Committee of the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran.

I express gratitude to the esteemed Heads of Delegations from Member States and International Organizations for their participation.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

Today's meeting will review the progress made by the Member States since the last meeting in June 2019 in Dushanbe, focusing on development of the existing and future railway corridors, optimizing railway routes, completing rehabilitation and construction, and expanding ECO corridors to neighboring regions and enhancing regional interactions. The Meeting will also focus on various thematic areas including digitalization, harmonization, infrastructure development, international partnerships and future projects and activities.

Since our last meeting, substantial progress has been achieved in realizing the objectives set forth in the ECO Vision 2025, including the implementation of decisions from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meetings on Transport and the Turkmenbashi Declaration. Notable accomplishments include the resumption of ITI train operations and plans to extend its reach into Europe.

The Study on Commercialization of KTI Corridor was successfully conducted, leading to the establishment of the Corridor Management Mechanism (CMM). Financing for the Rasht-Astara railway construction has been secured, and an agreement between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan has been reached to establish the Aras Corridor.

Progress has also been made in the development of the KTAI railway corridor, with operational train services initiated between Iran and Afghanistan. Tajikistan has expanded its railway network, while Kazakhstan and the Republic of Azerbaijan have enhanced their railway operational capacity. Feasibility studies are underway to connect China through Kyrgyz Republic to Uzbekistan.

The establishment of two new multimodal corridors by the 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Transport, namely the Tajikistan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Türkiye Multimodal Corridor (TUTIT) and the Kyrgyz Republic-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Türkiye Multimodal Corridor (KUTIT) are also among new windows of opportunity for our landlocked Member States that will enhance economic benefits to the Central Asian region.

### **Eminent Delegates,**

The Secretariat has also taken various steps to further consolidate ECO's role in the international supply/value chain through institutionalized collaboration with its international partners like IsDB, UNECE, UNESCAP, OTIF and some other entities.

Furthermore, the ECO Secretariat, in collaboration with UNECE and the Islamic Development Bank, has implemented the Geographic Information System (GIS) to establish a comprehensive mapping database of transport infrastructure in the ECO region and beyond, thereby enhancing network efficiency.

The Secretariat has also consolidated its ties with OTIF by gaining Standing Observer Status at the Ad Hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation Committee of Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF).

However, various challenges such as the COVID-19, new geopolitical situations, climate change and the rapid technological advancement are redefining the transport routes and its function. Relevantly, we need to adapt ourselves to the new realities and get well equipped for an uncertain future by enhancing the resilience of railway industry.

Building upon our holistic approach towards development of transport and connectivity, we have to augment our efforts to multiply the connections, embrace new technologies, including artificial intelligence and digitalization and readjust transport industry to meet the climate challenges.

Apart from the economic and connectivity impact of the railway transportation, the relevance and importance of the rail mode is gaining more and more attention in light of its contribution to the global climate action and reduction of the greenhouse emissions and the preservation of the environment.

In this connection, the Secretariat has prepared and shared two new project concepts namely “Study on Electronic Information Exchange among Railways and Customs of the ECO Member States” and “Pre-feasibility Study on Digital Modelling for Advanced Railroad Construction and Maintenance of the ECO Railways” that will contribute to enhanced rail cooperation and reduction of environmental pollution in the long run.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

Although, significant regional infrastructure projects have been successfully implemented during the past three decades, a lot more needs to be done to accomplish the desired goals of connectivity. Some of the established corridors are still functioning below the planned capacity and need due attention and necessary arrangements for the required optimization.

The Tashkent Declaration, adopted during the 12<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport in November 2023, underscores the need for expanding and consolidating regional connectivity through both existing and newly proposed corridors. It also emphasizes the commercialization of corridors including ITI, KTI, TUTIT, KUTIT, KTAI, Pakistan-Central Asia, Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul, Trans-Caspian East-West, and Bandar Abbas-Almaty corridors.

In order to achieve the desired targets, a fresh policy approach along with commitment to much needed infrastructure development is required. The meeting is expected to address the existing bottlenecks, procedural and harmonization challenges and operational and tariff issues and propose effective solutions for enhancement of rail transit development and competitiveness of transit corridors in the ECO region.

### **Dear Participants,**

I am deeply optimistic that the deliberations during this significant meeting will serve as a catalyst for advancing regional railway connectivity in alignment with both the Sustainable Development Goals and the ECO Vision 2025.

With confidence, I anticipate that the decisions and recommendations formulated here will pave the way for a brighter future for our region.

Thank you for your attention.