



**Statement of ECO Secretary General H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri
at the 12th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport
*Tashkent, November 2, 2023***

**Excellency Mr. Ilkhom Mahkamov, Minister of Transport of the Republic of
Uzbekistan,
Honorable Transport Ministers of ECO Member States,
Heads and Representatives of International Organizations,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Assalamu alaikum,
Good Morning,**

It's a matter of immense pleasure for me to join you all at our 12th Ministerial Meeting on Transport.

I congratulate and thank the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Uzbekistan for making excellent arrangements to organize this important event and hosting us in the beautiful city of Tashkent.

Let me also express my deep appreciation for the valued presence of the Honorable Ministers as well as Distinguished Heads and Members of ECO Delegations in the meeting.

Availing this opportunity, I would also like to felicitate Uzbekistan for holding the First International Transport Forum of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, International Aviation & Logistics Forum as part of the 19th International Exhibition on Transport and Logistics - TransLogistica Uzbekistan 2023. I consider this development to be very significant and contributory to developing strong inter-regional connectivity and expanding access to global markets.

Excellencies,

In line with our **connectivity targets and UN Sustainable Development Goals**, we have remained focused on developing consolidated transport infrastructure in the region. The Organization has adopted a holistic approach entailing policy making, establishing legal framework, implementing internationally standard procedures and conventions, development of infrastructure, capacity-

building, technical cooperation, coordination mechanism and collaboration with our relevant international partners and financial institutions.

ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) is the major source of our connectivity efforts, covering maximum components of ECO transport expansion policy. Through a Coordination Council and Technical Committees, TTFA seeks to regulate and consolidate connectivity cooperation amongst the Member States.

Distinguished Delegates,

Connectivity for greater integration of the region is the basis of ECO framework for improved and advanced regional transport infrastructure. In this context, the proclamation of 2022 as “**Year of Strengthening Connectivity**” and declaration of 2023 as “**Year of Green Transition and Interconnectivity**” are the brilliant initiatives, respectively by Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan which reflect our Member States’ commitment to achieving expanded and improved transport and connectivity across the region.

In the given context, we have initiated working on the **Mechanism & Principles of Collaboration between ECO and Islamic Development Bank** in order for ensuring shared execution of some projects, along with the support of our other development partners. ECO Secretariat, Islamic Development Bank and the ECO Trade and Development Bank, during 13th HLWG Meeting on ITI Train held in June this year in Istanbul, agreed to establish a consultative framework for implementation of joint transport projects in the region.

Excellencies,

Within the framework of WP.5 (Working Party on Transport Trends and Economy of UNECE), the **ECO-UNECE Coordination Committee on Trans-Caspian and Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul Corridors** is actively engaged. The 2nd and 3rd Meetings of this important Coordination Committee, organized this year in Istanbul and Baku, had been quite productive, making cooperative advancements in relations between ECO and UNECE.

ECO Secretariat in collaboration with UNECE and the Islamic Development Bank has also operationalized the **Geographic Information System (GIS)**, which will create a comprehensive mapping database on ECO region’s transport infrastructure, and will help improve the existing networks.

Extension of the ITI Rail Corridor to Bulgaria is an inaugural project in ECO to create a railway linkage between the South Asia and Europe. With support of the Government of Pakistan, we expect materialization of regular train services between these important regions.

Resumption of **construction on Rasht-Astara and Khaaf-Herat railways, study on Kyrgyzstan-China railway as well as railway construction in Tajikistan** are some of the major developments that will further contribute to regional railway connectivity.

Moreover, the organization of **1st Meeting of HLWG on Tajikistan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Türkiye (TUTIT) Multimodal Corridor**, held this year on September 21 in Dushanbe, has opened a new window for regional and international interconnectivity.

Also, the establishment of **ECO-TIR National Associations Consultative Group (ECO-TIRACG)** jointly by ECO and IRU is a quite encouraging progress on account of our combined efforts to enhancing public-private partnership. This Consultative Group is believed to act as a much needed tool for a more constructive public-private partnership and contribute to further facilitation of supply chains and other transit operations in the region.

Maritime is another important area of connectivity cooperation among the Member States. In collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, ECO Secretariat has begun implementation of the **ECO Gate Project** which aims at linking the existing regional sea ports in the ECO region with ECO's landlocked and dry ports of transit countries. I may recall that ECO is, particularly, concerned for **bettering connectivity of our landlocked countries**. In this regard, we are collaborating with UNOHRLLS and other stakeholders, focusing on a comprehensive Action Plan.

Regional cooperation on civil aviation is also placed on our priorities for boosting air connectivity. The 10th and 11th Ministerial Meetings on Transport commended expansion of civil aviation cooperation, particularly by **establishing an air hub in the eastern part of ECO region**. In this regard, ECO Secretariat has circulated a relevant Concept Note for consideration of the Member States. The idea is to enhance regional air connectivity as well as promote trade and tourism in the region. A Meeting of ECO Private Airlines to be hosted by Pakistan is expected to enhance civil aviation cooperation in the region.

Excellencies,

Based on our previous tasks and mandates, the Organization made other important activities, including various connectivity-related meetings, webinars, workshops, trainings, etc. organized and hosted by esteemed Member States as well as by the Secretariat. In addition, the Secretariat also attended many international events during the period of 2022 and 2023 with a view to **increasing ECO visibility** and cooperative engagements with its international partners, especially for ensuring joint implementation of some important regional transport programs and projects.

I would also like to inform that **ECO was granted the status of Standing Observer in the OTIF's (Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail) Ad-hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation** in May 2022. This development will facilitate ECO's further involvement in international fora, enabling the development of regional rules and regulations on railways.

Excellencies,

The conditions developed during COVID-19 as well as the current global challenges transpire that limited modes of connectivity are not enough alone to meet our transportation requirements. This encourages diversification of routes and **adoption of a network approach** to ensure smooth accomplishment of our strategies and targets to remain increasingly connected even during challenging times. Network approach warrants the maintenance of our existing supply and transport corridors while developing alternative options to mitigate the impacts of border closures and other associated factors in the times of difficulties.

With rising opportunities, the region is also facing recurring challenges. The emerging conditions require **a more coordinated approach and enhanced cooperation amongst the ECO Member Countries**, combining our efforts for ensuring smooth and unimpeded progress towards developing a shared, sustainable and well-equipped transport infrastructure in the region.

Today's interaction is quite important as it gears up **to adopt Tashkent Declaration** along with Report of the Meeting. I am confident that the decisions and recommendations to be made by this august forum will refresh and refuel our determination and commitments to securing a more advanced, integrated and consolidated regional transport infrastructure.

Concluding my remarks, I would like to once again thank the Republic of Uzbekistan for generously hosting us. I also reiterate my appreciation for all the distinguished Heads and Members of Delegations for attending this important ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport.

Thank you all.
