

Statement by
ECO Secretary General Ambassador Khusrav Noziri
at the Ministerial Policy Dialogue on Our Digital Future
Tehran, 12 July 2023

**Excellency Mr. Eisa Zarepour, the Honorable Minister of Information and Communications Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I am very much pleased to participate in this Ministerial Policy Dialogue on Our Digital Future and gladly join His Excellency Minister Zarepour in welcoming you all to this important forum. I sincerely appreciate the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran for this excellent initiative and gathering high-level ICT representatives of the ECO Member States as well as from other important countries of the region.

Excellences,

The growing digital technologies entail attractive dividends but at the same time aggressive approaches. They are witnessed to rapidly transform human societies in unprecedented ways while bearing new opportunities and challenges. The situation requires enhanced multilateralism to collectively utilize the potential of ICTs for supporting our sustainable development objectives.

The role of digital technologies goes far beyond simply promoting greater access to the Internet and it covers many areas of social, industrial and economic domains of our societies. With the right blend of policies, investment in infrastructure and human capacity and cooperation among stakeholders, the ICTs can revolutionize fields as diverse as health and education, industry, energy, transport, governance, enterprises, agriculture, environment and so on.

Achieving these ambitions will require, among others, multi-stakeholder alliances involving governments, private sector, international organizations and citizen groups to build new models of collaboration around “ICTs and digital trends” and pool the knowledge for betterment of our peoples and societies.

To join the international efforts for digital cooperation, ECO Region can also play an instrumental role and contribute to development of norms and standards that serves regional and national priorities and values. In this connection and learning from our experiences, the ECO and neighboring countries may jointly take following steps to join the global mainstream on digital cooperation:

1. Establishment of multi-stakeholder research and consultation on digital cooperation to set clear metrics or standards for the inclusiveness of digital technologies and cooperation and also application of engineering and ethical standards and principles;

2. Establishment of Regional Digital Help Desks to help governments, civil society and the private sector to understand digital issues and develop capacity to steer cooperation related to social and economic impacts of digital technologies. Regional Help Desk could be led by ECO in collaboration with UN, ITU and regional stakeholders;
3. Consultation on laws and regulations to prevent negative effects and abuse of technological advances;
4. Consult and cooperate towards clear and transparent standards that will enable greater interoperability of data in ways that protect privacy while enabling data to flow for commercial, research and government purposes, and supporting regional integration and innovation to achieve the inclusive and sustainable targets.
5. Playing a constructive role in governing of the Internet and global digital architecture through establishing relevant platforms and means like consultative contact groups and multilateral mechanisms;

Excellences,

I am confident that with your extensive knowledge of the ICTs and professional background, this Forum will explore functional and practical methods of multi-stakeholder cooperation and will open new horizons for further development of our regions.

Once again, I avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran for this excellent initiative and the distinguished delegates for their kind participation.

Thank you.