

**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General
at the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Information
& Communications Technologies (ICT)**

Tehran, 13 July 2023

**Excellency Mr. Eisa Zarepour, the Honorable Minister of Information and Communication Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It honours and pleases me, indeed, to join you all at our 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on ICT. I congratulate the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran for excellent arrangements to host this important event in the beautiful city of Tehran. I also thank the distinguished heads and the esteemed members of the delegations for their kind presence here.

Excellencies,

You would kindly acknowledge the importance of ICT that hold a very prominent place in today's world being indispensably fundamental in all fields of human activities either personal or professional lives. In this era of rapid technological advancements, the need to make more collective, concerted and coordinated efforts for exploring and exploiting the potential advantages of ICT appears to be quite relevant and necessary.

Bearing this special context in mind, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is increasingly determined to fuel, facilitate and enhance regional ICT cooperation that can be extensively supportive to our joint endeavours for a shared and sustainable progress and prosperity in the region.

The emerging technologies and the developing trends in Industry 4.0 are reshaping the societal patterns and processes. The revolutionary developments in ICT sector line up diverse opportunities, paving ways forward for the continued human advancements.

While the developing countries continue to struggle for improving their ICT, the developed nations have made tremendous progress on this way touching the heights of technological inventions and innovations.

Here, I deeply acknowledge the contribution and efforts individually made by ECO Member States for their ICT development. However, the mutual ICT journey of ECO countries requires an accelerated pace with their enhanced coordination and more active collaboration to achieve the targets of ECO Vision 2025 as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Distinguished Delegates,

The 2025 ECO Regional Strategy for Information Society Development and its Plan of Action aim to, *inter alia*, promote sustainable connectivity, production and consumption patterns, socio-economic growth and favorable climate for stability, predictability and fair competition at all levels. Our Regional Strategy, jointly developed by ECO Secretariat and the ITU, has studied the region's status of ICTs in 2018 defining strategic targets for enhancement of digital connectivity and ICT cooperation amongst the Member States, including for:

- Integration of ECO regional ICT networks within global infrastructure of higher capacity;
- Development of national modern broadband infrastructure;
- Leveraging the substantial potential of digital trade (e-commerce);
- Delivering modern and interoperable ICT-enabled public services within ECO region;
- Development of ICT infrastructure and local digital content for public education;
- Establishment of regional interoperable e-health infrastructure and e-health services;
- ICT applications for agricultural development;
- Creating a safe and secure cyberspace in the ECO region.

Based on the given targets, ECO countries stepped forward to some various extents, needing adequate coordination for aligning their policies and directions to meet the ECO strategic objectives for joint ICT development in the region.

The ECO Secretariat organized two High-Level Working Group Meetings on ICT in 2021 and 2022 to discuss various ways and means of regional cooperation in ICT.

Moreover, in line with the policies made by the 2nd ICT Ministerial Meeting in 2017 at Baku, and in consideration of our Regional ICT Strategy as well as realizing the necessity and importance of a legal framework as a pre-requisite for any technical cooperation and interactions, the Secretariat initiated the process for establishing an ECO Regional Regulatory Framework which would initially act as the High-Level Working Group of Regulatory Authorities of the Member States. It will be focusing on coordination and synchronization of legal background of the ICT collaboration in the region. The Terms of Reference of the said HLWG were approved by the 2nd ICT Working Group in 2022. Its functioning would require full support of the Member States and their active participation for the formulation of its policies and plans.

The Secretariat has further prepared and circulated the Terms of Reference for Studying the Regional Fiber Optics Networks. We are in process of negotiations

with relevant institutions for securing necessary finance to implement this important project.

The new technological developments and trends require our common approaches to be reviewed and upgraded to meet the emerging ICT demands. Relevantly on the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Secretariat is working to analyze the implementation rate of the 2025 ECO Regional Strategy for Information Society Development, which will enable us to develop a renewed and updated Strategy for the post-2025 period.

Dear Participants,

Today, we have gathered to review the ECO ICT activities and exchange opinions on building a mutually productive line of action to support regional advancement in ICT sector.

I am confident that our interactive discussions would lead us to some more meaningful and result-oriented directions in the pursuit of our strategic aims and objectives for development of and synchronizing regional ICT sector.

Thank you with best wishes.