

**Report of the 15th Meeting of
ECO Project Monitoring Group (PMG)
(June 14, 2021)**

**Part-1
Summary Report/Mid-Year Review on
ECO Projects Status**

Summary report is presented by the end of reporting year. Although Mid-Year Review has not been in regular ECO practice, rather a quarterly review; the following is the summary of project key performance indicators through their comparison to previous period of 2019 for the purposes of review PMG Meeting.

**ECO projects by status of implementation and sectors
(as of 24 of November 2019)**

No	Project Title	Completed	Ongoing	Proposed Projects	Total
1	Trade and Investment (T&I)	1	1	3	5
2	Transport and Communication (T&C)		6	4	10
3	Energy, Minerals and Environment (EME)		4	1	5
4	Agriculture, Industry and Tourism (AIT)		2	10	12
5	Human Resources and Sustainable Development (HRSD)			4	4
6	Project, Economic Research and Statistics (PERS)	3	1	2	6
7	ECO Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan		1		1
	Total	4	15	24	43

Source: 14th PMG Report

**ECO projects by status of implementation and sectors
(as of 14 June 2021)**

No.	Directorates	Completed	Ongoing	Proposed projects	Total
1	Trade and Investment (T&I)	2	6		8
2	Transport and Communication (T&C)	5	2	7	14
3	Energy, Minerals and	1		6	7

	Environment (EME)				
4	Agriculture, Industry and Tourism (AIT)	2	4	3	9
5	Human Resources and Sustainable Development (HRSD)	1		1	2
6	Tourism, PM, PJC, EAPA		1	4	5
7	Economic Research and Statistics (ERS)		1		1
	Total	11	14	21	46

Source: 15th PMG Meeting

By **Mid-Year 2021**, as compared to end of year performance in **2019**, the number of completed overall projects in ECO has increased at 64 percent rate.

Summary of key project performance indicators, 2019-2020

<u>KPPI*</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>Increase/Decrease (%)</u>
<u>Project quantity (overall number)</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>12.2</u>
<u>Project completion rate</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>20.0</u>
<u>Project progress rate</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>40.0</u>

Summary of project performance indicators, 2019 vs. Mid-Year 2021

<u>KPPI*</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Increase/Decrease (%)</u>
<u>Project quantity (overall number)</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>6.5</u>
<u>Project completion rate</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>42.9</u>
<u>Project progress rate</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>42.3</u>

Summary report is based on account of projects endorsed for implementation in 2021 by 31st Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council Meeting (January 12-21, 2021). List of projects is based on projects and proposals endorsed in ECO Work Programme 2021 by the 31st Regional Planning Council Meeting of ECO held on January 12-21, 2021 at ECO Secretariat in virtual mode.

Part-2 Report of 15th PMG Meeting

The 15th Meeting of the PMG was held on June 14, 2021 under the chairmanship of ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour to consider project proposals in the core activity areas of the Organization. The ECO Deputies Secretary General, Ambassador Jandos Asanov, Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli and Mr. Kanan Nazarov as well as the relevant directors, along with their Programme/Research Officers attended the meeting to make briefings on their areas of activity. The Representatives of the Embassies of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Islamic Republic of Pakistan (virtually) and Republic of Uzbekistan participated in the meeting.

2. While welcoming the participants, the **Secretary General** formally inaugurated the meeting, referring ECO's fresh approach to be more project-oriented. Quoting CPR's mandate for preparation of concrete proposals in regard to the project proposals, he drew PMG's focus on Small Sized Projects (SSP) to ascertain appropriate recommendations for consideration of next CPR, particularly aimed at expanding the scope of Small Sized Projects. He added that while some of the medium and large sized projects were implemented in the year 2020-2021, the Secretariat also executed seven (7) small sized projects out of the total ten (10) as per 24th COM's decision in this regard. If agreed by the participants, the Meeting may also discuss the extension of the scope of Small Sized Project to pre-feasibility and feasibility studies as 31st Meeting of RPC proposed, elaborating on the concept of such projects to be able to make reasonable suggestions to the next CPR for inclusion of these projects in the list of Small Sized Projects for the year 2022.

3. The **Head of the Project Management Section** briefed the participants about overall progress on ECO projects. ECO's project performance has been in line with recommendations of *Antalya Communiqué* (24th Meeting of ECO Council of Ministers, 8-9 November 2019, Antalya). The ECO project performance indicators for reporting period are positive. She stated that Project Management Section did not present mid-year figures in the past, but for the purposes of this meeting, the figures show positive trends if compared to year 2019, for which we have past records, and also, because the reporting period has not finished yet. As per increase/decrease, which characterizes the change in percent of growth in overall number of ECO projects as compared to 2019, it is positive. She also briefed the participants that project compilation rate as discussed is also encouraging, registering seven (7) percent, project progress ratio records 26 percent, which is positive and, in terms of seeing these figures versus the year 2019, these showed a positive increase. She concluded that project completion rate increased by 42.9% and project progress ratio by 42.3% by mid-year, 2020-2021.

4. The **Secretary General** underlined that the projects' execution rate had remained positive as progress in implementation of the decision of the 24th COM based on results, which is in proportion of 7 out of 10 mandated projects which have been implemented in 2020-21. Following the CPR and COM's decision in this regard, the ECO is believed to secure more efficient and effective outcomes, he noted.

5. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** suggested that the projects' Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and overall progress as mentioned by the Head of Section i.e. 42% may be reflected in the executive summary and figures shown in document. He further stated that KPI be explained in details in the document, so that they can reach and understand the overall KPI performance indicators.

6. **Director (Trade & Investment)** briefed the Meeting about two (2) Small Sized Projects, which have been completed: i.e. (i) "Study on the Impediments in the implementation of ECO's Trade Tools and Measures to Resolve" and (ii) "ECO Regional Payment System (ERPS) Feasibility Study Phase-I".

7. **The Secretary General**, giving his views on the project "ECO Regional Payment System (ERPS) Feasibility Study Phase-I", briefed that this completed project's main mechanism is to facilitate the selected commercial banks in ECO region and to make a network to balance their payments in local currency. The project allocated the amount of US\$ 3000/-. He further briefed that this project was also discussed and endorsed by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) as well as the Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy hosted by Tajikistan. The Ministers considered/supported the project also in their joint Declaration.

8. On the second small sized project, i.e. "Study on the Impediments to the implementation of ECO's Trade Tools and Measures to Resolve", the **Secretary General** briefed that the amount allocated for this project is US\$ 9000/- and the main aim of the project is to provide three (3) main documents i.e., (i) mechanism to resolve dispute, if any, on the implementation of ECOTA; (ii) MoU amongst the Member States on this important agreement to be considered by the next ECOTA Council for signing; and (iii) a major framework for removal of non-tariff barriers (Trade Facilitation Agreement). He further briefed that this document was also considered by the Ministers of Economies and Finance and they supported the project and sent it to the Ministers of Trade for discussions. He also stated that this would be a major item for the next ECOTA Council, and results of this project would be the main thing among the discussion items for ECO Ministers of Trade.

9. The **Chairman of PMG** Meeting sought the views of Member States on mentioned two Small Sized Projects in T&I Directorate. The Meeting appreciated the T&I for implementation of projects and endorsed them.

10. **Director (Transport & Communication)** highlighted the latest developments with regard to five completed projects, mainly, medium-sized and large ones.

11. While appreciating the TC Directorate for their work and performance, the **Secretary General** sought the focus of meeting on small sized completed projects. He mentioned that there was one completed small sized project under Transport and Communications Directorate i.e. "Resumption of the ITI Container Train's Regular Operation". He appreciated that this project had no burden on the Secretariat as regards cost of the project since its cost is covered by en-route Member States i.e. Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He stated that this is the good example to focus on particular framework, which is easily implementable. He also suggested small correction in Page (3) of the Small Sized Project documents, using the wording "For the reason that this project has entirely been contributed in-kind by the en-route countries i.e. Islamic Republic of Iran, the

Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, such concerted efforts helped skip a funding request.

12. The **Chairman of PMG Meeting** sought the views of Member States on mentioned SSP in TC Directorate. The Meeting appreciated the TC Directorate for implementation of the project and endorsed it.

13. **Director (Energy, Minerals and Environment)** stated that there were seven (7) projects under his directorate, two (2) of them Small Sized and five (5) are mid-scale and large-scale projects. Regarding the two Small Sized projects; (i) "Preparation of ECO Energy Strategy"; and (ii) ECO Phase Change Materials Project", he stated that the ToR of ECO Phase Change Material project are under development.

14. **Director (Energy, Minerals and Environment)** briefed the participants that regarding "ECO Energy Strategy", last ECO Action Plan for Energy Cooperation was prepared twelve years ago and after a long gap and lot of changes in regional, global energy landscapes and implementation of ECO Vision 2025, the Secretariat prepared and initiated project and to hire three Specialists from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan, who have vast expertise in this field. He mentioned that work on this project started in March 2021 and first submission of the relevant document related to this project has already been shared with the Member States who are reviewing the Energy Strategy with its implementable action plan. He stated that start of this project was not a concept part only, it has also implementable action plan and the up-coming Ministerial Meeting on Energy would adopt the new Energy Strategy with Action Plan.

15. As per complete Small Sized Project titled "ECO Energy Strategy", the **Secretary General** stated that this is very interesting project, having combined efforts by the interested Member States and recruited three (3) consultants, which is headed by one Consultant from the Republic of Azerbaijan. He stated that strategy provided by the consultants would be discussed in the next SOM of the Ministers of Energy Meeting scheduled to be held on June 22, 2021 and it will be considered by the Ministers of Energy on June 24, 2021. He mentioned that this would be a roadmap for another initiative which is a long-term project of "Establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre" (CECECO). To that effect, he said that this project linked with other components regarding the other aspects of the energy and it would be cornerstone as highlighted by the Director (EME) for energy cooperation in the region.

16. The **Chairman of PMG Meeting** requested the views of Member States on mentioned Small Sized Project in EME Directorate. The Meeting appreciated the EME Directorate for implementation of the project and endorsed it.

17. **The Director (Agriculture and Industry)** informed about the two (2) completed Small Sized Projects i.e. (i) "Establishment of Standardized ECO Network of Slaughter Houses and Reference Laboratories: and (ii) "Support to the Development of Organic Agricultural Production Certification and Market Integration". He also briefed that A&I Directorate already shared the result of the project titled "Support to the Development of Organic Agricultural Production Certification and Market Integration" with the Member States. He informed the Meeting that both projects were done by highly qualified experts. He also said that

Ministerial Meeting scheduled to be held in Uzbekistan in August 2021 and during that Meeting the result of the above mentioned projects would be shared with the Ministers.

18. As per progress on the project titled “Establishment of Standardized ECO Network of Slaughter Houses and Reference Laboratories, **the Secretary General** informed that all these Small Sized Projects either supported by Sectoral Ministerial Meetings or by Regional Planning Council or by initiation of the Member States through Secretariat’s Directorates themselves. The Secretary General stated that the above-mentioned project was highlighted in the meeting of the Heads of Veterinary Organization and supported by the last Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture. The cost of this project amounting to US\$ 10,000/- and Secretariat hired an expert from the Republic of Azerbaijan and inputs received from the Specialist would be shared soon with the Member States. The second completed Small Sized Project titled “Support to the Development of Organic Agricultural Production Certification and Market Integration” was also proposed in the last Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture that tasked the Secretariat to work on this idea. He mentioned that ECO Secretariat hired an eminent Turkish Specialist, who work with FAO and will finalize and wrap up this project for consideration of the Member States. The cost of this project is also US\$ 10,000/-. He instructed the A&I Directorate to finalize the project at the earliest and share with the Member States to have enough time to elaborate and discuss during the scheduled Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Uzbekistan in August 2021.

19. The **Chairman of PMG** Meeting sought the views of Member States on mentioned two Small Sized Projects in A&I Directorate. The Meeting appreciated the A&I for implementation of projects and endorsed them.

20. **Programme Officer in charge (HRSD)** briefed the meeting about the small sized project titled: “Intra-Regional Capacity in Trade of Pharmaceuticals in the ECO Region”. He stated that the capacity of intra-trade of pharmaceuticals in the ECO Region is about US\$10 billion but currently it is US\$1 billion, only. For this project, ECO Secretariat hired the services of Specialist, who is an eminent Iranian Professor on Nanotechnology of University of Tarbiyat Modarees, Tehran. The aim of this project is to evaluate the barriers and to suggest on a kind of model, in order to increase and take advantage of the trade entailing from the pharmaceutical production and make harmonization of the regulations. The amount allocated to this project is US\$ 8500/- and the project started and finished, on time, and the project has already been highlighted during the Ministerial Meeting on Health on June 2, 2021 and the Final Report of the project has been shared with all the Member States, based on the suggestion by the Secretary General. After receiving views/comments from the Member States and in the cooperation with interested Member States, a Task Force Group would be established to review the findings and discuss the model for ECO, as proposed by the Specialist. He informed the meeting that the establishment of such a mechanism approved by HLEM on Health and endorsed by 2021 Health Ministerial Meeting hosted by Islamic Republic of Iran

21. The **Secretary General** stated that this project is to link pharmaceuticals industry in ECO region. He further stated that this issue would resolve Standard Generalized Framework, which normally followed international institutions to facilitate the interested Member States to work properly and make network on this important area, which has two aspects i.e. trade and humanitarian aspects.

22. **DSG (TC, HRSD & CFU)** briefed the meeting that the draft has already been prepared and that the draft agreement would be shared with the Member States and, in future, it would be agreed among the Member States on the establishment of ECO Medicines Agency.

23. The **Chairman of PMG Meeting** sought the views of Member States on the mentioned Small Sized Project in HRSD Directorate. The Meeting appreciated the HRSD for implementation of the project and endorsed it.

24. Regarding the implementation of the Small Sized Projects, the **Secretary General** briefed that there are two tools available for the implementation of these projects i.e. (i) private sector, for example, ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry and, after finalization of these projects by Member States, and agreeing upon implementation, these projects need financial support and for that purpose, the private sector should be consulted; offer those projects to ECO-CCIs in which they show interest and, provide inputs for their early implementation; and (ii) implementation of these bankable projects through ECO Trade Development Bank (ETDB), and if for that purpose a source of discussion is required with the Board and President of the Bank, these projects would be shared with the Board of Governors (BoG) and ECO Member States to give mandate to their Representatives of the Board to support the projects. In this regard, he highlighted that ECO should rely on its own resources like the ECO Chambers of Commerce and Industry and ECO Trade and Development Bank.

25. The **Chairman of the PMG Meeting** moved to the second topic for 15th PMG Meeting and requested the ECO Directorates to brief the meeting on Under Consideration Small Sized Projects.

26. The **Director (Transport and Communications)** informed the Meeting about the overall seven (6) Proposed New Projects i.e. (i) "Development of economic corridor along ECO KTI Railway Corridor"; (ii) "Needs-based financial and technical assessment for installing the transshipment facilities, instruments and tools in Taftan Railway"; (iii) "Establishment of a common gateway among ECO-Countries-ECO Gates" (iv) Establishing direct air flights among tourist destinations within the ECO region" and (v) Establishment of ECO regional fiber optic network", (vi) "Establishing direct air flights among tourist destinations within the ECO region". The above new proposals have been stated in line with the topic of the discussion, i.e. "New proposals and proposals for pre-feasibility and feasibility studies".

27. Regarding project titled "Needs-based financial and technical assessment for installing the transshipment facilities, instruments and tools in Taftan Railway", the **Secretary General** apprised that Taftan-Zahedan is very important for en-route countries. He stated that the cost of study of this project may be shared by them, having one Specialist nominated for the assessment with the consent of both countries, stressing on the very much bankability of this project which is beneficial for cargo trade between Taftan-Zahedan, enabling an easy and timely arrival of the cargo at their destinations in ITI Corridor with speedy access/connection between the three Member States.

28. On the project titled “Development of Economic Corridor along ECO KTI Railway Corridor”, the **Secretary General** briefed that this project is initiated on the proposal of the honourable President of Turkmenistan to create and develop Economic Corridor in two phases i.e. (i) commercialization of the corridor and (ii) development of economic corridor. He instructed the TC Directorate to seek Pakistan’s expertise on this kind of economic corridor, considering that the country had already acquired a lot of relevant experience in CPEC.

29. Regarding project titled “Establishment of ECO regional fiber optic network”, the **Secretary General** said that this Small Sized Project was also recommended in the last TC Ministerial Meeting that needs a detailed study, especially as fiber optic network go along with Transit Corridor. He also suggested consultations with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, recalling that they already expressed interest in the project.

30. Another important project i.e. “Establishment of a common gateway among ECO-Countries-ECO Gate”, the **Secretary General** described that this bankable project, ECO Gate, is in line with the interest of the ECO landlocked countries. Relevantly, he proposed that the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkey and Islamic Republic of Pakistan may work on first phase of study to finalize this idea as establishment of gateway is very much beneficial for the ECO Member States in terms of economy boost.

31. On the project titled “Establishing direct air flights among tourist destinations within the ECO region”, the **Secretary General** stated that this idea was strongly supported during the last Ministerial Meeting on Tourism and also Ministerial Meeting on Transit Transport, in especial consideration to boost the tourism in ECO region.

32. **DSG (TC, HRSD & CFU)** briefed the meeting regarding the project i.e. “Development of economic corridor along ECO-KTI Railway Corridor”. He said that signing of an agreement on Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran (KTI) between these three countries was quite necessary, adding that the ECO Secretariat corresponded with these three Member States in order to sign the said agreement and start implementation of the project proposal to make this route as Economic Corridor. Regarding another project “Establishment of a common gateway among ECO countries”, he suggested that this is one of the important projects in ECO region and due to this project dry ports may be linked to the sea ports of the ECO region and it will give access to land-locked countries to the international waters. He also gave reference to the Meeting of the Heads of Maritime Organization, in which the Heads of delegations requested the ECO Secretariat to increase the allocated amount of project from US\$ 25000/- to US\$ 50000/- and requested the CPR to consider and approve it.

33. **Director (Trade and Investment)** highlighted the latest developments with regard to the two (2) Small Sized Projects, namely, (i) “Study on preparation of the guidelines for the establishment of ECO Regional Network of SEZs in the ECO Member States; and (ii) “Study on preparation of the Road Map for formulating a Comprehensive Action Plan among the sovereign Wealth and National Development Funds (SW/NDF) of the Member States.

34. On the Project “Study on preparation of the guidelines for the establishment of ECO Regional Network of SEZs in the ECO Member States”, the **Director (Trade and Investment)** briefed the Meeting that for the above mentioned two Small Sized Projects, the T&I Directorate prepared the ToRs for hiring the services of the Specialist. He stated that this project is to promote ECO Regional Value Chains (RVCs) and augment investment climate within ECO Region for the investors from the ECO region as well as other regions of the world. He said that 30th RPC Meeting gave the mandate to hold the “First Meeting of the Heads of Special/Free Economic Zones of the ECO Member States which was realized on 17 December 2020 for setting up a network of Special Economic Zones in the ECO region to develop guidelines for the formulation of networks of the selected SEZs in prioritized sectors in the ECO region based on comparative advantage as envisaged in ECO Vision 2025, which may have symmetric investment policies and procedures and incentives for investors from the region.

35. The **Director (Trade and Investment)** further informed that the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy also supported the initiative of establishing a network among selected SEZs of the ECO Member States to develop and ensure an enabling environment for free flow of goods and capital aimed at trade diversification and competitiveness leading to the creation of Regional Value Chains (RVCs) and their connections to Global Value Chains (GVCs), which will foster technology, transfer, skill development, new jobs creation and poverty alleviation in the region. The cost of the project is US\$ 8000/-, duration of the project is three (3) months and project’s starting time is 2021. He said that the development of the regional guidelines for the establishment of ECO Regional Network of SEZs to strengthen among ECO Member States would be as follows: (i) create a synergy in investment policies and procedure of the Member States; (ii) identify selected sectors and zones on the basis of their comparative advantage and incentives for investors from the region and outside; (iii) strengthen private sector cooperation and businesses to increase trade in the region; and he also stressed that: (iv) with greater investment, the region may achieve much needed diversification to contribute to the global economy in a more productive manner and ensure socio economic development in the region.

36. Regarding the project titled “Study on preparation of the Road Map for formulating a Comprehensive Action Plan among the Sovereign Wealth and National Development Funds (SW/NDF) of the Member States” **Director (Trade and Investment)** briefed the Meeting that, during the 30th RPC Meeting, a consensus amongst the Member States, was reached that the “First Meeting of the Heads of National Development and Wealth Funds and sovereign Wealth Funds in the region should be held and, that the ECO can invest via trade financing in the projects from those funds so that ECO develops infrastructure in the region through these funds which will be regional projects. First Meeting of the Heads of National Development and Wealth Funds of the ECO Member States was held on 17 December 2020. In this meeting, Heads of the National Development Fund decided that on the basis of bankability or commercial profits these projects can be financed from these funds; and that there would be a networking of these funds and that not only the feasibility but the infrastructure development projects would be funded. In that meeting, the Heads of the National Development Funds, also tasked the Secretariat to prepare a “Road Map” to institutionalize a comprehensive joint action plan among the SW/NDFs of the Member States for implementing regional development projects

prioritized by the Member States. He said that this task was taken up by the ECO Secretariat and prepared some action plan because this meeting hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran and their relevant authorities working together with the ECO Secretariat and the Directorate is in the process of developing the ToRs in consultation with the Islamic Republic of Iran and it expects that this Small Sized Project of US\$10,000/- will be completed in 3 months.

37. Regarding the two (2) projects from the Directorate of Trade and Investment, **Secretary General** suggested that in the first project, ECO Secretariat recommended that the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan or one of the central Asian countries may look after this project and nominate a Specialist to design the networking amongst the Free Trade Zones in that region, having his/her expert views on it vis-à-vis trade and rules of origin from Afghanistan and export industrial countries under the law with very minimal rates of tariffs and benefiting from the experiences of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Regarding the second project, the Secretary General suggested that the mechanism for enhancing intra-regional investment is in focus. He mentioned that this project must be under a framework of bankability.

38. On the project titled “Feasibility Study on Manufacturing and Marketing Opportunities for Promotion of the Sustainable and Advanced Phase Change Material-based Renewable Energy Technologies (ECO-PCM), **Director (Energy, Minerals and Environment)** briefed the meeting that this project was supported by the last RPC Meeting and included in the Work Programme 2021. He further stated that EME Directorate already developed the ToRs and, accordingly, decided that the ToRs have two dimensions: (i) Marketing dimension; and (ii) Scientific dimension by applicability/implementation by Phase Change Management by using Solar Energy and storage of energy. He stated that the up-coming Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Renewable Energy Sources scheduled to be held in fourth quarter of this year needs active participation of the ECO Member States to ensure their strong support for this project.

39. **Programme Officer (Tourism)** informed the Meeting about the three (3) Small Size Projects titled: (i) “ECO Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development; (ii) “ECO Tourism Routes and Packages” and (iii) Tour operators’ chain and connectivity. Regarding “ECO Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development, she stated that high potential of tourism sector can be a powerful tool for the regional development and that it can stimulate new economic activities, bearing positive impact on the economies of the countries/communities of the Member States.

40. **Programme Officer (Tourism)** said that to focus on these aims, the objectives of ECO Vision 2025 have to be achieved and therefore this project has been prepared in line with important and concerted common systematic approach and the actions amongst the Member States are essential between public and private stakeholders to cooperate and work in harmony to achieve the expected outcome of the ECO Vision 2025. She said that meaningful cooperation can strengthen linkages between private and public sectors amongst the Member States and efforts amongst public and private sector together to secure results/outcomes of this project. She further stated that ECO Member states instructed the ECO Secretariat to prepare an action plan, the draft ToR of the project have been prepared and the feedbacks from Member States have been started and 5 out of 10 Member States have sent their replies and the

Secretariat has initiated the preparation of the Draft ECO Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development for convenience and it is in progress. She further said that after completion of preparation of the Action Plan, the consultancy will be initiated depending on the comments and views of the Member States, to improve the document and its objectives and requirements. The proposed list of specialists is being compiled in the meantime and a group of consultants from volunteer Member States will be selected, to fulfill the study, in coordination, to enhance its efficiency.

41. Regarding the other project titled: “ECO Tourism Routes and Packages”, the **Programme Officer** stated that the main goal of the project is establishing a network among major tour operators in ECO region for providing ECO Tourism Package that would be useful for increasing numbers of tourists and tourism revenues. On the project titled: “Tour operators’ chain and connectivity”, she said that the main objective is establishing a network among major tour operators in ECO region for providing ECO Tourism package that would be useful for increasing numbers of tourists and tourism revenues, achieving a high level of professionalism within the tour operators, developing sustainable tourism industry in the ECO region. She further mentioned that these two projects which have not been initiated yet are under stage of proposals.

42. **Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, Project Management & Judicial Parliamentary Coordination)** stated that it is important to implement the ECO Regional Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development which is a challenging task in the area of tourism. He further stated that the planned events in Dushanbe (Republic of Tajikistan) and in the Islamic Republic of Iran have been postponed but implementation of the objectives/goals in the area of tourism is very important especially in the pandemic situation as the tourism area in ECO needs restoration as well as advancement.

43. Regarding ECO Regional Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development, the **Secretary General** instructed that a skeleton of Plan of Action be prepared and shared with the Member States for their views/comments. He added that in the next stage, ECO should decide either to recruit a Specialist or not. The Secretary General also suggested the extension of invitations to the Member States and Experts of the field of Tourism through Webinars for securing their experiences.

44. Regarding the two Small Sized Projects i.e. “ECO Tourism Routes and Packages” and Tour operators’ chain and connectivity”, the **Secretary General** reminded that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat started negotiations with major tour operators i.e. TURSAB in the Republic of Turkey. He reiterated that if such negotiations continue, TURSAB may introduce with the Secretariat one of their major tour operators who is involved in regional tour operations. Secretary General also suggested the merger of these two projects to make it one, adding that TURSAB may nominate a good expert and provide with an idea regarding the creation of a platform of tour operators in the ECO region led by TURSAB while other agencies may join the process.

45. Regarding “Tourism Visa”, the **Secretary General** stated that it may be added as a feasibility study project not the bankable project.

46. The **Secretary General and Chairman of PMG Meeting** sought the views of Member States on Small Seized Projects which are under consideration. In the absence of any objection, the meeting supported the list of under consideration SSP and mandated relevant Directorates of the Secretariat to continue working on and prepare relevant ToRs in line with the direction of 31st RPC and relevant Sectoral Ministerial Meetings.

47. **The Secretary General** then moved to the third topic under discussion of 15th PMG, giving his views on pre-feasibility and feasibility study proposals for the year 2021. He mentioned that the ECO projects' progress implementation rate appears to gear up reaching 26%, whereas it was around 4% three years ago. He emphasized to move forward with the Organization's project-oriented approach as adopted by 24th COM in Antalya. He narrated that if the Secretariat's proposal regarding expansion of small-sized projects' scope is agreed by PMG, the Secretariat will undertake some feasibility study projects in due course. He explained that ten small-sized projects would be executed within the cost of one Mid-sized project, recommending the meeting to consider the given proposal. He mentioned that feasibility and pre-feasibility studies in the form of Mid-sized project might take longer time to implement. He stated that this kind of approach regarding Small Sized Projects is a new method in any international organizations now which is called a fast track approach that was also supported by COM. He stressed the meeting to consider the proposed approach, recommending the next Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to expand of the number and the scope of small sized projects along with pre-feasibility and feasibility studies. He also requested the Member States to share their views on this issue.

48. Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** reiterated his earlier position in the matter that was expressed during the 253rd Meeting of CPR, adding that during the PMG's Meeting he was not in a position to officially support or object as regards expansion of scope of small sized projects and any authorization to the Secretary General in this regard. He expressed his right to comment on the issue in the next CPR Meeting, explaining that his country was still elaborating in the matter. He assured of sharing his feedback once the response from their capital was received.

49. **Head of Section of the Project Management** informed that new proposals have been based on the Work Programme-2021, which includes these nine (9) new proposals and pre-feasibility and feasibility study proposals.

50. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** stated that after formal/in-writing receipt of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), progress achieved and progress on KPI/Statistics, it would be easier for their capital to further elaborate and give comment on the expansion of scope of projects and any authorization to the Secretary General in this regard. He repeated that this matter is still under consideration of their authorities, conveying his inability to make any objection or support to the idea at the moment.

51. On another issue in regard to the need to strengthening of the Project Management Section, on which the proposal was made by the relevant Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Asanov, the Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** raised a point of order and desired the PMG and the Secretariat to follow the

agenda of the meeting. He stressed that the above matter being administrative was not supposed to be discussed in this forum.

52. On this issue regarding staff in PMS Section, **Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, PMS and JEAPA)** stated that this was an established practice in other international organizations as well, and as such, not depend on one person to manage all these projects and the workload must be shared with another colleague. He said that the Secretariat should provide one “A” category staff to Project Management Section, as the workloads, activities of this section, Project Monitoring Group Meeting activities are also increasing day by day.

53. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** stood at his stance for formal/in-writing provision of the progress achieved on Key Performance Index (KPIs). He also asked the Secretariat to provide the status of ECO Earmarked Funds for the Projects. He further stated that the Accountancy Office might make a summary on project progress and availability of earmarked funds (in two columns), giving in writing comments at the earliest possibility.

54. In his concluding remarks, **the Secretary General** stated that this PMG meeting discussed positive approaches in ECO, and that all the Member States are very much supportive on the ideas to make ECO a project-oriented Organization, while the Secretariat and Member States worked together on such ideas, having support of the Ministers. The Members of the 15th PMG Meeting had the opportunity to review Small Sized Projects which are completed and also had the opportunity to review those projects that are under consideration. The Secretary General thanked the Representatives of the Member States for participation and, he also thanked all distinguished Deputy Secretaries General as well as Directors who worked hard to make priority goals and objectives feasible and implementable.
