

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark,  
Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Head of Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
In the 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council  
December 17, 2018, Tehran**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Honorable Secretary General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am very pleased to welcome all distinguished delegates participating in the 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization and wish you all a pleasant and memorable stay in Tehran. I would also like to extend my appreciation to H.E. Mr. Soleimanpour, the honorable Secretary General of ECO and his entire team at the Secretariat for coordinating and holding 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council.

**Distinguished participants,**

Unilateralism and unilateral economic actions and imposing sanctions against independent states are the most important challenges of our era, which led to global recession and low growth rate. We are concerned by rise in unilateral measures and disrespect to the international and multilateral commitments, which jeopardizing the global sustainable development. To address these challenges, we should strengthen the multilateralism. It's more than necessary for the countries in the region to promote and strengthen economic convergence to achieve a more prosperous ECO community via multilateralism. ECO as the oldest Asian regional organization is the best framework for economic and trade multilateral cooperation.

The Member States should work together to strengthen the cooperation in the Organization and enhance the efficiency and viability of the decisions and joint plans, in line with the goals set in the charter and "ECO Vision".

ECO Vision provides the perspective and necessary instruments for Member States to guide the activities in coming years. The "ECO Vision 2016-2025" is the main

agenda of the Organization in this decade. All Member States should commit themselves to the realization of the objectives set forth in this Vision.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,**

Although trade is one of the priorities of ECO, less than 8% volume of inter-regional trade remains modest. It is necessary that some realistic and practical trade facilitation mechanisms and frameworks be evolved to address the challenges and hindrances in the way of growth of inter-regional trade. In this line, we welcome the revisiting of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to make it compatible with the realities on the ground and make it inclusive to bring all 10 Member States on board.

ECO Trade and Development Bank and ECO Insurance are the most important agencies to facilitate trade in the region. It is necessary to find proper solutions for more involvement of their institutions in ECO projects and more contribution to the economic cooperation.

The development of a reliable and efficient transport network in the ECO region still will be a high priority in the decades ahead. Numerous projects with national or regional significance have been implemented or to be implemented. Some of these projects have huge positive impacts on removal of existing obstacles in transit transport in the region. Implementation of major regional agreements such as Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) has to be focused through concerted efforts of the Member States.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,**

We strongly believe that the private sector should be involved in all areas of cooperation such as trade, investment, industry, agriculture, social interactions and tourism. We need to encourage the private sector to participate appropriately in economic and commercial activities of the Organization. The private sector can play a central role in advancing innovation, creating wealth, income and jobs mobilizing domestic resources and these are activities that can lead, among others, to poverty reduction.

We acknowledge the key role of energy in economic growth and development, and are committed to expanding cooperation in this sector. The Islamic Republic of Iran has one of the world's largest reserves of gas and oil and is ready to contribute to global energy security as a long-term partnership, and to increase the capacity of international transit corridors through joint ventures in maritime, rail and road infrastructure.

We are of the view that there is a strong need for establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market and invite the Member States to take necessary steps for facilitation of this process.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been and remains committed to the objectives of ECO and will continue to support this Organization towards the achievements of its goals. This unreserved support stems from our firm belief that ECO and its goals provide a unique opportunity for the individual Member States and for the region as a whole to address potential challenges ahead and to foster the collective development strategies.

We will continue to provide the support and assistance in various sectors of the Organization, looking forward to a stronger and more enhanced cooperation within the ECO framework.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**