

Baku Declaration
For
Cooperation in Agriculture and Food Security in ECO Region
December 4, 2019 – Baku, Azerbaijan

We, the Ministers for Agriculture and Heads of Delegation, participating in the Sixth ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Baku on December 4, 2019, and guided by the Treaty of İzmir, the ECO Vision 2025, the Quetta Action Plan as well as recalling the Declarations adopted by the previous ECO Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture in Islamabad (2002), Antalya (2004), Tehran (2007), Baku (2008) and Antalya (2012); while

Recalling the objectives and tasks prescribed in the 13th ECO Summit declaration, as well as Dushanbe and Antalya communiqué;

Stressing on the pivotal role of agriculture as a driving force in the economies of the region for achieving food security, poverty alleviation, rural welfare and sustainable economic development;

Acknowledging the important role of the agriculture sector in development of the economy of the region, and the fundamental need for increased agricultural cooperation among the Member States;

Cognizing the significance of enhanced cooperation in addressing food security challenges at global and regional level and a regional approach toward safe, healthy and environment-friendly agri-food value chains;

Realizing the need for harmonized, science-based food safety regulations and requirements on the basis of international standards and formulation of mechanisms for achieving mutual recognition and certification in and outside the ECO region to catalyze agricultural growth and cooperation and to facilitate smooth trade;

Having the familiarity that reducing "food loss and waste" is beneficial for increasing food security; alleviating pressure on climate, water and land resources; and improving income for farmers, agri-food businesses and the household economy;

Reaffirming "food loss and waste" require a comprehensive food systems approach, covering all levels of the agri-food value chains; including prevention and awareness-raising, as a priority in policy development, in order to reach sustainable food systems;

Recognizing the importance of enhancing cooperation on the exchange of meteorological and hydrological data between ECO Members' national Meteorological or Hydro meteorological Services for preparation of early warning systems and management of natural disasters;

Underlining that water shortage for agriculture represents a global-regional challenge, and adequate as well as reliable access to suitable water for agriculture is vital for global food security and nutrition; and also **Knowing** that water management needing to be integrated and inclusive, requires coordination and strategies adapted to all levels of water governance enhanced dialogue, collaboration, coordination and policy coherence;

Having cognizance of the need to promote agro-trade and investment in the ECO region and active role of the private sector in agricultural production and trade, and the need to encourage it further;

Emphasizing on the need to encourage ECO Member States to benefit from global market on agricultural production and to improve their competitiveness in the agricultural global market and trade;

Emphasizing the significance of the support of the ECO Trade and Development Bank in financing ECO agricultural projects/programmes, in particular, empowering agricultural SME, and rural and agricultural cooperative association to contribute to the sustainable development goals.

Noticing that having high quality seed trade, increased regional cooperation is needed in the ECO Region;

Highlighting the importance of microfinance of agriculture in rural areas and cooperation with international financial institutions for sustainable rural development;

Have agreed to:

1. **Call** all stakeholders in agricultural sector in the ECO region to act together to design and implement necessary strategies, promote better allocation of resources and ensure the regional solidarity to reach effective results in eliminating food insecurity for all humanity;
2. **Facilitate** the smooth functioning of regional agro-trade and to **take** advantage of the benefits of trade for achieving food security and alleviation of poverty in the Region;
3. **Appreciate** the efforts made by FAO and ECO-RCC for initiation of a project proposal concerning the transformation of the nature of ECO-RCC and **take** note of the revision of the RPFS in line with the current food security situation of the ECO region and related policy priorities of ECO member countries and **request** a more comprehensive, willful partnership and financial contribution of all Member States for accelerating its implementation; and **recommend** the Secretariat to consider different aspects of the proposal and to take required actions through the respective organs of ECO for identification of ECO projects as provided for in ECO Functional Methodology;
4. **Urge** all Member States to hold the 3rd Donors Conference on the Implementation of the RPFS and the main actors of international community including FAO, IDB, OIE, ICARDA, UNDP, UNIDO, UPOV, World Bank, ADB to support the projects in the main components of the RPFS;
5. **Decide** to establish a dialogue forum to increase partnerships and assistance, through joint programmes with all stakeholders the promotion of coordinated action to increase synergy in our regional efforts to enhance food security through technical cooperation, including institutional capacity development, transfer of technology, and increasing agricultural productivity;
6. **Appreciate** the finalization of the draft statute of the ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM); **Encourage** the Member States to establish a data sharing mechanism to facilitate disaster monitoring and disaster management in the region;

7. **Request** the Member States to create a network among their relevant organizations based on the outcomes of the project proposal for the establishment of the ECO Center for Efficient Utilization of Water;
8. **Appreciate** the 3rd ECO Heads of Veterinary Organizations Meeting held in October 2018 and **support** to prepare a harmonized regional approach to take joint measures for prevention and control of trans-boundary diseases and **recommend** the Member States to facilitate and expedite the early implementation of ECO-VECO project for an effective prevention mechanism against TADs and promoting the intra-trade of animal and animal products in the region aligned with the standards of OIE;
9. **Encourage** national veterinary organizations of the Member States to support financially and legally the implementation of ECO-VECO projects (i) Developing ECO network of standardized reference laboratories, (ii) Establishment of standardized ECO network of slaughtering houses, (iii) Facilitation of the movement of animals & animal products at Quarantine on Borders) which facilitate and promote trade of animal & animal products among the Member States with close coordination and consultation with ECO Secretariat based on the OIE standards;
10. **Invite** all regional and global financial institutions including ECO-TDB to support SMEs of agriculture and related industries in the Region;
11. **Appreciate** and **support** ECO-CCI for its roles of strengthening trade and investment ties among the private sector of the Member States in the food and agriculture sector;
12. **Agree** on the need for concerted efforts to boost organic agriculture and establishment of a regional cooperation framework between the Member States to promote harmonization, equivalence and mutual recognition of organic food production and certification to optimize agro-trade in the region and with the international market;
13. **Support** the campaign for 'Save Food' initiated by the Republic of Turkey and invite the other Regional partners to minimize food waste and loss in all levels of the agri-food value chains;
14. **Support** the initiative of Azerbaijan on the establishment of ECO Regional Agricultural Research and Innovations Network (ECO-RARIN) with the purpose to launch close and effective cooperation among the Member States and its relevant institutions in the fields of agriculture research, application of innovations and transfer of modern technologies. **Support** the idea of networking among agricultural research centers as well as eminent scientists in the field of agriculture and **mandate** ECO-RCC to coordinate the proposal in close consultation with the Secretariat and the Azerbaijani side;
15. **Decide** to develop a framework for further cooperation on agricultural machinery and equipment industry and prepare a ground for exchange of best practices and technology in this field;
16. **Invite** the Member States to cooperate in ensuring the regional harmonization on validity of international quality standards, and standardization of the seed certification/registration systems for promotion of regional seed trade;
17. **Extend** thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the excellent arrangements of the meeting and the warm hospitality extended to all participants and the leading role of the Republic of Azerbaijan for reviving the cooperation among ECO countries in the field of agriculture.