

**The 10th ECO Summit
(Tehran, 11th March, 2009)**

The Secretary General's statement

Your Excellency,
Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad,
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
Honourable Presidents,
Prime Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

It is a great privilege for me to present to this 10th ECO Summit a brief report on the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization. But before I could proceed with any report, may I extend my warmest felicitations to the Honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad, on his unanimous election as the Chairman of this ECO Summit. Under his able leadership, ECO would make further progress in all the different areas of regional cooperation.

I must also express my very sincere thanks to the Honourable President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev for the vision and vigour with which he guided our organization since the 9th ECO Summit in Baku in May, 2006. It is an added honour for the Economic Cooperation Organization to have at this Summit meeting His Highness, the Amir of the State of Qatar, the Honourable President of Iraq, His Excellency the Secretary General of OIC and His Excellency the President of the UNGA.

Excellencies,

In my statement, I will touch on the main events since Baku. The Baku Summit took important decisions. These generated a dynamism which set the pace of the progress that followed. We were able to hold more meetings. Their number rose by 35 percent in two years. We crossed important milestones in transport and communications, in energy and industry, in agriculture and environment as well as in the campaign against drugs, human smuggling and money-laundering. The ECOTA took effect. Implementation of TTFA went ahead. The ECO-TDB started operations in Istanbul. Its offices in Karachi and Tehran will be opened shortly. The ECO White Card Insurance Scheme became effective; it has been based on the Green Card Insurance Scheme in Europe.

More of our projects were completed or reached final stages of completion. These included the ECO Regional Centre for Management of Natural Disasters, the ECO Technology Transfer Centre, the ECO Nano-technology Centre and the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment and Metrology (RISCAM). In the 18th COM meeting yesterday, our Foreign Ministers approved the establishment of a Seed Association in Turkey and a Regional Water Management Centre in Pakistan.

China joined the ECO container train project and, together, we set about extending the ECO Istanbul-Almaty container train to Urumchi. On the 14th of August this year, coinciding with the independence day of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, we would launch the demonstration run of the ECO Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul container train. On the external

front, MOUs were signed with more of our regional peers and international organizations, including SCO, EC, UNECE, UNESCAP, IOM and CICA. The UNGA passed a new, more elaborate resolution on cooperation with the ECO. All this became possible to achieve with your guidance, your support and the cooperation of your governments. I deeply appreciate it. I highly value it.

Excellencies,

The progress we made was smooth and steady in most fields. In some, however, we faced stiff challenges. In trade – and it is our highest priority – the ECO Trade Agreement took effect. But the crucial step of exchange of positive and negative lists suffered delay. We have to overcome it. And overcome we must this delay urgently to resume our march towards a free-trade area by 2015.

The energy sector is another area we need to pay added attention. We have so much potential in this sector. Yet we have so little energy cooperation on the regional plane. We have to address this subject on priority. We will look into it at the Energy Ministers' Meeting in Dushanbe shortly.

The global financial crisis has created ripples in our region. It is not a minor crisis and would take a coordinated response. We discussed it at the ECO Finance Ministers' meeting (Tehran, December, 2008). We will discuss it again at the Summit retreat later today.

Excellencies,

Transport is the centre-piece of regional cooperation. We are focusing on improving transit arrangements. We are extending the ECO train network to more member states and to China. We are opening two new train routes – Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul and Almaty-Bander Abbas. In road transport, we are making steady progress. I appreciate the support of UNECE, UNESCAP and IRU. We are implementing, in coordination with UNCTAD, the Almaty Programme of Action for land-locked and transit countries. We are working out concessional tariffs and related facilities for our landlocked member states. We will do so at two seaports each of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

Honourable Chairman,

The Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture and on Tourism held last year were very productive. The ECO Food Security Programmes were put into implementation. I thank FAO and ICARDA for their support. We are also keeping up the fight against drugs, human smuggling and money-laundering. We are following up the decisions of the ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting (Ashgabat, May, 2008). Our campaign has picked fresh pace since we entered into formal arrangements with the European Commission, the UNODC and IOM. The European Commission is providing us Euros 9.5 million for our counter narcotics programme. ECO deeply appreciates it.

Excellencies,

Afghanistan is a most valuable member of our organization. It is our land-bridge to Central Asia, to South Asia. ECO makes a modest contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction. We

are pursuing four projects, essentially in health and education sectors. These are in Kabul, Bamian and Farah provinces. We would shortly approve three more projects. I am grateful to the governments of Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for their generous contributions to the ECO Special Fund for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan. I would appreciate contributions by other member states to this Fund.

In conclusion, Excellencies, ECO is on course to achieve its aims and objectives. And these are all perfectly achievable. We have to quicken our pace. And we can do so. Indeed, we have generated more momentum in important fields. We have to sustain it. We have to expand it to all the diverse fields of regional cooperation. We have some challenges, and in important sectors like trade and energy. But none is insurmountable. Our resolve, our resolution to press ahead is taller, is stronger than any challenge. ECO is set to progress and prosper further. We will achieve more of our targets, more of our goals, including the ultimate, the over-arching goal of regional economic integration.

I thank you, Excellencies.