

Annex-II

(Unofficial English Translation by ECO Secretariat)

*Distinguished Heads of State and Members of delegations,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great honour to me to greet the Heads of States of the Economic Cooperation Organisation and High Representatives of prominent international organizations here in the land of Turkmenistan. May I thank you from all my heart for the honourable duty of chairing this forum you entrusted to me.

During next two days we have to continue the work initiated at previous meetings and to discuss issues of great importance regarding promotion of interaction and enhancement of cooperation among our countries. ECO Member States have an immense resource and intellectual potential which implementation should be expedited for the benefit and prosperity of all the peoples of the region. In many respects it depends on how we succeed in enhancing the effectiveness of our Organisation.

During the last year important changes took place in Turkmenistan. As you recall, the idea of the neutrality of Turkmenistan was initially expressed during our Third Summit Meeting in Islamabad last year. At that time this idea was supported and reflected in the final document and I reiterate my heartiest gratitude for this to all the participants present here. Today this initiative has come true, Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality being reflected in a special Resolution of UNGA. It was possible mostly due to the constructive position of all ECO Member States. I avail myself of this opportunity to state that the neutral Turkmenistan is ready to implement its status in the name of peace and security in the region.

It may be noted that since the last Summit in Islamabad ECO has taken next step towards its consolidation as a major regional organisation being already recognized as one of most perspective. I would like to emphasize the great contribution of ECO Secretariat headed by its Secretary General Mr. Shamshad Ahmad who exerted every effort and high professionalism to ensure our common success. EPG sessions and meetings of Technical Committees we have established in various fields of cooperation under coordinating role of the Council of ECO Foreign Ministers have now become a regular practice. All these efforts have already borne their fruits and strengthened the interaction among our countries.

As far as global politics are concerned, the enhancement of regional cooperation is a characteristic feature of the XX century. We may note with satisfaction that in this context ECO countries are building relationship among themselves within the framework of global process which is confirmed by a number of major international projects being actually implemented within ECO framework.

Yesterday we witnessed the inauguration of Tejen-Serakhs-Mashad railway line bringing together transport networks of Turkmenistan and Islamic Republic of Iran. But this is only the

visible side of our work. In fact the outcome is much more ponderable: new comfortable lines on North-South and East-West routes are there now, all CIS and Baltic States have got direct access to the Persian Gulf, there is a direct transport way from Pacific to Atlantic Ocean. This is only one of so many projects being actually implemented.

There are large scale joint plans in the field of oil and gas, telecommunications, education and health, culture and tourism. The common purpose of all these plans is to fully realize the immense potential of our countries, to bring them at the level of developed and prosperous countries of the world at the earliest possible. I am confident, we shall succeed in the implementation of our projects.

It is important that the interaction within ECO framework is being promoted at different levels at once. During our annual meetings we have adopted common, framework documents while the cooperation is also developed on bilateral, trilateral and four-lateral basis. There are those tangible relations which give substance and meaning to our cooperation leading us to real and practical results. Besides, many trilateral documents facilitate our direct contacts with other countries representing various regional organizations such as ASEAN, EU and SAARC. It has a special importance for us taking into account our transport projects.

We have constantly emphasized during our meetings that our Organisation has a purely economic nature without any political background. We share common views on this matter and we all are aware of the fact that only expediting of economic development and promoting of a close cooperation among the Member States will ensure the well-being and prosperity to all the peoples of the region. But to develop economic interaction a number of political prerequisites are required to make it indeed effective and fruitful. To my belief, there is a need first of all for an environment of political confidence. Such environment once became a permanent factor in our relationship will facilitate the formulation of new bold ideas and specific projects. We have to profess the philosophy of mutual understanding and confidence – only then we may have our joint projects implemented successfully.

The word “road” has always symbolized good expectations, best aspirations, human values such as friendship, mutual assistance, good neighbourhood. People who built roads were always highly honoured being called as “pioneers”. I see a great significance in the sense that our cooperation has started from the construction of roads in the best meaning of this word. Both pipelines, electro-transmission lines and communications are roads too as they unite people, facilitate mutual understanding and assistance and thus enable them to see their life becoming better, prosperer and happier every day.

Every new road remains forever if there is a traffic on it. Reviving the Great Silk Road we restore indissoluble connection of centuries, we bring together the great past of our peoples with their great future. Today we are building our common road to the future and traffic will never stop on it as it is impossible to stop the life itself. I am convinced that this road will lead to highest goal we have set before us, i.e. prosperity of our States and peoples.

May I once again welcome you in the land of Turkmenistan and wish fruitful and successful deliberations.

Thank you.

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