

Ashgabat Declaration

Annex-VIII

The Fourth Summit Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 14 May, 1996. The meeting, presided over by His Excellency Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, President of Turkmenistan, was attended by:

- **His Excellency Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani**, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.
- **His Excellency Mr. Heidar Aliiev**, President of the Azerbaijan Republic.
- **His Excellency Mr. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani**, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- **His Excellency Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev**, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- **His Excellency Mr. Askar Akaev**, President of the Kyrgyz Republic.
- **His Excellency Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari**, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
- **His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmonov**, President of the Republic of Tajikistan.
- **His Excellency Mr. Suleyman Demirel**, President of the Republic of Turkey.
- **His Excellency Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov**, President of Turkmenistan, and
- **His Excellency Mr. Islam Karimov**, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Heads of State/Government held, in a cordial and brotherly atmosphere, indepth exchange of views on important regional and global issues of common interest with a view to promoting the socio-economic well-being of the peoples of the ECO region. In this context, the Heads of State/Government.

BEARING in mind the aims and objectives of ECO as laid down in its basic charter, the Treaty of Izmir;

CONSIDERING the deep-rooted historic and cultural affinities binding the peoples of the ECO Member States;

CONSCIOUS of the changes taking place around the world having a bearing on the ECO region;

REAFFIRMING their resolve to promote the welfare of the peoples of the Member States through enhanced cooperation within the framework of ECO;

RECALLING the Tehran Communique of the First ECO Summit Meeting held in February 1992, the Joint Communique of the Second ECO Summit Meeting held in Istanbul in July 1993, and the Joint Communique and Islamabad Declaration of the Third ECO Summit meeting held in Islamabad in March 1995;

MINDFUL of the provisions of the Quetta Plan of Action, Istanbul Declaration and Almaty Outline Plan for the development of transport sector in the ECO region;

NOTING the Report of the Secretary General of ECO on the activities of the Organization since the last Summit Meeting at Islamabad;

1. **REAFFIRMED** their commitment to the goals and objectives of ECO envisaging broad regional cooperation for the economic wellbeing of the ECO Member States;

2. ENDORSED the decisions taken at the Sixth Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers held in Ashgabat in May 1996;

3. EMPHASIZED the need to revitalize ECO in its expanded framework and appreciated in this context the commendable work carried out by the Eminent Persons Group on Enhancing the Effectiveness of ECO and directed that the recommendations of the Group as adopted by the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers on 11 May 1996 be implemented expeditiously, and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host an extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers in the city of Izmir in autumn 1996 to sign the Treaty of Izmir.

4. UNDERLINED the urgency to focus attention on the priority areas namely Transport & Communications, Trade and Energy with a view to accelerating the process of regional economic cooperation amongst the ECO Member States;

5. URGED the Member Governments to ensure their participation and speedy implementation of projects in the priority areas envisaged in ECO's Plans of Action by including them in their respective national plans and/or through bilateral and regional arrangements;

6. CALLED for early establishment of ECO institutions on the basis of the Agreements signed during the Third ECO Summit meeting and expeditious implementation of the ECO Transit Trade Agreement by finalizing transit regulations including mutually agreed customs procedures within the region in accordance with international conventions as well as multilateral transit agreements signed by the Member States;

7. WELCOMED the inauguration of Tejen-Seraks-Mashhad railway line as a bridge-head linking the Central Asian ECO Member States with the Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea as well as with Europe through Turkey.

8. EXPRESSED satisfaction at the finalization of arrangements for the use of the Karakoram Highway as a road link to promote commercial and trade exchanges among ECO Member States;

9. EMPHASIZED the need for early completion of the remaining road and railway links within the ECO region envisaged in the Almaty Outline Plan providing access to adequate sea port facilities for Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan through Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, with special priority to the transit roads connecting Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with the ports of Karachi and Gwadar through Afghanistan. Similarly priority be given to the completion of railway lines between Kushka-Heart-Kandhar-Chaman; between Kirman and Zahidan; between Astra (Azerbaijan)-Rasht-Qazvin; and the railway by-pass of Lake Van as well as Kurgan-Tiube – Kuliab and Kuliab-Khorog roads.

10. NOTED with satisfaction the proposed gas and oil pipeline network in the region with priority to the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Europe via Iran and Turkey and another to Pakistan via Afghanistan as well as a

gas pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. Other Central Asian ECO Member States could also use these pipelines for their exports.

11. RECOMMENDED that, as part of the current review of ECO's existing preferential tariffs arrangement, the possibility of progressive removal of trade barriers within the ECO region keeping in view the experiences of other regions, global economic trends and international commitments undertaken by the Member States.

12. RECOMMENDED that a committee comprising representatives of ECO Central Banks be constituted to prepare a comprehensive proposal for evolving a mutual payment arrangement for interested Member States for settlement of trade and transport accounts in order to overcome the problems of exchange repatriation and currency convertibility faced by some of them.

13. RECOGNIZED the importance of the role of private sector in regional economic development and extended full support to the on-going process of structural adjustment and privatization in the ECO member countries;

14. ENDORSED the cooperative arrangements entered into by ECO with major Regional and International Organizations and Institutions within and outside the U.N. system for joint efforts towards implementation of ECO's economic projects and programmes.

15. WELCOMED the adoption of a Resolution on ECO-UN Cooperation by the 50th Session of the UN General Assembly;

16. CALLED for institutionalizing a system of regular contacts and exchange of views between ECO and other major regional organizations through their Contact Groups in New York and Geneva.

17. WELCOMED the efforts of the Secretariat for comprehensive cooperation with EU in the fields of transport and communications, trade, energy and drug control, and with ASEAN in the fields of trade and investment, transport and communications and human resource development.

18. WELCOMED the adoption by the 50th Session of the UN General Assembly of a Resolution on the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan granting UN's recognition and support to the status of permanent neutrality declared by Turkmenistan.

19. RECOGNIZED the need for furthering mutual confidence and solidarity among Member States to promote harmony in the ECO region as a step towards accelerating the process of economic development and fostering greater solidarity and cooperation among the peoples of the Member States.

20. ACCEPTED the important contribution of the Secretary General H.E. Mr. Shamshad Ahmad to the process of regional cooperation during the formative

years of ECO in its expanded framework and commended his relentless endeavours, diplomatic skills and professionalism in pursuing reform and consolidation of the Organization and carrying it to regional and international prominence;

21. WELCOMED the appointment of H.E. Mr. Onder Ozar as the new Secretary General of ECO from Turkey with effect from 12 August 1996 and expressed the confidence that he would continue the momentum gained by ECO in promoting regional cooperation.

22. APPRECIATED with thanks the offer of the Republic of Kazakstan to host the Fifth ECO Summit Meeting in Kazakstan in the first-half of 1998;

The participating Heads of State/Government expressed their gratitude and profound appreciation to the President of Turkmenistan and the Government and the people of Turkmenistan for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to them during their stay in Turkmenistan and for the excellent arrangements made for the Summit Meeting.

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