

Statement of the ECO Secretary General

Annex-VI

*Honourable Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Heads of State/Government,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great honour and privilege for me to present some views regarding the importance of transport and communication infrastructure and network of transnational pipelines in the ECO region which is the main focus of this distinguished forum of Heads of State and Government.

At the outset, I wish to point out, Hon. Chairman, your timely initiative in convening this Extraordinary ECO Summit to reiterate our collective resolve for the development of transport and energy sectors in the ECO region. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan for making excellent arrangements to host this meeting with their traditional hospitality.

May I avail this opportunity to express my profound thanks to the esteemed leaders of the member countries for the support and understanding I have received from them and their Governments in the performance of my duties since my take over last August.

Hon. Chairman,

Your inaugural address as well as the statements of other esteemed Heads of State and Government were most appropriate and re-assuring as policy guidelines to assign due importance to the multilateral programmes related to transport, communications and transnational oil and gas pipelines as a priority field for regional development and to determine new policy courses to achieve our objectives in this regard.

As underlined in various ECO documents, particularly in the revised Treaty of Izmir and the Economic Cooperation Strategy for the ECO region, transport & communications and energy along with trade are at the top of our agenda for the next ten years. It is, indeed, high time for the ECO countries to mobilize their resources and energy in completing various projects and programmes which are at different stage of implementation within the framework of Almaty Outline Plan. Most of these projects and programmes, once completed, would facilitate transportation and transit of goods and passengers and help in the development of new and modern transport infrastructure.

I would also like to mention that international and regional organizations are showing great interest to the several ECO projects and programmes in the field of transport and communications. In this regard, a special mention must be made of the assistance we have consistently received from the IDB. The first Ministerial Conference in the field of Transport & Communications which was held in Almaty in October 1993 and which produced the comprehensive Almaty Outline Plan was a positive manifestation of IDB's assistance to ECO. IDB's offer of assistance to evolve a regulatory framework for multimodal transportation in the

ECO region enabled ECO Secretariat to seek productive association of the relevant international organizations for a joint project to achieve this objective. Presently, a comprehensive trade and transport regulatory framework is being worked out to evolve an efficient regime on multimodal transport in the ECO region with the cooperation of IDB-UN/ESCAP and UNCTAD. The European Commission has also shown interest in ECO's transport-related programmes as well as ESCAP-sponsored ALTID project viz-a-viz their own TRACECA project.

In the field of energy, the ECO region undoubtedly possess an extraordinary potential (for multilateral action) in harnessing energy resources and building networks of transnational oil and gas pipelines for common benefit. Optimal exploitation of our resources in the field of energy will contribute to the consolidation and development of the economies of the ECO region.

The determination of policy objectives in this regard by this supreme ECO forum and endorsement of a viable strategy of action to achieve these objectives would mark the beginning of a new era in the ECO region. It is hoped that planners, policy makers and experts in our member countries will respond to the new challenges emerging in the wake of this important Summit meeting with action-oriented work programme supported by effective and fast-operating legal, financial and administrative arrangements. The Ashgabat Declaration will also serve as a mandate for the Second Ministerial Meeting in the field of Transport and Communications in December this year in Ashgabat.

*Hon. Chairman,
Excellencies,*

Conclusion of a Regional Agreement on Transit Trade in 1995, followed by launching of the ECO Shipping Company and inauguration of the Tejen-Seraks-Mashhad railway line in 1996, extension of the role of TAEFOS to ECO region and arrangements for the regional use of the Karakoram highway are positive developments towards the building of a comprehensive transport and communication infrastructure in the region. Important steps have also been realized towards attaining the objectives of providing access to the sea for the land-locked member countries. In underlining the urgency to take concrete and effective measures at the regional level to facilitate transportation of oil, gas and the related energy resources within the ECO region as well as to other part of the world. This Extraordinary Summit shall have added a new dimension to our combined agenda of work.

To undertake new regional programmes in the field of transport, communication and energy, the techno-economic viability of individual project is an essential factor. Accordingly, the concerned experts of the member countries must take into consideration the accurate data and the overall resources of the region to formulate an action-oriented strategy. In cases of large scale projects, possibilities of external financing in the form of credits or consortium funding by regional or international financing and credit institutions need to be explored in light of the studies by the experts. In this regard, the Ashgabat Declaration will constitute an important document which could be referred to in various occasions to provide international expertise and assistance.

Before concluding, I would like to express on behalf of the Secretariat our appreciation and gratitude to H.E. the President and the Government of Turkmenistan for their valuable

contributions and support to promote the image of ECO and to help carrying out various programmes and activities of our Organisation by hosting a considerable number of high level and expert meetings and by collaborating in an exemplary way with the Secretariat particularly during their chairmanship.

I would also like to inform this august assembly that the Secretariat has taken due note of the suggestion made in his statement by H.E. the President of Azerbaijan to establish permanent working conference of Ministers for transport in Euro-Asia corridor. Involving also other regions in addition to ECO, such as idea would enquire detailed study at appropriate I.

May I be permitted, Hon. Chairman, to express on behalf of the Secretariat our deep sorrow for the great loss of lives and damages caused by the recent earthquakes in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

To conclude this brief submission, Hon. Chairman, I wish to assure this august forum that no effort will be spared on the part of the Secretariat to follow-up the conclusions of this Summit meeting and to provide necessary environment to achieve its objectives.

I thank you all.

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