

Report
of
27th Meeting of the
ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)
includes:
Work Programme 2017 & Calendar of Events 2017

5 -8 December 2016
ECO Secretariat - Tehran

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Report

Inaugural Session

The Twenty-Seventh (27th) Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on 5 - 8 December, 2016 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. Sectoral Committees' Meetings were also held on the sidelines of the 27th RPC Meeting.

2. The Meeting was attended by the delegations from all the Member States i.e. the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as the delegation of ECO Secretariat. The Meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States in their capacities as Observers. The representatives of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies also participated in the Meeting. The list of participants is placed at Annexure-IV.

Agenda Item No.1

Inauguration of the Meeting

3. The ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça welcomed the distinguished delegates to the 27th Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting. He presented a comprehensive overview of the main activities of the Organization during 2016. He said that the Secretariat is fully involved in the process of evolving its new vision for next ten years which should set priorities of the Organization in the light of regional emerging needs and realities. He said after the plenary session of 27th RPC, a special session on "ECO Vision-2025" is being held for more deliberation/recommendations in which all the Heads of delegation and the Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives of Member States are participating. He said that the ECO Secretariat has made efforts to realize the objectives of the Work Programme in 2016. The Secretary General briefly shared the trade profile of the Region stating that early operationalization of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) will increase the intra-regional trade. He said that transport and connectivity within the Region has witnessed further progress and the ECO/IDB Feasibility Study on Customs Related Provision of TTFA has been successfully completed. The Secretary General said that accession of Pakistan to TIR Convention has resulted in bringing all Member States under the TIR System. The Secretary General in his statement further mentioned about different projects and sectors being pursued with vigor by the Secretariat such as: energy, environment, agriculture, tourism and health etc. The Secretary General reiterated the importance of the RPC Meeting and its approach towards future. A copy of his statement is placed at Annexure-III.

Inaugural speech by the Chief Guest

4. The Meeting was formally inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Nasrollah Jahangard, Deputy Minister of Communication and Information Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He warmly welcomed the distinguished delegates of the ECO Member States in the historic and beautiful city of Tehran. He said for the past 24 years, the Economic Cooperation Organization has embarked on a journey to enhance regional development, expand existing cultural affinities and develop joint plans for addressing priority needs of the Region. He emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been following an “ECO advocacy” policy and will continue to do so. The Chief Guest indicated that as a result of the expansion of the activities of the Organization in the recent years, the number of events/meetings included in the ECO Calendar of Events has been drastically increased which is beyond the available resources of the Organization. He, therefore, suggested that this RPC meeting may take initiatives to include in the Calendar of Events only the events with substantial items in their agenda and more possible tangible results. He said there is a need to initiate consultations for setting the strategic direction of the Organization for the coming decade i.e. “ECO Vision 2016-2025”. He hoped that the current RPC Meeting, as the most eligible technical body of the Organization will utilize the occasion to discuss and reflect on the results of the ECO Vision-2025 and to discuss and finalize the Draft ECO Vision 2025.

5. The Chief Guest further said that ECO region may hardly be visionary without considering ICT regional potential for cooperation. In this regard the Chief Guest through presentation elaborated on the successful regional models of cooperation and suggested to utilize those experiences for similar gains in ECO Region. Concluding his remarks, the Chief Guest wished this very important gathering, a live and productive discussion and an outcome document. A copy of his statement is placed at *Annexure-III*.

First Plenary Session

Agenda Item No.2

Election of the Chairman

6. His Excellency Mr. Majid Bizmark, Director General of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was elected as the Chairman of the 27th RPC Meeting. In his opening statement, Mr. Bizmark highlighted the importance of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting and underscored the need for appropriate decisions to help in strengthening the economic cooperation among the Member States.

Agenda Item No.3

Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Council adopted the following agenda items for its deliberations:

Agenda

1. Inauguration of the Meeting
2. Election of the Chairman
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Statements by the Heads of delegation on the implementation of the decisions of the 26th RPC
5. Review of the progress of implementation of the ECO approved programmes/projects and consideration of proposals for new programmes and projects for the year 2017-18:
 - a) Trade and Investment
 - b) Transport & Communications
 - c) Energy, Minerals and Environment
 - d) Agriculture, Industry and Tourism
 - e) Project, Economic Research & Statistics
 - f) Human Resources & Sustainable Development
 - g) Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination
 - h) ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies and International Relations
6. Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2017-2018
7. Any other business
8. Date and Venue of the next Meeting
9. Adoption of the Report
10. Closing Remarks

Agenda Item No.4

Statements by the Heads of Delegation on the implementation of the 26th RPC

8. The Heads of delegation of the ECO Member States made their statements outlining their country's policies and views on the programmes and activities of the Organization. They also highlighted the progress achieved on the implementation of the decisions taken during the 26th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council. Copies of their statements are placed at Annexure-III.
9. The Heads of delegation of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Secretariat of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States also delivered their Statements. Copies of their statements are placed at Annexure-III.
10. The Heads of delegation of the ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies, including ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECOCCI), ECO Cultural Institute (ECO-CI), ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF), ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECOTDB), ECO College of Insurance (ECO-CI), ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC), ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST), ECO Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC) and ECO Educational Institute (ECO-EI) also delivered their statements highlighting their activities and progress achieved since last RPC meeting. Copies of their statements are placed at Annexure-III.

Special Session on ECO Vision

11. As per the programme of 27th RPC, after the Plenary Session, ECO Secretariat organized a Special Session for further deliberations on the “ECO Vision-2025”, prepared by the Secretariat with the participation of Heads of Delegation, Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives in Tehran and ECO Secretary General with other officials of the Secretariat. List of participants is placed at *Annexure-IV*. The outcome of the Special Session are as under:

Begins

The Special Session on Draft ECO Vision 2025, with active participation of heads of delegates and representatives from Embassies of the ECO Member States and ECO-TDB, was convened on 5 December 2016 at Espinas Palace Hotel in Tehran (list of participants attached at Annexure-IV)). The session discussed the latest draft version of ECO Vision and sought inputs on ‘ECO Vision Implementation Fund’ and ‘Reform Process’ etc. The ECO Secretary General briefed the Meeting on various aspects of vision document and overall progress achieved so far since the “Future Search Conference”, held on 15 December 2015 during the 26th RPC Meeting, adding that the ECO Vision Document would be approved during the forthcoming COM Meeting and the 13th ECO Summit, scheduled for 26 February-1 March 2017 in Islamabad.

The ECO Secretary General also touched upon proposed reform process to be undertaken within the ECO, ECO Secretariat and ECO Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies in line with EPG findings/recommendations, and in this context, the Secretariat would prepare as annexure to the ECO Vision 2025 a ‘reform document’, with the help of a working group comprising of representatives of ECO Member States, in time to be approved by COM prior to the ECO Summit, which would act as catalyst in implementation process of ECO Vision.

The Meeting while appreciating the ECO Secretariat for preparing an all-inclusive draft ECO Vision Document, discussed various components of the document, particularly focusing on expected outcomes, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and financial framework with active role of ECO-TDB. The session suggested slight amendments in the current draft vision. After extensive deliberations, following comments and recommendations were forwarded by the delegations:

- i. Establishment of a Working Group by the Secretariat for embarking on preparing two annexes of ECO Vision - (a) Implementation Framework and (b) Reform Document – for further submission through CPR for final approval by the upcoming COM Meeting and the 13th ECO Summit in Islamabad.
- ii. The reform document will be prepared based on the EPG recommendations, taking into account limited resources of the Organization and financial realities. The Secretariat will utilize the

experience of other similar organizations while preparing this reform document.

- iii. After approval of the Vision along with two annexes, restructuring process would be initiated by the Secretariat in line with approved reform document.
- iv. Secretariat should create a Working Group to determine ToR and modalities for managing the ECO Vision Fund (*with ECO-TDB as bank account holder*) with the purpose of technical pre-feasibility studies of viable projects, as well as conducting research, capacity building and awareness raising programs. ECO will also prepare bankable feasibility studies for projects for getting funding contribution from IFIs like IDB, ADB, etc.
- v. Strengthening the role of ECO-TDB for funding of some of key ECO projects, including trade financing and infrastructure projects;
- vi. Enhancing ECO's cooperation with international organizations for seeking financial assistance for ECO projects rather than just hosting meetings and workshops; and
- vii. Giving some financial authority to ECO Secretary General for utilizing money on undertaking some studies, raising awareness and capacity building programs for the Secretariat so as to strengthen capability of the Organization.

The ECO Secretary General called the Meeting very productive in reaching consensus on key aspects of vision document and informed the participants that revised version of the ECO Vision 2025 along with two annexes would be shared with Member States in due course of time for their feedback and comments before finalizing it in upcoming COM and ECO Summit in Islamabad.

Ends

Agenda Item No.5

Review of the progress of implementation of the ECO approved programmes / projects and consideration of proposals for new programmes and projects for the year 2017

12. The Council elected the following delegates to Chair Sectoral Committees:

(a)	Trade & Investment	-	Mr. Selçuk KOÇ, Head of Department, Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey
(b)	Transport & Communications	-	Mr. Sami Ullah, Joint Chief Economist, Ministry of Planning, Development & Reforms, Islamic Republic of Pakistan
(c)	Energy, Minerals & Environment	-	Mr. Majid Mohammadi, Ministry of Petroleum, Islamic Republic of Iran

(d)	Agriculture, Industry & Tourism	-	Mr. Homan FATHI, Ministry of Agricultural Jihad, Islamic Republic of Iran
(e)	Projects, Economic Research & Statistics	-	Mr. Taylan Ozgur AYDIN, Head of Department, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey
(f)	Human Resources & Sustainable Development	-	Mr. Mohammad Shoaib Dogar, Director, Ministry of Communications, Islamic Republic of Pakistan
(g)	Drugs & Organized Crime Coordination	-	Brigadier General Mr. Sayed Afandi, Director of International Police (INTERPOL), Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
(h)	ECO Regional Institutions/ Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies and International Relations	-	Mr. Selçuk KOÇ, Head of Department, Ministry of Development, Republic of Turkey

Second Plenary Session

13. Closing Plenary Session of the meeting was held on 8th December 2016 under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Majid Bizmark, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

14. The Council after review of all Sectoral Work Programmes prepared during the Review Committee Meetings formally endorsed the Sectoral Work Programme 2017 for final approval by the COM. The Work Programme 2017 is placed at *Annexure-I* of this Report.

Agenda Item No.6

Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2017

15. Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2017, proposed by the Sectoral Committees Meetings, was reviewed by the Council and was also endorsed for final approval by the COM. The Annual Calendar of Events 2017 is placed at *Annexure-II* of this Report.

Agenda Item No.7

Any Other Business

16. In reply to query raised by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, regarding holding of the ECO Meetings in an Observer State, the Head of Turkish delegation stated that the same issue has extensively been discussed in respective meetings of the committees. He emphasized that there are no clearly defined rules and procedures for holding such ECO meetings in an Observer State and reminded the precedents set by previous ECO events. In this regard, he underlined while not objecting to the Iranian observation, the position can in no way be understood as consenting the view that an ECO event could not be held in an Observer State. The Head of Turkish delegate stressed that Turkey maintains readiness to co-host with

Turkish Cypriot State the 4th Expert Group Meeting on Ecotourism in 2017. He called for further discussion on the same issue during the CPR Meeting.

Agenda Item No.8

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

17. The Council decided to organize the next 28th RPC Meeting on 18-21 December 2017 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. The Secretariat would work out/coordinate the exact date and venue of the Meeting and inform the Member States accordingly.

Agenda Item No.9

Adoption of the Report

18. The Report of the 27th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council was unanimously adopted.

Agenda Item No.10

Closing Remarks

19. On behalf of all the participating delegations, the Council expressed its deep appreciation and gratitude to the ECO Secretariat, Secretary General and his Staff for making excellent arrangements for successfully organizing this important meeting, including the Special Session on the "ECO Vision-2025", preparation of necessary documents, and logistical arrangements made for the delegations. The Council also underscored finalization of the draft ECO Vision 2025 and its approval and adoption during the Islamabad Summit in 2017.

20. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting proactive deliberations of the Meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council also profoundly thanked the Chairmen of various Sectoral Committees for successfully conducting the business of their respective Committees.
