

215th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Report

21st November, 2016
ECO Secretariat - Tehran

Report

The **215th CPR Meeting** was held on **Monday 21st November 2016** at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark, Permanent Representative/Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was attended by the Permanent Representatives/Representatives of all ECO Member States except Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The ECO Secretary General along with concerned officials of the Secretariat also attended the Meeting. The list of participants is enclosed as *Annex-I*.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

2. The Council adopted the following agenda of 215th CPR Meeting for deliberations:

Agenda

1. Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 215th CPR Meeting
2. Adoption of the Draft Report of the 214th CPR Meeting
3. Preparations for 27th RPC Meeting
4. Consideration of Revised Modalities for Utilization of SSF
5. Participation of the Turkish Cypriot State and Turkic Council at the 27th RPC Meeting in their capacity as observers
6. Secretariat's budget proposal for the financial year 2017
7. Administrative matters:
 - (a) Continued discussions on the issue of entitlement of a former staff of the Secretariat
 - (b) Recommendations of the Selection Panel
8. Any other business
9. Date of the next CPR Meeting

Agenda Item No.2

Adoption of the Draft Report of 214th CPR Meeting

3. The Council adopted the Draft Report of the 214th CPR Meeting contained in the document ECO/CPR/214/2 (18th October 2016) which was circulated among the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No.CFU/214th CPR/2016/1276 dated 19th October, 2016.

Agenda Item No.3

Preparation for 27th RPC Meeting

4. The ECO Secretariat, in accordance with the decision of the 26th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) to organize the next 27th RPC Meeting in early December 2016, proposed to organize the next **27th RPC Meeting on 5 - 8 December 2016** at the ECO Secretariat.

5. The **213th** CPR Meeting held on 15th August 2016 finalized the dates for 27th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) on **5-8 December 2016** at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. The Meeting also decided that for ensuring enhanced participation from the Member States in the RPC meeting, the ECO Secretariat will provide accommodation and reimburse the cost of round trip air tickets (up to US\$900) for **four (4) delegates** from each ECO Member State from the Feasibility Study and General Purpose Fund (FSGPF). The ECO Secretariat vide its Note Verbale No.CFU/RPC/27th Meeting/2016/**1168** dated 28th September 2016 circulated the Draft Agenda and Annotated Draft Agenda of 27th RPC Meeting and requested the Member States to confirm their participation along with composition of their delegations and flight details

to ensure quorum and enable the Secretariat to make necessary logistical arrangements for the participants and more recently the Secretariat has issued the Revised Tentative Programme of the Meeting on 17th November, 2016.

6. The ECO Secretariat briefed the Council on the preparations/logistic arrangements of 27th RPC Meeting mentioning that Working Papers, Annotated Draft Agenda and the Tentative Programme have already been issued to the Member States. It was informed that the Secretariat has arranged accommodation at Hotel Espinas Palace. The inauguration of the RPC meeting will be held in the same hotel besides holding of a special session on ECO Vision-2025 with the Heads of delegation and distinguished Ambassadors of Member States stationed in Tehran. The eight Sectoral Committee meetings and the concluding session of the RPC Meeting on 8th December 2016 will be held at the ECO Secretariat. The meeting was also informed that to-date only three Member States (*Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan*) have formally confirmed their participation in the 27th RPC meeting. Moreover affiliated bodies i.e. ECO-ECI, ECO-CCI, ECO-CI, ECO-CEC and ECO-TDB have also confirmed their participation in the meeting. Turkish Cypriot State has also expressed its willingness to attend RPC Meeting.

7. The Secretariat requested the distinguished Member States for early confirmation and provision of list of delegations of their respective countries enabling the Secretariat to complete the administrative and logistic arrangements of the 27th RPC Meeting accordingly as the hotel authorities have also given a deadline for the booking of the participants in the hotel otherwise the Secretariat will also have to bear the financial compensations.

8. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran while appreciating the briefing by the Secretariat about the latest status of the 27th RPC Meeting informed the meeting that instructions have already been issued to the Iranian Embassies/Consulates in the Member States for affixation of visas to the participants of the RPC Meeting. He requested the delegates for early confirmation to enable the Secretariat to complete all the necessary arrangements accordingly.

9. On the same agenda, the Secretary General taking the floor brought to the attention of the Council about the following issues/developments:

- (i) The Secretary General informed that after the Extraordinary COM Meeting's decision in New York relating to the ECO Summit and COM Meeting, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz made a telephone to him informing that Pakistan intends to *host the next ECO Summit in February 2017 in Islamabad*. He said that the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has informed him today that after communication with other Member States, the date has almost been finalized from 26th February to 1st March 2017. However, formal communication in this regard is expected to be received soon by the ECO Secretariat and thereafter the preparations for the Summit and COM meeting will start accordingly.
- (ii) The Secretary General said that the Ministerial meeting which was scheduled to be held in Kabul for finalization of the "ECO Vision-2025" could not be held. Therefore, considering the 27th RPC a very helpful platform to deliberate on the ECO Vision-2025, the Secretariat has decided to hold a Special Session for the Vision inviting the Heads of the RPC delegations and the Ambassadors of the Member States stationed in Tehran. He mentioned that the ECO Vision-2025 has been finalized by the Secretariat through communications with the Member States.

- (iii) The Secretary General informed the Council that the Secretariat intends to start preparations for finalization of the issue of “*Scale of Assessments*” before the Summit/COM meeting.
- (iv) The Secretary General said that ‘*Institutional Reforms*’ of the ECO Secretariat and its affiliated bodies need to be started. He also mentioned about finalization of the process of “*ECO Awards*” which was started in 2014 for the upcoming summit (which could not be held).

10. The Secretary General requested the Chairman CPR for discussion on the above mentioned issues by the Council in this meeting or after receipt of formal communication from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; a Special CPR could be convened to deliberate on these issues. Moreover, the Secretary General emphasized for establishment of a Working Group in order to finalize the issues of “*Scale of Assessments*” and ‘*Institutional Reforms*’. He said due to limited time before the ECO Summit, the Council may decide to continue the process of ECO Awards which was initiated in 2014.

11. The Secretary General also announced that the Secretariat has planned to celebrate the “*ECO Day*” during the 27th RPC Meeting on Wednesday 7th December, 2016 in order to provide a chance to the members of RPC delegates for their participation in the subject event.

12. The CPR Chairman requested the distinguished delegates of the CPR meeting that due to shortage of time, they may approach the respective capitals for confirmation as soon as possible with provision of lists of their delegations enabling the ECO Secretariat to complete all necessary arrangements well in time. The CPR Chairman said that the ECO Secretariat on its part has issued Agenda and the Annotated Agenda of the 27th RPC Meeting and is in the process of finalizing the administrative arrangements.

13. He further said that the issues raised by the Secretary General in the preceding paras could be discussed, if required by the Council, under the Agenda Item “Any Other Business”.

Agenda Item No. 4

Consideration of Revised Modalities for Utilization of SSF

14. On the request of some Member States and based on the practical experience on implementation of the existing SSF Modalities, including the scope and coverage of the Fund, the Council of Permanent Representatives at its 206th Meeting held on 19 October 2015 requested the Secretariat to prepare the Revised “Modalities for the Utilization of ECO Special Support Fund” for consideration of the CPR. Accordingly, the Secretariat prepared and circulated the revised text of the Modalities for kind considerations of the Member States vide Secretariat’s Note Verbal No. ADM/EPG/2016/194 dated 4th February 2016. However, in this regard the Secretariat did not receive any viewpoints/comments from the Member States. The revised text of the Modalities was then submitted before the Council in its 214th Meeting for deliberation and possible decision.

15. At the 214th CPR Meeting the Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Iran* said that principally his delegation supports the issue but due to its importance, proposed to establish a Working Group or Special Committee comprising representatives of all ECO Member States to thoroughly discuss the revised “Modalities for the Utilization of the ECO Special Support Fund (SSF)” and come-up with a concrete report for its approval in the next CPR Meeting. The ECO Secretariat, based on the proposal of the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for establishment of a Working Group to discuss the

“Revised Modalities for Utilization of SSF” convened the meeting of the Working Group on 31st October 2016 at the ECO Secretariat.

16. The *Chairman of the Working Group* briefed the Council that the meeting was held on 31st October, 2016 and while appreciating the “*Revised Modalities for Utilization of SSF*” prepared by the ECO Secretariat, the meeting showed its main concern about the likely financial impact under new Modalities. The meeting requested the Secretariat to provide financial impacts of different scenarios for circulation among the Member States which would be discussed in the second session of the Working Group’s meeting.

17. Deputy Secretary General (Admn) taking the floor further informed the Council that in the first session of the Working Group, general aspect of the proposed Revised Modalities was discussed. He said that the revision in SS Fund Modalities has been initiated by the Secretariat on request by the Member States under recommendations given in the EPG Report. The current modalities are in place since 2000 and the main purpose for revision is to maximize the participation of the Member States in the activities. He said that one of the recommendations of the EPG was to fix percentage of the budget for this purpose in order to cover more activities through SSF. The Deputy Secretary General said that at present it is limited and covers one ticket per country per event.

18. Deputy Secretary General (Admn) further informed that in the first meeting mainly the allocation of budget was discussed as the EPG had proposed 7% and the Secretariat has proposed 5% of the budget for SS Fund. He said information on the last five years’ expenditure on SS Fund has been provided to the Member States and the second session of the Working Group’s will be held soon.

Agenda Item No. 5

Participation of the Turkish Cypriot State and Turkic Council at the 27th RPC Meeting in their capacity as observers

19. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkish Cypriot State via its Note Verbale Ref. No: TRNC/2016/21221 dated 1 September 2016, informed the ECO Secretariat that a delegation from the Turkish Cypriot State would like to participate in the 27th RPC Meeting to be held on 5-8 December 2016 at ECO Secretariat-Tehran in its capacity as ECO Observer.

20. The Council considered and approved, in accordance with the ECO Modalities for Granting Observer and Dialogue Partnership Status at ECO, the participation of Turkish Cypriot State and Turkic Council, in their capacities as “Observers” without right to vote in augural and closing ceremonies of 27th RPC Meeting scheduled on 5-8 December, 2016 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran.

Agenda Item No. 6

Secretariat’s budget proposal for the financial year 2017

21. The Secretariat has prepared budget proposal for the financial year 2017, which has been circulated to the Member States vide Secretariat’s Note Verbale No. ACC/Budget/2016/1140 dated 18th September 2016 for consideration. The budget has an overall increase of 7.6% from the last year’s budget which includes 10% increase in the salaries.

22. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** said that as the Budget is very important matter, therefore, it is proposed that a Working Group may look into it. He proposed that the already Working Group established for the purpose of Revised Modalities for Utilization of SSF may also deliberate the issue of Budget and submit its recommendations/outcomes on the Secretariat’s budget for the year 2017.

23. The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** supported the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran while stating that Pakistan will go with the consensus decision. He also said that due to different budget calendar in Pakistan (starting from July every year), in case of increase in ECO Secretariat budget, Pakistan Mission will need to apply for supplementary grant to the capital for payment of complete share.

24. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** also agreed with the stance of the Ambassador of Pakistan and to approve the existing volume of budget till receipt of instructions from the capital. He also enquired whether the budget document provided by the Secretariat is final one.

25. The Secretary General informed the Council that the proposal of Budget 2017 was sent to the Member States in September 2017. He said that total increase in the budget is 7.6% only which is not a major increase. Moreover, the 10% increase in salaries is a routine practice in every third year. He said that approving the budget in two parts will not be helpful and requested the Member States to evaluate and approve the whole budget in its totality. On the query, the Secretary General clarified that the final consolidated budget document has been sent to the Member States. It was also clarified that once the budget is approved by the CPR its further approval by the COM is mandatory as and when its meeting is held.

26. After deliberation, the Council concluded that the Budget 2017 may be deliberated/finalized in the Working Group's meeting which has already been established for finalizing the Revised Modalities for Utilization of SSF. The delegates attending the CPR meeting were requested for active participation in the Working Group which will submit its recommendations to the CPR meeting.

Agenda Item No. 7

Administrative Matters

(a) Continued discussions on the issue of entitlement of a former staff of the Secretariat

27. In April 2015, the ECO Secretariat received a letter from a former employee of RCD-ECO, Mrs. Frideh Yeganeh Esfarjani (Iranian national) who brought to the attention of the Secretariat a pending case on her working relations with the ECO Secretariat. According to her explanations, on the 21st year of her service in September 1985 and while on approved annual leave, she got fired. Following her failed attempts in the Secretariat to get back to work, the labour court of the host country (Iran) issued a verdict in her favour in 1988 requesting the Secretariat for remedial measures. She also informed the Secretariat that she had not received her entitlement under the Termination Benefit Fund of the Secretariat.

28. Following Mrs. Yeganeh's letter, the ECO Secretariat examined the case internally through collecting and studying all possible information and available documents, taking into account the facts surrounding the matter as well as the applicable administrative law and practices. The Secretariat later on briefed the CPR on its findings as well as on the way to settle the case amicably.

29. The Council at its 212th Meeting decided that the matter requires more time for evaluation and said that any further question from any Member State can be raised with the Legal Office of the Secretariat and then it could be discussed in the next CPR Meeting. Following the 212th CPR meeting, Secretariat circulated among Member States a document titled "The Case of Mrs. Farideh Yeganeh Esfarjani: Some Observations by the ECO Secretariat" (Note verbale No. LA/2016/999 dated 4 August 2016), presenting an overview of the case, legal opinions and findings, as well as options for settling the case.

30. The 213th CPR Meeting further deliberated on the issue and decided that the case could be discussed in the future CPR. The Secretariat proposed that a draft decision will be prepared and circulated for the ease of Member States for possible decision in the next CPR Meeting.

31. Accordingly, the below draft decision was before the Council for consideration in its 214th meeting:

“Following consideration of the case brought to it by the Secretariat, the Council authorized the Secretary General to amicably settle, at his discretion, the case of Ms. Farideh Yeganeh Esfarjani. Settlement to this effect should not exceed the projected 20,000 USD, which will be paid from savings of the Secretariat. To the extent possible, this settlement should not create precedence for the future claims.”

32. At the 214th CPR Meeting Member States delegations made request on the provision of additional documents concerning the case of Mrs. Farideh Yeganeh, the former employee of RCD/ECO, and therefore, the Council after lengthy discussion decided to defer the issue to be discussed during the next CPR Meeting. The ECO Secretariat vide its Note Verbale No: LA/Staff/2016/1243 dated 10th October, 2016 circulated requested additional documents concerning the case of Mrs. Farideh Yeganeh the former employee of RCD/ECO for the information of the Member States.

33. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** reiterated the concern as the matter is very old (32 years old) and the Turkish side is still not satisfied as why the case was not settled for such a long time. He said that we need to be more flexible/practical as Turkey’s reservations have not been removed as yet. Moreover, the matter can be solved in a Working Group or some other meeting and that CPR is not the forum where such type of cases could be discussed in detail.

34. The Chairman of CPR mentioned that as the matter has been thoroughly deliberated in previous three CPR meetings and as such there seems to be no new facts/position to be discussed in the CPR meeting. He said that all relevant documents of the matter available in the Secretariat have been provided to the Member States. The Chairman of CPR requested the views/opinion of all the delegates of the Member States participating in the meeting whether the Council may give authorization to the ECO Secretary General to settle/conclude the case.

35. Representatives of Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Tajikistan expressed overall agreement that the case should be delegated to the Secretary General to settle the case on its merits.

36. It was decided by the CPR to authorize the ECO Secretary General to settle/conclude the case of Ms. Farideh Yeganeh Esfarjani after consent from the Republic of Turkey.

(c) Recommendations of the Selection Panel

37. The Chairman of the Selection Panel informed the Council that the meeting was held on 21st November, 2016 and on its recommendations the Council approved the following:

(i) Director (Transport & Communications) (Category-I, D2)

Extension in tenure of Mr. Mohsen ESPERI (*Iranian National*), Director (Transport & Communications) (Category-I, D2) of the ECO Secretariat, for one year until 3rd December, 2017.

As per Article 6.4 of ECO Staff Regulations “The term of appointment in Category-I shall be 3-years renewable by another term of 3-years with the approval

of the Council of Ministers”, the Council asked the ECO Secretariat that, as per practice, it may seek the COM approval, through circulation. In case of no objection by any honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States, the extension will be considered as approved by COM. However, the formal approval will be sought as and when COM Meeting is held

(ii) Assistant Accountant (Category-II, P2)

Appointment of Ms. Symbat Tanaguzova (*Kazak National*) as Assistant Accountant (Category-II, P2) for a term of four years effective from the date of her joining the Secretary replacing Ms. Zhanar Utegulova, who would be completing the remaining period of Ms. Elvira Tanaguzova on 1st December, 2016.

38. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** informed the Council that Mr. Ugar Kilicarslan (*Turkish National*), Director (HRSD) of the ECO Secretariat will be completing his tenure in January 2017 and until a new nomination is received from the capital, his tenure may be extended. A formal communication in this regard from the Embassy will follow soon to the ECO Secretariat.

39. Under this agenda, the Secretary General informed the Council that the Deputy Secretary General Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari (*Iranian national*) will complete his tenure on 29th January 2017. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has re-nominated him for a further period of one year. He said that this information has already been circulated among the Member States vide ECO Secretariat’s Note Verbale dated 8th November, 2016 and, as per practice, it may seek the COM approval, through circulation and in case of no objection by any honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States, the extension may be considered as approved by COM.

40. The Council considered and approved the extension in tenure of Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari (*Iranian national*), Deputy Secretary General, incharge of Administration; Human Resource and Sustainable Development; Energy, Minerals and Environment; and Drugs and Organized Crime (*Category I, D-3*) for one year until 29th January 2018. As per Article 6.4 of ECO Staff Regulations “The term of appointment in Category-I shall be 3-years renewable by another term of 3-years with the approval of the Council of Ministers”, the Council asked the ECO Secretariat that, as per practice, it may seek the COM approval, through circulation. In case of no objection by any honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States, the extension will be considered as approved by COM. However, the formal approval will be sought as and when COM Meeting is held

Agenda Item No. 8

Any Other Business

41. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** informed the Council about the inauguration ceremony of the Secretariat of the Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation, and Metrology (RISCAM) scheduled to be held on *Wednesday 14th December, 2016*. The RISCAM Secretariat will be inaugurated by the Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mrs. Ferozbakht, who is also the Head of Iran’s Standard Organization. The Representative extended invitations to all the distinguished delegates and the Secretary General. He said formal invitations in this regard are being sent soon.

42. The Secretary General informed the Council that he has received an invitation from the Governments of Afghanistan and India for participation in the “*6th Ministerial Conference on Heart of Asia*” to be held on 4th December 2016 in India. However, as the 27th RPC Meeting is scheduled to be held on 5-8 December 2016 at the ECO Secretariat, it

is not possible for him to attend this meeting and decided to nominate Mr. Kanan Nazarov, Deputy Secretary General to participate in the said event. The Secretary General sought Council's approval for attending the Conference.

43. The Council approved the participation of Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kanan Nazarov in the 6th Ministerial Conference on Heart of Asia to be held on 4th December 2016 in India.

44. Deputy Secretary General (TC&PERS) Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi shared information regarding holding of recent meetings with two Economic Research Institutes: (i) *SESRIC* (Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre) of Islamic countries affiliated with the OIC and (ii) *TEPAV*: an Organization established for the purposes of conducting data-based policy analysis and policy making contributions. He opined that in the background of Vision Document, being prepared by Secretariat, it is felt that Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) needs to have an updated research on different areas especially in transport, trade and energy markets. He informed that both the Organizations have shown their interest in order to have some understanding and collaborative research programmes with ECO. Deputy Secretary General said that, as per the regulations, the Secretariat is going to share details of both the organizations with the Member States and later request the CPR for its formal approval for entering into negotiations and signing of a Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) by ECO with both the Organizations.

45. At the end of this agenda, the Secretary General again reminded the Chairman of CPR about the issues raised by him earlier in the meeting i.e. (i) *Reform Process* and (ii) *ECO Award*, which could not be discussed by the meeting due to time constraints. Moreover, as the ECO Secretariat has not yet received a formal communication from Pakistan regarding the Summit, the Secretary General enquired whether to convene a Special CPR or wait for a regular CPR or the Secretariat may start establishment of Working Groups for these issues.

46. The Chairman of CPR said that once a formal communication is received then holding of a Special CPR, if needed, will be decided.

47. The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** assured the Council that decision of holding the Summit is final and a formal communication in this regard will follow soon to the Secretariat.

Agenda Item No.9

Date of the next CPR meeting

48. The Council decided to convene its next (216th) Meeting on Monday 26th December, 2016 at 1000 hours at the ECO Secretariat.

49. While concluding the meeting, the CPR Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to the distinguished Permanent Representatives/Representatives of all ECO Member States for their participation and valuable contribution in the Meeting.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Ahmad Haroon Najmpoor, Minister-Counsellor
- Mr. Mohammad Rahim Sarwari, First Secretary
- Ms. Zahra Badaghi, Administrative Assistant

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark, Permanent Representative/Director General
- Mr. Abolghasem Tahmasebi, Director of ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Ahmad Reza Asghari, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau
- Ms. Maryam Torabi, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- Mr. Serik Zhumabekov, Minister-Counsellor

The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- Mr. Aziz Kurumbaev, Counsellor, Charge d, Affaires a.i.
- Mr. Kochorbaev Musa, First Secretary

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Ambassador
- Mr. Ghulam Hussain, Second Secretary

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- Mr. Murodzhon Buriboev, Counsellor
- Mr. Saidali Shosaidov, Embassy officer

The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey:

- Mr. Baris Saygin, Counsellor
- Ms. Sinem Gokce, Third Secretary

The ECO Secretariat:

- H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akça, Secretary General
- Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Kanan Nazarov, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Bahodur Rahmonov, Assistant Director (CFU)
- Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar, Legal Adviser
- Mr. Farhad Najafzadeh, Chief Accountant
- Mr. Israr Ahmad Khan, Steno-Secretary
- Ms. Aynur Mammadova, Russian Interpreter/Translator
- Mr. Nurgul Duissenova, Russian Interpreter/Translator
- Mr. Amir Javaheri, Persian Interpreter/Translator
