

# The 26<sup>TH</sup> RPC Meeting

13-17 December 2015

**Annex IV- Statements by Heads of Delegation of Member States**

**STATEMENT OF DR. SAYED YAHYA AKHLAQI**  
**OF THE**  
**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN**

His Excellencies  
Mr. Secretary General  
Honourable Chairman  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is my pleasure to be here to discuss about the implementation of the decisions taken during the 25<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting and discussing about the future plans of ECO.

Afghanistan as one of the focus on Trade and Transit hubs can be considered in ECO Region. In addition of some negotiations which is going on between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan Transit Trade Agreement is going to be discussed in near future (2010) - Extend to SA.

Drafting Transit Trade Agreement from Afghanistan leading to India via Chabahar Sea Port will be done, as planned next month.

Electricity transformation project from Kazakhstan to Pakistan which is called "CASA 1000" will kick off in this coming new year.

Our Ministry of Interior (Inerpol Police Department) in close cooperation with all ECO Member States prevented of occurring a number of organized crimes. My colleague Mr. Sayed Afandi is here to share with you in details the recent activities and also provide you with some suggestions for better cooperation among Interpol Police Agencies of ECO.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Although Afghanistan is suffering from terrorism and extremisms, but we are determined to continue rebuilding our infrastructure and our institutions.

We welcome any cooperation and assistance from ECO Member States.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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**STATEMENT of**  
**H.E. Ambassador Javanshir Akhundov**  
**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan**  
**in the Economic Cooperation Organization**  
**at the 26th meeting of the Regional Planning Council**

Distinguished Mr. Chairman,  
Honorable Mr. Secretary General,  
Dear participants,

I greet the participants of the 26<sup>th</sup> ECO Regional Planning Council meeting and express my appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for the efforts in organizing this event. Since this Regional Planning Council meeting is the first one for the Ambassador Khalil Ibrahim Akcha newly appointed to the post of the Secretary General of the Organization, I would like once again to congratulate him on his appointment and wish success in his work.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Bizmark with his appointment as the chairman of the meeting.

The Republic of Azerbaijan as one of the member-states of the ECO has always supported the main goals and objectives of the Organization and made a significant contribution in the form of specific actions in regional development. Clear examples are hosting the ECO Summit and Council of Ministers meeting and about seven or eight different ECO meetings each year, the development and submission of important regional projects to our Organization, establishment of ECO Information Network on Renewable Energy and early operationalization of the ECO Research Center in Baku.

I would like to emphasize that for the first time among the non founding members, the Republic of Azerbaijan will host a regional center of the organization. The Centre will develop regionally important economic projects, research programs and economic models. The research center will facilitate further development of the

ECO and its becoming a real project-oriented Organization. Operationalization of the research center is one of the most important issues in today's agenda.

Soon, our country is hosting another important ECO event – 4<sup>th</sup> Business Forum. This forum will contribute to establishing profitable contacts between business representatives and entrepreneurs of the Member States and to the implementation of economic projects of regional importance in the future. As you can see, Azerbaijan stimulates holding of one of the important events that serve implementation of the key objectives of the Organization. Taking this opportunity, we call on all Member-States to actively participate in this event.

Distinguished participants of the meeting,

Like every year at a meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council today also I would like to draw your special attention to the development of the transport sector. I can say that early completion of "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan)" Railway Project which is a part of the "North-South" international transport corridor will create extensive opportunities for the countries of the region. We appreciate the establishment and holding High Level Working Group meetings on "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan)" Railway Project. We do hope that with the efforts of the ECO the issue of financing "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan)" Railway Project will be included in the IDB's Work Programme for 2015-2017.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to draw your attention to important information regarding this Corridor. In October this year, during the meeting of the co-chairs of the State Commission for Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan in economic, trade and humanitarian spheres, preliminary agreement was reached to start the design and construction work on the Azerbaijan and Iranian segments of the "North-South" international transport corridor and the construction of a cargo terminal at the border between two countries. Azerbaijan envisages the construction of the Azerbaijan segment of the railway with length of 8.3 km and Iran envisages the Iranian part - about 2 km, and the construction of "Rasht-Astara" railway line with length of 167 km in Iran in the near future.

In general, in addition to the great economic importance, the construction of the Azerbaijan and Iranian segment of the "North-South" international transport corridor will greatly expand transit opportunities of ECO region. We do believe that

one of the priorities of the ECO agenda should be taking actions on the interconnection of ECO rail networks and the development of unified railway infrastructure of the region.

Distinguished participants of the meeting,

In order to improve the efficiency of ECO, non-economic activities should be limited and the principle of holding quantitative meetings should be avoided. Instead of organizing numerous meetings, we consider it more important to hold those meetings which contribute to the preparation, implementation and coordination of economic projects beneficial for the region, and which attract financial resources.

As you know, the draft document of ECO Vision 2025 is under preparation. We believe that this document should include such issues as the identification of priority areas of ECO, direction of the efforts towards development of railway transport in the region, implementation of ECO economic projects, transition of ECO to a project-oriented organization, establishment of only those agencies/institutions and centers under the auspices of ECO which are of economic nature and serve closer cooperation of ECO with other international donors and financial institutions.

In conclusion, I would like to wish you success during panel meeting of the regional planning and meetings of review committees and thank once again the ECO Secretariat for organizing this event.

Thank you for attention!

**General Statement**  
**by Head of Delegation**  
**of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

**before the**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of**  
**ECO Regional Planning Council**

**13-17 December 2015**  
**Tehran- Islamic Republic of Iran**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Honorable ECO Secretary General,**

**Distinguished Heads of Delegation,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and** address the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your election as the chair of this august body. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership, this meeting would achieve a fruitful outcome. Let me also welcome all distinguished delegates from ECO Member States to the 26<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting and wish them a pleasant and memorable stay in Tehran. Likewise, my sincere appreciation goes to Secretary General of the ECO and his entire team at the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and facilitations in organizing the ongoing meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

Once a year, the RPC Meetings provide the Member States with an opportunity to review the progress of implementation of ECO's approved program of actions and projects, thus evaluating the achievements of the past year and deciding on the agenda for the next year through preparing the calendar of events. We should not miss this opportunity and take the advantage of collective wisdom in order to bring the membership to a closer and more constructive cooperation for the benefit of our peoples and countries.



The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been following an ECO advocacy policy. This has been our commitment since the establishment of the Organization and obviously since the last RPC meeting in Tehran. With that in mind, I would like to briefly touch upon the activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past year in line with the recommendations of the last RPC meeting as follows:

**In Transit and Transport,** Islamic Republic of Iran has extended its support to regional cooperation through hosting the 12th Meeting of the ECO Heads of Railway Authorities, along with the 6th Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC in Tehran on 17-18 May 2015.

Regarding Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) railway project, I am pleased to inform that a protocol for clarification of the measures for construction of Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) segment was signed by Iran and Azerbaijan Railway Authorities on 10th October 2015.

In another area of railway cooperation within the ECO region, a trilateral meeting for operationalization of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway held in Tehran on 15th October 2015. In a protocol signed between the participating authorities, they agreed to establish a competitive price for cargo carriage from Uzen (Kazakhstan) to Inchebrun (Iran).

In addition, I would like to inform that the English version of the ECO White Card Website was designed by the Central Insurance of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**In Communications and Information Technology,** the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to support this sector through its significant contribution towards implementation of the decisions made during Tehran Ministerial Meeting in 2012. In this regard, we emphasize on the importance of conducting feasibility study on the needs for development of ICT and Telecommunication Infrastructure Connectivity as an essential



tool to identify the priority areas and projects in order to promote development of ICT in the ECO region.

**In Trade and Investment**, signing the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) was an important step towards trade facilitation and liberalization of the movement of goods and services among the Member States. In this connection, the Islamic Republic of Iran is hosting this week a Special Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of WTO Ministerial Meeting in order to explore the ways and means of implementing the ECO Trade Agreement. We hope that as a consequence of this Meeting, the road towards early implementation of ECOTA will be paved and our region will be benefited from positive impacts of this agreement. Having that in mind, it is also expected that the meetings of high ranking officials, such as Commercial and Financial Ministerial meetings, Governors of Central Banks, Heads of Investment Promotion Agencies and other dignitaries whose decisions can improve the process of economic development of the Member States, and lead to the free movement of goods, services and capital in the ECO region, shall be highlighted in the work program of the year 2016.

Today, the fast and rapid progress of IT as well as the innovations in the communication technologies and their application in trade and transportation is mostly indebted to the efforts of the private industrial and commercial institutions and firms and lessening the interference of the governments in the private sector. For ECO to raise its share of the world economy there is no other choice but to boost up this sector. In this line, the ECO-CCI and its national committees as well as the national stock exchanges retain a considerable potential in demonstrating the private sector capabilities toward the expansion of economic and trade cooperation among the Member States. This great potential and capacity along with the supportive plans of ECO Trade and Development Bank multiplies the prospects for enhancing ECO trade and investment activities.



**In Energy**, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been in the forefront of regional cooperation in the field of energy through making efforts for the establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market. We are of the view that there is a strong need for establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market and invite the Member States to take necessary steps for facilitation of this process. We also believe the idea of establishing a Trust Fund for financing high priority ECO regional energy projects, which was raised during the Third ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum in March 2013 in Tehran, needs special attention.

In line with the above-said, the 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Expert Group (HLEG) Meeting on Energy was held in Tehran in May 2015, attended by delegates from 8 ECO Member States. The main purposes of the meeting were to discuss and review the ECO Plan of Action on Energy/Petroleum Cooperation in the years 2011 -2015, possible extension and/or revision of the Plan of Action for 2016 -2020, possible extension and/or revision of the Plan of Action (2016 -2020), establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market, establishment of the ECO Refinery Association, and exploring the role of public and private sectors in energy cooperation.

**In Mines**, the First Workshop on ECO Seismic Hazard Reduction Program (ECO-SHARP), hosted by the Geological Survey of Iran, was held on 10-12 May 2015 in Tehran. Likewise, the Second Workshop on Ferrous & Base Metal Mineral Processing was held on 8-9 September 2015 in Karaj, Iran. These Workshops were attended by participants from ECO Member States.

**In Surveying and Mapping**, the First Meeting of "ECO Geomatics Committee" was held by the National Cartographic Center of Iran(NCC) in Tehran, on 20-21 October 2015. It was attended by delegations from 6 Member States.

**In Environment**, the Second Conference on "Wetlands Management and Engineering" was held in June 2015 in Tehran. Also, a preliminary study on desertification in the ECO region was conducted.



**In Industry**, as one of the core cooperation areas in ECO region, given the change of approach in global economy and enhancement of knowledge-based trade, my country endeavors to turn this into one of the priorities within the ECO region and hence we are ready to extend cooperation in the field of Nano Technology with all ECO Member States. On the other hand, we believe promoting interregional trade is an important factor for regional convergence which requires standardization within the RISCAM framework. We request those Member States who have not done so yet, to sign and ratify the Statute of RISCAM to pave the way for early operation of the Institute.

**In Health** related issues, the Islamic Republic of Iran coordinated holding of the Second ECO Health Ministers Meeting in Geneva in May 2015 on the sidelines of World Health Assembly. The Meeting discussed and adopted the principles concerning the Plan of Action on Health Cooperation among ECO Member States.

**In Drug Control**, according to the recommendations of the 25<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting, Islamic Republic of Iran made preparations for holding two workshops, namely the Workshop on "Crisis Management" and the Workshop on "Best Practices on Drug Demand Reduction", as well as a Meeting on "ECO Plan of Action to Combat Terrorism" which were not held regretfully, due to lack of quorum. We hope these events to be rescheduled and contained in the Calendar of Events of the year 2016, and invite the ECO Member States to actively participate in the said meetings.

**And finally**, the Regional Training Workshop on "Measuring the Informal Sector and the Non-observed Economy for ECO Member States" was jointly conducted by the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), Statistical Center of Iran and Economic Cooperation Organization in October 2015 in Tehran. The workshop was attended by 7 Member States and aimed at enhancing the capacity of participating organizations to take practical steps in improving their measurement of the contribution to economy by the informal sector and non-observed economy

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Economic Cooperation Organization has high potentials to turn into a solid regional mechanism for economic development in this part of the world. Together, we have to realize it to the best interests of our peoples. The RPC is the best platform to serve this purpose and we look forward to work closely with all our partners in this gathering in order to achieve a constructive outcome.

**Thank you for your attention.**



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**Statement of Mr. D.Nursadykov**  
**Representative of the MFA of the Republic of Kazakhstan**  
**At the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council**  
*(13 December 2015 z., Tehran)*

**Honorable Secretary General,**  
**Distinguished colleagues,**  
**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Let me greet the participants of today's event and wish fruitful work.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Halil Akcha with his appointment to the post of ECO Secretary General and wish him success in this assignment.

**Dear colleagues,**

ECO is one of the first regional organizations to which Kazakhstan joined after its independence. We are firmly committed to the progressive development of regional cooperation, including using ECO platform which has a considerable economic potential.

For example, transport and logistics have high potential for development. In this context, launching Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway route recorded in the report of the 25<sup>th</sup> RPC will improve transport and transit potential of the countries participating in this project, which will undoubtedly strengthen regional cooperation. This route of North-South international corridor can also be connected to Western Europe – Western China international road corridor, construction of which involves a number of countries of ECO region (Turkey and Iran). This project is planned to be completed in 2016.

It was noted in the report of the 25<sup>th</sup> RPC that Kazakhstan organized ECO Ministerial meeting on Economy and Finance in 2014 on the sidelines of Astana Economic Forum which confirms the commitment of Member-States to the regional economic cooperation.

At the present time, Kazakhstan is studying a draft document of "ECO Vision 2025". We believe that this document is a strategic vision for the development of the ECO in the medium term requiring careful analysis in its preparation by all the member-states of the Organization.

As it was noted above, transport and communications is the most important area in the framework of the Strategy-2025. So "Nurly Jol" State Program of Infrastructure Development is being implemented in Kazakhstan and ECO platform could be actively used for its realization.



At the same time, the Economic Cooperation Organization was originally established for regional integration and its activities should contribute to its implementation in practice.

Unfortunately we have to mention some decline of interest of ECO Member States that directly affect the efficiency of the organization as a whole.

In this regard, we believe that the time has come to solve a number of pressing issues such as the need to reform the Organization and its Secretariat, as well as to approve a new scale of assessment and budget, accordingly, what was previously noted by Kazakh side during the ECO Extraordinary Council of Ministers in New-York in October this year.

### **Distinguished meeting participants,**

Due to the current global financial crisis Kazakhstan has revised contribution rates in a number of international organizations, including the ECO. Currently, the scale of assessment of the organization is unacceptable for Kazakhstan.

The use of the United Nations scale in the calculation of the ECO budget, in our opinion is not justified and requires fundamental reforms. As we mentioned in New York, reducing the contribution of Kazakhstan is comparable to today's expectations in the framework of the ECO that does not decline our interest in the activities of the Organization.

Unfortunately, the position expressed by Kazakhstan during the ECO Council of Ministers in New York was not reflected in the outcome of the event. In this context, Kazakhstan has recently submitted its position to the Secretariat in written form. In this regard, we urge the Secretariat to supplement the final report taking into account the position of Kazakhstan.

While developing a new scale of assessment we offer an integrated approach. We consider it reasonable to work with the following formula: "the review of the main scope of activities of the organization - approval of a new scale of assessment – payment of contributions.

For this, first of all, it is necessary to revive the activities of the working group on ECO reform process with the assistance of experts of national authorities in the field of trade, transport and energy. The three sectors of the economy are the main pillars of ECO for the development and strengthening of which the organization was established.

In our view, cooperation in culture, education, health and etc. should be second priority or temporarily suspended up to proper streamlining of ECO economic block.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

In 2013-2014, the ECO Secretariat developed an action plan to reform the organization based on the proposals and recommendations of ECO Eminent Persons Group but it was not brought to its logical conclusion.

Reform process of the ECO activities will require a number of changes and, possibly, additions to the charter and other basic documents of the organization.

Only after reaching a consensus on the reform of the ECO and approval of the main areas of cooperation we can move to a discussion of the national contributions and approval of a new scale of assessment. This issue should also be discussed by the working group with the involvement of national ministries of finance.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Once again I would like to emphasize that the reduction of Kazakhstan's contribution in any case does not mean the decline of interest of the Republic of Kazakhstan towards the Organization. We are interested in enhancing our cooperation through a pragmatic and constructive approach that meets the interests of all Member-States.

We look forward to a constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation which will bring profit to all the countries.

**Thanks for attention.**



**Statement by the Head of Delegation of Kyrgyz Republic at Plenary Session of 26<sup>th</sup>  
Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC)**  
(13 December 2015, ECO Secretariat-Tehran)

**Distinguished Mr. Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization,**

**Ladies and gentleman,**

Kyrgyz delegation appreciates ECO Secretariat for good organization of 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) and hopes for fruitful work during the session of the Council.

Since its joining to Organization, the Kyrgyz Republic has been cooperating in all directions of interaction. The representatives of the Kyrgyz Republic regularly participate in ECO activities at different levels.

Since 12 August 2015 the Kyrgyz Republic was granted an Observer status in Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Wide market to promote local products is opening in this regard.

In spite of that the Kyrgyz Republic is also intended to cooperate with other integration institutions one of which is ECO.

Most priority fields of cooperation for the Kyrgyz Republic are:

- Trade and investments;
- Transport and communications;
- Energy

Since the day of functioning of Organization, member states established a number of bodies in the fields of science, education, culture, trade, banking, agriculture and environment. The number of such affiliated bodies is about 20.

One of attractive institutions for the Kyrgyz Republic is ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) providing project financing for such sectors as infrastructure, agriculture, energy, transport and communications which have a potential influence on economic development of member states.

Articles of Agreement of ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) signed on behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on 12 February 2015 in Istanbul, Turkey by the Minister of finance of the Kyrgyz Republic in accordance with the Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 594 dated 22 December 2014.

On 20 July, 2015 Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on ratification of the Articles of Agreement of ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) was adopted. In November 2015 Kyrgyzstan paid its authorized capital.

Worth to mention that with accession to a big regional multilateral bank the Kyrgyz Republic is getting an opportunity to attract new preferential investments for further promotion of national economy, international trade and enhance banking activities.

Thus, the Kyrgyz Republic is activating its ownership in the ECO.

Kyrgyzstan is considering ECO as an actual tool on social and economic development and technical cooperation between member states.

Agriculture is an important sector of Kyrgyz economy and a basis for achieving food security. Share of agriculture in the GDP of Kyrgyzstan is about 17%. While only 66% of total population lives in rural area.

A lot of work in the field of food security of the Republic aimed at secure food supply is done within the framework of the project named “Strengthening of National Information System on Food Security in the Kyrgyz Republic” with the support of FAO and participation of World Food Program, UNICEF and other international donor organizations.

Special Program on Food Security and Nutrition for 2015-2017 was developed and adopted by the Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 618 dated 4 September, 2015.

However food supply of the population is not on a desirable level.

Recent FAO and OECD forecasts show that food prices will further increase in 3% - 4 % per year up to 2020. It's assumed that such trend will be maintained vis-a-vis to growing prices of energy carriers and fast moving of economy in developing economies.

In this regard and taking into account that the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as a regional organization attaches priority importance to providing food security and agricultural development in the region, the Kyrgyz Republic expresses its wish to actively participate in this context.

The Kyrgyz Republic is also actively participating in the development of transport and communications as one of the priority spheres of cooperation. Currently, intensive negotiations on implementation of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran railway construction project are underway.

Expert Group Meeting of Railway authorities of enroute member states was held in October 2015 in Bishkek.

In conclusion, we would like to renew the assurance of our highest consideration and express hope for further fruitful cooperation.

**Statement by Hussain Hadir,**  
Deputy Secretary  
Leader of the Pakistan Delegation

(ECO Secretariat, Tehran, 13 December, 2015)

Honourable Chairman,  
Honourable Secretary General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Assalam-o-Alaikum!

It gives me immense pleasure to be in the beautiful city of Tehran to attend the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). On my own behalf and on behalf of my delegation I would like to convey my sincere thanks and gratitude to the brotherly Government of Islamic Republic of Iran for their warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us and excellent arrangements made for this meeting by ECO Secretariat

Mr. Chairman!

2. I congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the meeting. I am confident that through your longstanding experience and guidance, we will be able to harness our resources and efforts for the mutual benefit of all the Member States.

Mr. Chairman!

3. Availing this opportunity I would also like to congratulate the ECO Secretary General on assuming the charge of this prestigious Organization. While, we acknowledge with thanks the very valuable contribution made by your worthy predecessor for the cause of regional cooperation and economic integration, we are sure that your leadership would be a source of inspiration and strength for all of us to work for the betterment of ECO countries.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen!

4. Regional cooperation has now assumed a central role in the post-WTO era and is considered as a strategic tool for economic development. The participating states are thus not only required to expand existing potential but also to open up new vistas and opportunities based on comparative advantage of Member States. Among other things, we have to harness benefits of technological break-through in the world. The ECO Member States have to seize the opportunity and create a niche for themselves for the

mutual benefit of their people. We need to evolve an effective strategy based upon high international standards to meet the challenges posed by globalization.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen!

5. We need to accelerate the pace of economic development and intensify our efforts to meet the challenges of expanding world trade and competitiveness. Pakistan on its part is making concerted efforts to promote bilateral and regional cooperation among the Member States.

6. Pakistan seeks to achieve sustainable and inclusive yearly growth in the next five years of over 6 percent. It seeks to achieve this through sound macro-economic policies, optimum utilization of the country's physical and human resources and full exploitation of the technological potential of its industry, agriculture and services. Our economic managers have prepared vision 2025 which is country's long-term development blue print. It aspires to transform Pakistan into an industrialized and know ledged based high income country by 2025. To this end we have to ensure:

- Energy Security
- Private Sector led growth
- Modernization of existing infrastructure
- Improving competitiveness
- Internal resources mobilization through tax reform
- Ensure peace, security and tranquility in the country and region

7. A key instrument for attaining its objective is to fully exploit the benefits of regional integration. Its vision in this context is to be a regional hub with the economy fully integrated with the region to accelerate economic growth, create job opportunities, expand trade, improve competitiveness and usher prosperity in the region.

8. Central to achieving the above objective and converting vision into reality is development of projects and initiatives which are focused in comprehensively and economically integrating the region to its neighbors in the north, south east and west.

9. The key areas of cooperation which would be focus for integrating the economies in the region are; Transport and Communication that would enable increased freer trade in the region, enable easier access for people to people movement both for business and tourism, allow Pakistan to be used to integrate trade in the region. The desired outcome is to provide world-class logistic support and shortest links to the neighboring countries for the speedy movement of goods and people at reduced cost that would enhance international competitiveness of the region and stimulate investment and growth.

10. In this backdrop, our Govt. has taken an initiative to establish China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is being conceived as a lynchpin of the plans by the

two countries to deepen their economic cooperation. Early implementation of the CPEC would be transformational for Pakistan's economy and dovetail perfectly with China's strategy of developing its inland and western regions. China Pakistan Economic Corridor will provide an integrating platform for over three billion people in Central, West and South Asia, the Middle East and Africa Regions. The increase in trade, investment and financial flows would bring peace and prosperity to the region through enhancement in the competitiveness of the economies of the countries, contribute to reducing regional disparities and social inequality, and improve life expectancy and quality of life in every country and in the regions.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen!

11. Islamic Republic of Pakistan attaches high importance to its trade relations with ECO countries. In 2014-15, Pakistan's total trade with ECO countries was US\$ 3.14 billion including US\$ 2.37 billion exports from Pakistan and US\$ 773.48 million Pakistan's import from ECO countries. Pakistan wishes to further raise the volume of its trade with the countries in the region.

12. Pakistan continues to have one of the most liberal trade and investment regimes in the world. All sectors of the economy are open for foreign direct investment. Foreign investment is fully protected under domestic laws. Likewise, in principle import and export of all items are allowed. The only restrictions that are imposed are in the interest of consumer health and safety, environment, national security and on religious and moral grounds. Pakistan is pursuing an export led growth strategy. Entering into free and preferential trading arrangements with important trading partners is a key component of the government's trade diplomacy. Pakistan is a founding member of the World Trade Organization and is playing a significant role for successful outcome of multilateral trade negotiations. Taking this opportunity, we would like to congratulate the Republic of Kazakhstan on their accession to the WTO earlier this year.

13. ECO remains one of the least integrated regions in the world in. It's unfortunate that ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) which was signed in 2003 has not yet come into effect. For its part, Pakistan has completed all legal and procedural requirements for the implementation of ECOTA and we are keen that tariff preferences under the Agreement come into effect without further delay. Let me add that the performance of the Organization in the year to come will largely be determined by our ability to make ECOTA functional.

14. Pakistan has volunteered to host the first meeting of ECO Heads of Investment Promotion Agencies. In 2015, Pakistan announced the dates for hosting the meeting on two occasions but regrettably on each occasion the meeting was postponed due to lack of quorum.

15. It is pleasure to inform you that peace in Pakistan has been restored in result of joint military operation of Zarb e Azb which is being conducted by the Pakistan Forces against various militant groups. Up to 30,000 Pakistani soldiers are involved in Zarb-e-Azb, to flush out all foreign and local militants. The operation has received widespread support from the Pakistani political, defence and civilian sectors. As a consequence, overall security situation improved and terrorist attacks in Pakistan dropped to a six-year low since 2008.

16. As regards the state of Pakistan's economy I am pleased to inform that due to prudent economic policies, the macro-economic indicators have improved. During 2014-15, Pakistan's growth remains more than 4.24%, fiscal deficit which was 8% of GDP in 2013 has been reduced to 5% of the GDP. Tax revenue increased by 12.6%. Foreign exchange reserves have been doubled. To create friendly investment environment, the interest rate is at lowest point in the history of last 40 years. Pakistan received US \$ 18.5 billion remittances. FDI which was dropped to \$ 700 million has improved and it remain \$ 3.57 billion. This Pakistan's performance has also been acknowledged by the international organizations.

- ✓ **Standard & Poor's** upgraded Pakistan's ranking from stable to positive (B-ve)
- ✓ **Moody's** upgraded Pakistan's ranking from stable to positive (B3)
- ✓ **Bloomberg** ranked Pakistan
  - a) **3<sup>rd</sup>** amongst top ten Best Performing Markets in 2014
  - b) **14<sup>th</sup>** amongst top potential investment locations in 2016
  - c) Pakistan has been included among the Top 10 emerging economies of the world
- ✓ **World Bank:** Pakistan world's least expensive country
- ✓ **OICCI: Business Confidence Index** improved from 16% (Sept.2014) to 48% (March-2015)
- ✓ **Forbes:** Pakistan has the potential to be a global turnaround story (Pakistan: The next Columbia Success Story)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

17. Economic development and governance reforms in Pakistan, alongwith the impressive growth have indeed created win-win opportunities for the Member States. ECO with its expanding framework for cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, transport, communications, human resource development and economic research, among others, is now well positioned to enable us to capitalize these opportunities.

18. This Organization has entered into the next phase of its evolution and is in process of vision 2015-2025. This phase is characterized by implementation on the ground, of the plans and projects envisaged in the last decade. It places greater demands on our resources, financial, intellectual and institutional. We must not be found complacent. We

must sustain the momentum generated in recent years, on the plans in the pipeline, and achieve breakthroughs on projects that have already been agreed, but have suffered inordinate delays. It is time for ECO to produce tangible results and bear visible fruits for all its Members.

Mr. Chairman!

19. I am of the firm belief that under your able guidance the meeting will achieve the desired objectives of accelerating the pace of economic cooperation between the Member States. The technical sessions will, I am sure, draft ECO's agenda for the year, keeping the imperatives I have just mentioned, in mind. In the coming days we will examine closely the progress achieved thus far, and examine fresh proposals. I wish everyone complete success in the accomplishment of the tasks that lie ahead.

20. In the end I would once again like to place on record our profound thanks to our hosts, the ECO Secretariat for their generous welcome and excellent arrangements made for the meeting, and to the Government of Iran for making special provisions for the guests.

I thank you very much.

## **Statement**

**by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda at the first Plenary Session of the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council**

(13 December 2015 ECO Secretariat Tehran)

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Secretary General of ECO,  
Distinguished heads of delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and our delegation I would like to thank the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for organizing this event at the proper level.

Tajikistan is interested in the development of a broad regional cooperation and integration in all areas.

Most important areas of cooperation in the framework of the Organization may include, among others, issues of creating fully functional transport and transit system, trade facilitation, efficient use of water and energy potential of hydrocarbons, creating a unified energy system and the regime of free movement of goods and labor.

Trade cooperation among ECO member countries, as it is now a priority area, plays a key role in promoting integration process, guaranteeing creation of a dynamic regional economy. In this regard, the ECO Member States take a leading place in foreign trade of Tajikistan, where the share of ECO countries in the foreign trade turnover of the Republic for years 2005-2014 was 36% in average.

The most important sphere of regional cooperation is the solution of the problems of effective use of water and energy resources of the region. The integrated and effective use of the available potential will allow to strengthen the role of the regional countries in determining world energy market and reducing negative impact of the world energy prices fluctuations.

As you know, the intensive melting of glaciers undoubtedly is one of the key environmental and social impacts of climate change. At this stage, the national adaptation strategy to climate change is being developed by Tajikistan, the adoption of which is expected in early 2016.

In this regard, at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris (November 2015) President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon stated: Tajikistan attaches great importance towards the efficient use of renewable energy sources, especially hydropower which promotes social and



economic development, populations adaptation to climate change and formation of a "green economy". Construction of hydropower facilities at the same time will favorably contribute to reducing risks of natural disasters related to water.

Accordingly, the development of hydropower is among the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. It should be noted that overall potential of hydropower resources of Tajikistan is one of the leading directions. The total combined hydropower potential of the country is 527 billion. KW. Hours of energy per year. Unfortunately today the country effectively uses only 5% of the capacity of the electricity production. At the same time, in many countries, there is a need for this production.

Tajikistan is interested in ECO's pertinence in implementing projects on regional energy trade between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and seeks funding for these projects.

It is necessary to pay special attention to the development of cooperation in transport and communications and accelerate the implementation of projects in the field of transport and communications. In particular, emphasizing the transport sector on formation of regional infrastructures, ECO can use great technical and financial opportunities of the international organizations.

In the conditions of lack of a direct exit of the Central Asia countries to seaports, creation of the general transport corridor would become a powerful impulse of strengthening of geopolitical and trade and economic value of the region in general. An example of such transport corridor is the highway Murghab - Kulm's pass with an exit to Karakorum Highway.

One of the strategic goals of Tajikistan at this stage is the freeing the country from it communication deadlock, through the construction of tunnels, bridges, modern roads and railways, as well as the creation of land transport infrastructure and communications.

Tajikistan is also interested in ECO's persistence in implementation of projects on introduction of practice of oil and LNG trade at preferential prices among member countries having limited resources of oil and natural gas.

Stabilization of social and political conditions in Afghanistan establishes preconditions for more development of ECO region in whole. In this context, eco member-states should pay more attention to promotion of Afghanistan rehabilitation.

We are glad that ECO takes steps in this direction by launching its Special Fund for projects on Afghanistan rehabilitation and Feasibility Study Fund.

Tajikistan supports the early implementation of the ECO Plan of Action on reconstruction of Afghanistan, takes steps to making a significant contribution to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan's economy.

It should be noted that countries in the region have great potential for cooperation in such areas as industry, construction, communications and telecommunications, agriculture and processing of agricultural products, food industry, etc.

For a more complete and efficient use of the potential for cooperation active involvement of the business community and the private sector of ECO member states with a view to more effective implementation of regional projects is required.

Joint activities in the field of economic, food and environmental security, management and technology transfer, poverty reduction and others should become a special area of cooperation. Since these problems are faced by more than a single state, ECO Secretariat should intensify efforts to attract the attention of donor countries and international organizations to gain financial and technical assistance in these areas.

Tajikistan is very interested in developing cooperation with ECO Member States in the field of telecommunications. Plan for development of telecommunications and postal services in the region, defines the main directions of joint work at providing modern telecommunications in the region.

At the present time, when the Organization is going through the process of reform, which aims at further improving the performance of ECO, we hope that it will strengthen the coordinating role of the ECO and adaptation to the modern realities and the future challenges.

Tajikistan follows the true methods and goals of the Economic Cooperation Organization and is ready to further enhance and improve the level and quality of its participation in the framework of its activities.

I thank you for attention!

**Opening Speech by H.E. Cüneyd DÜZYOL,  
Undersecretary of Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey  
at the 26th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC)  
13 December 2015**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

His Excellency Mr. Chairman, Majid BIZMARK,  
His Excellency Halil İbrahim AKÇA, the Secretary General of ECO,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatuh

Excellencies,

It is a great pleasure for me and my delegation to be with you here in this beautiful city of Tehran on the occasion of the 26th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council. I would like to convey my sincere thanks to the Islamic Republic of Iran for the excellent hospitality and to the ECO Secretariat for excellent arrangements and intensive efforts for the success of this Meeting. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our heartfelt wishes of success to H.E. AKÇA in his new and important assignment as the new ECO Secretary General. I sincerely believe that as a former planning expert, a top level planning manager and as an experienced ambassador, His Excellency AKÇA has a lot to offer and serve to the ECO cooperation in diverse fields.

Distinguished Delegates,

The ECO Member Countries are located in one of the most strategic regions in the world. In this critical region of the world, we have only one viable option: That is to deepen our cooperation. We need to strengthen stability and development urgently in our region through focused, practical and result oriented cooperation. Within this perspective, I would like to underline that we need specific targets and implementation tools for realization of concrete projects and programs.

Distinguished Participants,

Spreading across a large and strategic geography and having members with varied competitive products from mineral and oil to textile and manufacturing goods, ECO Region has a huge potential for trade. However, present figures are far below than our expectations.

In this respect, the intra-ECO trade is close to 8 percent, which is quite lower than other international organizations such as EU, ASEAN and the OIC.

At this point, ECO's flagship project, namely ECOTA has the potential to provide an important opportunity. However, it is our great dismay to see that as of December 2015 only Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey completed the necessary requirements for ECOTA and are ready for the implementation of the Agreement. It is also quite disappointing to see that the convening ECOTA Cooperation Council Meetings for six times since 2008 has not sufficiently contributed to the expedition of the realization of the Agreement. We also would like to see our other relevant brotherly countries to show the same willingness and efforts for the implementation of the ECOTA.

Dear Colleagues,

ECOBANK is an important asset of our Organization in terms of project and trade financing. In this respect, the total amount of loans disbursed by the Bank to the various operations reached 856 million USD by the end of 2014. We, as the member countries, should give further our support to the Bank for enhancing its institutional and financing capacity. On the other hand, we are pleased to observe that the number of signing countries of the Bank's Agreement reached to six. Seizing this opportunity, I would like to call upon the Member States, which have not done so yet to sign the Agreement of the Bank.

Excellencies,

Regional integrated transport systems and thus effective transport corridors remain one of the most important premise of promoting deeper regional integration and greater intra-regional and inter-regional trade in ECO. This statement is especially valid for ECO region which provides the most convenient land transport corridor between some of the main trading hubs of the world, Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Europe and has seven land-locked member countries. The objective of enhancing intra-regional trade would remain unattainable in the absence of a well-functioning system of transport in the region. In this respect, I believe that the effective implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) would be instrumental in establishing viable region-wide corridors of transport.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Regarding agriculture sector, it is a pleasure to see that the FAO-Seed Cooperation (FAO-SEC) project, which has been implemented within the framework of Turkey-FAO Partnership Programme for development of seed growing sector in the ECO member countries, was successfully completed with the final workshop held in Antalya in November 2015. With this perspective, the ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC) for Implementation of the ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS), whose secretariat services have been provided by Turkey, can support our member countries in the field of food security through similar projects. We expect relevant national institutions of the ECO member countries cooperate with the ECO-RCC.

Distinguished participants,

The year 2015 has been a turning point for the global development agenda. Last September, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As you all know, SDGs have a more ambitious context than MDGs both in terms of context and coverage, therefore we should give due regard for proper implementation of these goals in our countries to make the progress in the ECO region a success story.

Dear Colleagues,

New ECO Vision is of utmost importance for us, as it will guide our cooperation efforts throughout the next decade. We should allocate adequate time, wisdom and energy in the preparation Vision Document without unnecessary haste. We believe that Vision Document should give clear indications and guidance for cooperation efforts of the Organization and efficiency of its work with a result-oriented approach, well-defined objectives and implementation instruments. Through the Vision, we should also be able to give a main thrust to major ECO projects for actual implementation like ECOTA, further strengthen ECO Bank and complete and operate effectively ECO transport corridors, which are “reason d’etre” of our Organization.

As you will kindly recall, the 3rd ECO Eminent Persons Group (EPG) has come up with a number of recommendations designed to improve decision-making process, ensure effective

follow up and implementation of decisions, encourage better participation of the member countries in ECO activities and enhancing the capacity of the Secretariat in terms of personnel, staff, budget and visibility. In this respect, the EPG's recommendations must be taken into account in designing the new ECO Vision document. As we will share our detailed views on Draft ECO Vision during the special brainstorming session, I will not take more of your precious time on the matter for the time being.

Esteemed Representatives,

Before concluding my words I wish all success to this Council during its comprehensive working sessions and I hope our deliberations in this Meeting would contribute to enhancing cooperation efforts among our brotherly countries.

Thank you.

Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatur