

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

13-17 December 2015

Annex V- Statements by Heads of Delegation of Observers

**Statement by the Deputy Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of  
Turkic Speaking States Abzal Saparbekuly at the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Regional Planning Council**

**(13 December, 2015 Tehran)**

Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank you for giving me the floor to address the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) as the representative of Turkic Council, observer to the ECO.

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me shortly elaborate about developments that took place within our organisation since last year.

Since its establishment in 2009 as a regional cooperation mechanism, Turkic Council has been fully involved in increasing its economic activities. We constantly held Working Groups as well as Ministerial Meetings in economy, transport, customs tourism, as well as Business forums which assist Member States in exchanging contacts between interested parties.

Turkic Council doesn't only promote partnership relations among its members but also strongly encourages dialogue and good neighbourly relations with other countries in the region. At the same time, establishing and developing relations with other regional and international organizations is among priorities for us. Thus, just recently we have established relations with ASEAN and hold bilateral meeting with Secretary General of ASEAN. Furthermore, we signed MoUs with UNWTO and International Centre for Sports Security which will open new opportunities in this spheres. Turkic Council in cooperation with UNECE organised a First Preparatory meeting for the 14th session of the Group of Experts on the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) on 20-21 October 2015 in Istanbul.

Moreover, on 27-28 October 2015 Turkic Council and UNDP convened a Conference on ICT for development in Istanbul where delegates from the region shared their views on this subject.

Although Turkic Council and ECO differ in size and complexity we share common goals and objectives and there are still many areas where the two organisations may complement each other. For this reason exchange of new ideas and cooperation in various spheres between the two organisations can provide new opportunities for our member states.

In order to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region, joint endeavours are essential. Thus, Work Programme encompassing the future practical cooperative activities would add value to the activities of our organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my thanks to the ECO for their kind invitation and for excellent organisation of this event and wish all the success to the Meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.



**Text of the Speech by Mr. Mustafa LAKADAMYALI  
Ambassador/Director for Political Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus  
at the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the  
Economic Cooperation Organization  
(Tehran, 13 December 2015)**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me and my delegation to participate at the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization. I extend to you all the heart-felt greetings of the Turkish Cypriot people.

At the outset, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to H.E. Mr. Halil İbrahim Akça, the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization and the able staff of ECO Secretariat for their tireless efforts in organizing this important meeting.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,

The Turkish Cypriot State, which shares common history and culture with the member states, is also committed to the objectives of ECO. Northern Cyprus which has been participating in the Organization's activities and events since 1992, gives utmost importance to cooperation among the member states and development of the region. In 2012, our status was upgraded to that of observer member which gave us the chance to further our economic relations with ECO member countries. Since the first day, we have aimed at contributing to and benefiting from our strengthening relations with the member countries.

At this point, I would like to share with you trade figures of my country. Currently, while total export of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to ECO member countries, except for Turkey, is over 778 thousand US Dollars, the total import from ECO member countries, excluding Turkey, amounts to 1 million Dollars. Our main aim is to increase the trade volume between the ECO member states and the TRNC.

We believe that there is great potential for cooperation amongst ECO member states, especially in the fields of trade, tourism and education. I am proud to share with you our achievements and what my country has to offer in these fields.

I would like to provide you a brief information about the current economic situation prevailing in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). In conformity with the objectives of ECO, liberal economic system is being implemented in our country. Under this system, the promotion of the private sector, the rational use of natural resources, the encouragement of foreign investment receive priority as a matter of government policy. Over the years, we have succeeded to establish trade relations with more than 70 countries all over the world.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a fast developing country with higher education and tourism as two main economic sectors. Our country is emerging as a center of higher education and a prominent holiday destination in Eastern Mediterranean.

Higher education constitutes an important sector of the economy of the TRNC. Today, there are 12 universities where nearly 81,000 students are studying in our country. There are about 47,000 Turkish students from Turkey, 12,000 local Turkish Cypriot students, and 22,000 international students. We have students from 140 countries and teaching staff from 65 countries. This depicts the international and diverse character of higher education in our country. As a major contributor to this diversity, I am pleased to announce that about 6,000 of university students are from ECO member countries, mostly from Pakistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. It is our primary objective to raise the standards in higher education in order to attract more foreign students, particularly from ECO countries, to study at our universities in the period ahead.



In this context, we would welcome a decision by the member states, to include our universities in the available options for the higher education of their youth.

Another sector contributing significantly to the economy of our country is the tourism sector which offers a lot with its natural beauty, cultural and historical heritage. There are 140 holiday establishments with an overall bed capacity of nearly 20 thousand. In addition to a wide range of accommodation from five star luxury hotels and holiday villages, North Cyprus offers many special interest tourism, including golf, diving, trekking and cycling and eco-tourism.

In line with the policy of ECO which evaluates tourism as another important area of cooperation to be explored and developed for the benefit of member states, we strongly believe that our country is an ideal holiday destination for our brothers and sisters from ECO member countries.

According to statistics in 2015, nearly 1.3 million tourists came to our country, ~~including from Turkey~~, via air and sea ports of Northern Cyprus. Also in 2015, 750 thousand tourists accommodated in the Hotels in our country.

We are actively encouraging foreign investment to North Cyprus and therefore I would like to take this opportunity to invite investors from ECO member countries to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to be informed about the investment opportunities in our country and the incentives offered by our government.

Investment opportunities exist especially in the tourism sector. Hotels and conference tourism, special interest tourism like yacht tourism and marina construction are just a few of the investment opportunities that await foreign businessmen in our country. In addition to <sup>and</sup> above-mentioned fields, newly developing areas such as health tourism and agri-industry are considered as attractive fields of investment for the private sector and foreign investors.

Consequently, those wishing to invest in the Turkish Cypriot State can be sure of favourable government attitude. The relevant Ministries and our State Planning Organization and the Cyprus Turkish Investment Promotion Agency are all at the disposal

of potential investors and businessmen who would like to learn more about the extensive opportunities and incentives that exist in our country.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Participants,

As you may all be aware, Northern Cyprus hosted a number of ECO events since 1992. Lately, "Workshop on Tourism" was organized in our country between 28-30 April 2015 with the Participation of Republic of Turkey, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Republic of Azerbaijan. The event enjoyed a great deal of success and the participants enormously benefited from these events.

I also would like to reiterate that our country is committed to furthering the relations between member countries in mutually beneficial fields, which will contribute to the general objective of cooperation among member states that ECO is striving to achieve.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank once again to Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for their efforts in making this meeting a great success.

I thank you all for your most kind attention.