

The 26TH RPC Meeting

13-17 December 2015

[Annex VI- Statements by Heads of ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies/Affiliated Bodies](#)

In the Name of ALLAH, the Almighty

Statement by

Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif

President of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)

The 26th Session of the Regional Planning Council (RPC)

December, 2015, Tehran

Mr. Chairman, H.E. Mr. ...

H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akça, ECO Secretary General

Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives of ECO Member States,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a distinct honor for me to participate in this important meeting once more on behalf of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI).

At the outset, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulation to H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akça for his appointment as the new ECO Secretary General. ECI is committed to cooperate fully with the Secretary General and the Secretariat to further expand mutual cooperation more than ever.

Mr. Chairman,

I should also wholeheartedly appreciate unwavering support of the host country, specially the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during the last two years and a half of my responsibility in ECI. The Institute's achievements could have not been realized without the logistical and financial support of the governmental and non-governmental institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is also my pleasure to inform that I have enjoyed the full support from the distinguished Ambassadors of ECO Member States in Tehran during this period of time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to submit to you a brief report on the strategies, policies and activities of the Institute during the last two years.

Tajikistan hosted the 6th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT) in March 2015, in Kujand, which coincided with the Norouz

celebrations. I would like to express profound appreciations to the government and people of Tajikistan, especially to H.E. Mr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzadeh, Minister of Culture, for their warm hospitality extended to all delegations and the successful organization of BoT meeting. Khujand Declaration as one of the main outcomes of the meeting constitutes a major achievement of and necessary guidelines for ECI in the decade ahead. The declaration also highlights the main programs of ECI for the next two years. It is noteworthy that the 6th BoT was held with three years delay. Extensive diplomatic efforts were made to ensure the participation of all ECI member states.

I would like to reiterate that accomplishing the missions stipulated in the Charter of the Institute, as well as expansion of cultural ties and promotion of common cultural heritage in ECO region, needs contribution of all the ECO Member States. Accession of the other ECO Member States to the Institute's Charter is an essential step in achieving its objectives as declared in ECO founding documents including the Izmir Treaty. Good news about the full accession of some countries to the Institute has been received which I hope will be realized very soon.

Mr. Chairman,

Efficiency, effectiveness and dynamic management has been the strategy adopted by the Institute over the past few years which led to the rightsizing of the staff strength, increasing quality and quantity of activities and more rational management of the ECI budget.

Despite financial constraints in the past years, the Institute managed to develop and diversify its activities in ECO region in the areas of literature, arts, cultural heritage, sports and commemoration of luminaries of cultural field. The 1st ECO Poetry Night, commemoration of prominent figures such as Molana (Rumi), Iqbal, Makhtumkuli Feraghy, Bobojon Ghafurov, the 1st ECO Chess Tournament with participation of players from all the ECO Member States, two editions of the Qura'nic calligraphy and graphic works festival, publication of several books and ECO Heritage magazine issues, are instances of ECI activities.

The International Conference on Allama Iqbal's thoughts and philosophy in Tehran in collaboration with a cultural organization of the host country was successfully held in August 2015. The conference received special praise from the high officials of both countries including President and Prime Minister of Pakistan as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran. Scholarship granted to students from ECO countries by the Arts University of the Islamic Republic of Iran was the milestone to exchange training program for our students. I take this opportunity to invite all 10 ECO members to nominate two students for bachelor, graduate or Ph.D. Program as soon as possible. Iranian Art University will cover round air ticket, accommodation as well as financial assistance during the whole program to the students.

The 2nd Norouz International Photo Festival and numerous art exhibitions and cultural events at the ECI Headquarters are the feature activities/programs of the Institute in 2015. A biannual activity report will be submitted during the RPC meeting.

The other programs planned to be held in order to promote tangible and intangible common heritage of ECO region include the anthology of "Modern Persian Poetry" which, in collaboration with the prestigious world famous publishing house, Oxford University Press, will be published very soon. A selection of handicrafts of all ECO Member States is to be collected and would be displayed in ECI headquarters and subsequently in all ECI Member States.

I am happy to inform that the first meeting of the deans of art universities of all ECO members to be hosted by the Iranian Art University, will be held in Tehran on 26 of this month of December. It would be appreciated if the delegations could facilitate the participation of the invited universities in their countries. The air ticket and accommodation will be covered by the Iranian counterpart for all 10 members.

As UNESCO has recently registered 'Kulliyat-e Sa'di' on its Memory of the World program, ECO Cultural Institute would organize a commemoration in the ECI Member States to pay homage to the great genius and the author of Gulistan, sheikh Ajal (شيخ اجل) Sa'di.

Excellences,

I would like to inform that a notable portion of the annual contribution of the ECI Member States for the year 2015 has been received over the past months. This is promising news, because delayed payment of annual contributions in the past years caused difficulties in the timely implementation of the Institute's programs.

Finally, as the mass consciousness of the common cultural heritage and its impact on enrichment and development of cooperation in all aspect in the ECO Region is recognized in ECO Documents, I strongly believe that ECO Cultural Institute in cooperation with the other ECO bodies can play more effective role in realizing the great goals of the Economic Cooperation Organization during its future perspective and vision.

Last but not least, Mr. Chairman, I have the honor to invite all delegations to a cultural program organized by the ECI in collaboration with ECO Secretary General on the morning and afternoon of Tuesday, 15 December. This program hosted by the Municipality of Tehran consists of visiting ECO Park in Tehran and its touristic surroundings, including Tehran's Planetarium as well as the Bridge of Nature, followed by lunch. In the afternoon of 15th, delegations are invited to a program of Yalda Night, consisting of a multi lingual Shah Nameh Reading by the Children of Peace and Friendship, two photo exhibitions of Norouz in ECO region and ECI activities as well as an exhibition of handicrafts from several ECO countries. This will be followed by a dinner hosted by the ECO Secretary General and the ECI President.

I wish you all success.
Thank you very much.

**26th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council
Statement by Mr. Masoud Rekabdar, Vice President
ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB)
Tehran, I.R. of Iran
13-17 December 2015**

**Mr. Chairman
Mr. Secretary General
Distinguished Delegates
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a great pleasure and honor for me to participate to the 26th RPC meeting and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the organizers for the excellent arrangements provided for this meeting. I would like to congratulate H.E Mr.Akçay for his appointment as the new Secretary General and wish him every success in this momentous responsibility. Availing this opportunity let me also convey the best wishes of new President and the management team of the Bank which took their responsibilities recently. We are committed to carry forward the achievements of the ECO and the ETDB to higher levels as expected by our respective member states.

Mr.Chairman,

I would first like to start by commenting on some points regarding our optimism and our caution about developments in global economy and probable spillovers on the economies of ECO countries. The global growth remains subdued and current environment we are living in has become increasingly more challenging. The economies are being more frequently subject to extreme conditions. Caution about the risks and uncertainties facing the global economy have itself become a tangible element of the slowdown. Concerns about timing and pace of monetary policy normalization, about the future of commodity prices, about future demand from advanced and emerging economies and lower expected future growth has in turn dampened demand for investment. Looking ahead, projections indicate a global growth of 3.1 percent this year, down from 3.4 percent in 2014 and rising to 3.6 percent next year. Overall, there is a sense of normalcy there, but not strong growth.

Excellencies

These rapid developments throughout the world would have negative spillover effects on some developing economies including ECO countries. So far, some of our countries have shown greater resilience but some need to take policy steps that can strengthen growth. The

region is trying re-gain its pre-global economic crisis performance after it witnessed a setback during 2008-9 in terms of its growth performance but quickly recovered to post an average 4 percent economic growth performance in the post-crisis era. The regional output most recently grew 3.6 in 2014 but our forecast point out to a deceleration in the growth figure in 2015 by 1 percentage point while growth is expected to remain at sub-par level in the following year as well. Nonetheless, we cannot lose sight of the shifts in business sentiments and volatility in global markets. It is about being resilient. Therefore, it is important for ECO countries to be vigilant and continue fiscal, financial and structural reforms that would put economies in a far better position in the current post crisis-era. All in all, the region needs to achieve an annual economic growth rate close to 7 percent in order to catch up with other country groups as well as to accommodate the huge labor force entering into their economies every year.

Mr.Chairman,

The regional countries have the potential and resources to become the world's most competitive economies. In the current global environment of intensified search for sustainable growth models, developing countries are facing daunting challenges. Therefore, this unusual period of time calls for shared responsibility and enhanced cooperation. There is an increasing need to consider new roles for smart economic planning, industrial policy and related contemporary tools to support economic development and competitiveness. Investing in regional infrastructure connectivity, trade, innovation and diversification will empower the region to make best use of its resources. The new phase of sustainable growth in the region would come from deepening business relations, taking advantage of the scale economies and improving competitiveness. Becoming dominant in supply of agricultural products and manufacturing of certain medium-to-high tech items necessitates pursuing opportunities in creating niches in service industries as well. It is quite evident that in this process, private sector should feel seriously part and parcel of the whole scheme. In this regard, we need to expand our support for public-private partnerships. We also need to take measures to promote small and medium-sized businesses, start-ups and venture deals.

It is important that the ECO region to take its rightful place in this emerging new global development architecture. In this respect, I am confident that drawing from the achievements and principles of Quetta Plan of Action, ECO Long-Term Perspectives and the new ECO Vision is expected to reinforce and further catalyze regional solidarity for sustainable

development. To this end, as a member of the ECO family, the ETDB would remain committed to contribute and facilitate resource for successful achievement of goals of the new Vision.

Mr.Chairman,

Let me now shed briefly a light on the activities of ETDB. Here, I prefer not to delineate on the details of our operations which have already been provided as a comprehensive report to the respective Council. But, let me state that we are committed to ensure that each and every operation of this Bank achieves development results, contributes genuine additionality, and catalyzes investments to the region. Since 2008, which the Bank started its operations, the total amount of loans disbursed to various operations in the member states have exceeded 1 billion U.S dollars threshold as end of November 2015. The Bank has been posting a positive net income without having any non-performing loan in its well diversified portfolio. Perhaps this is one of the best levels among the peer institutions. We continue to provide support for enhancing trade, development of SMEs, meeting the financing and technical assistance needs of corporates and projects in the member counties. We have been concluding several co-financing agreements with relevant Multilateral Development Banks. Meanwhile, we also recognize the importance of strengthening Bank's capacity to deliver on technical cooperation and capacity building. Certainly we can't do this alone. In this respect, we look forward kind cooperation and assistance of the ECO member states. We have been also working on a new initiative under the name of 'ECO Regional Partnership Forum'. It is a continuing process and requires time to institutionalize a well-established substantive Forum. But I am confident that in collaboration with ECO Secretariat and member states we will realize this objective as well.

Excellencies

As I move towards my closing remarks, let me state that ETDB remains undeterred and committed to move forward with its mission. The Bank has a role to play in helping ECO members to address sustainable development challenges. We stand ready to work with prospective investors and make due contribution to regional economic development. Building on its competitive advantage of regional ownership, the Bank is better placed than any other development finance institution operating in the region to understand local and regional challenges and opportunities. Based on its competitive advantage and market niche in the region, the Bank's strategy over the next years is to be at the forefront of providing

development capital, through customer focused and innovative financing instruments backed by competitively priced funds. Additionally, looking at the outset experiences of other MDBs, a recapitalization process would enable the Bank to do more. We have a noble goal to make ECO Bank a well-recognized and reliable brand name of the region.

On a final note, I would like underline that with joining of Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, the membership base of the Bank has been enlarged to include majority of the ECO member states. I am confident that other four ECO member states would also join and support the activities of the Bank.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Statement by Dr. Atousa Goodarzi, Dean, ECO College of Insurance (ECO CI) at the 26th Meeting of Regional Planning Council

(13-17 December, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)

Mr. Chairman

Mr. Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a distinct honor for me to participate, in this meeting on behalf of ECO College of Insurance. I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretariat for their efforts and I hope that the meeting would succeed to achieve its goals and objectives.

Excellencies,

The College has been making efforts to pursue the planned activities and goals. One of the most important aims has been strengthening and development of the academic international cooperation.

In this regard, thanks to the developments in the political and international relations of the I.R. of Iran, a number of outstanding professors from ECO region and other countries from Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Australia have been invited to teach for short or long terms in ECOI.

Meanwhile, professors from ECOI have had active participation and lectures in international conferences on insurance, risk, and regional studies. Among the most outstanding conferences, we can name those held in Germany, South Korea, Afghanistan, and Canada.

Signing Memorandum of Understanding with Universities from ECO Member States comprising Arabaev Kyrgyz State University, Rabi'a Balkhi

Higher Education Institute from Afghanistan, Istanbul University, University of Lahore, Benazir Bhutto Women University and Hamdard University from Islamic Republic of Pakistan is another achievement for the College during the previous year.

Among other activities of the College are research ceremonies on the occasion of the Research Week (December, 2014), the ECOI was the host of many comprehensive programs including the lectures of professors from the ECO organizations (Cultural Institute, Secretariat, etc.), and having specialized sessions with the Chief Executive Officers and executive directors from local insurance companies.

Holding specialized meetings with CEOs from the Salamat (health), Keshavarzi (agriculture) and several other insurance companies, to address the problems and challenges facing the Iranian insurance industry, in February 2015, were another research activities conducted in the last year.

Doing research projects on a number of subjects as insurance industry, risk, etc., sponsored by Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU) and a number of insurance institutions and organizations including the Central Insurance of Islamic Republic of Iran can be considered as the other research activities for the College.

In regard with educational activities, the College had several achievements:

- 1- After being inactive for four years, the degree program "Regional Studies: Central Asia and Caucasus", it was restored since the current academic year, hosting a great number of students educating in English. The discussions offered in this program are supposed to lead to strengthening the inter-organizational and inter-regional relations.

- 2- Setting and holding English-Language Examinations for the students of Insurance Management and Actuarial Sciences was the other activity of ECOI in the last year. This was done with the aim of preparing the students of these two programs, in both BA and MA degrees, to attend the English classes and recruit the qualified students from June to August, 2015. The exams were held with the aid of the National Organization for Education Testing (NOET, widely known as Sanjesh Organization).

- 3- Four new academic staffs were recruited in the Departments of Insurance and Regional Studies. At present, the ECOI faculty is increased 80 percent relative to the previous year. With regard to the increased number of programs; further recruitment of faculty members is high on the agenda.

Excellencies,

In 2014-2015, there were considerable enhancements in the ECOI building, including the equipment of classrooms, beautifying the public spaces, building a new conference hall, etc.

Distinguished Delegates

To pursuit of the Decisions of the 25th Regional Planning Council (1-5 March, 2015), the following activities were conducted:

- I) To keep applicants of ECOI informed of the programs, scholarships, registration process, etc., brochures were designed and printed which are planned to be distributed among the ECO member states. These data has been sent to Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be distributed in the embassies of ECO member states in Tehran and ECO Secretariat. Moreover, ECOI's English website will also be soon available for any

detailed information on the process of registration, the College's educational system, etc.

- II) With regard to the delay in issuance of College's approved statute and due to its requirement in the establishment of BOT, with the efforts of ECOI, the statute was finally served in 2013.

Another prerequisite for the establishment of BOT is to introduce three academic members from ECO member states, who, according to the "Rules of Procedure" approved in the first BOT, should be introduced by ECO Secretariat. Therefore, we kindly ask the Secretariat to expedite this process, so the second BOT could be formed.

As the final point, the ECO College of Insurance welcomes the suggestions and advices of ECO member states related to the enhancement of the educational and research level of the College.

Thank you all for your attention.



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

REGIONAL COORDINATION CENTRE

December 2015



PRESENTATION TOPICS



- **Establishment of RCC**
- **Goals, Functions and Organisation of RCC**
- **Activities**
- **Conclusion & Requests**



ESTABLISHMENT OF RCC



- **ECO 20th Regional Planning Council (2010, Antalya)**
Turkey >> elected as the coordinating country on RPFS
- **ECO 19th Council of Ministers (2010, Istanbul)**
RCC >> decided to be based in Ankara
- **Established within the DG for EU and Foreign Relations, MFAL, in 2012**
- **ECO 5th Meeting of Ministers on Agriculture (2012, Antalya)**
RCC >> publicly announced



ESTABLISHMENT OF RCC



- **A coordination unit of ECO for RPFS**
 - ❖ **Full time staff appointed by MFAL**
 - ❖ **Fully financed and supported by MFAL For a period of 3 years under FTTP by a Project (GCP/RER/044/TUR) as of 01 June 2013**



GOALS OF RPFS & RCC



- **Achieve food security in ECO region**
- **Enhance cooperation on food security**
- **Raise awareness on food security**



MAIN FUNCTIONS OF RCC - 1



- **Facilitating & coordinating all activities relevant to the implementation of RPFS**
- **Enhancing cooperation, knowledge sharing and information exchange on food security among ECO member states**
- **Collaborating with national and international organizations on food security**
- **Working & cooperating with relevant institutions for facilitating the implementation of the projects to be developed**



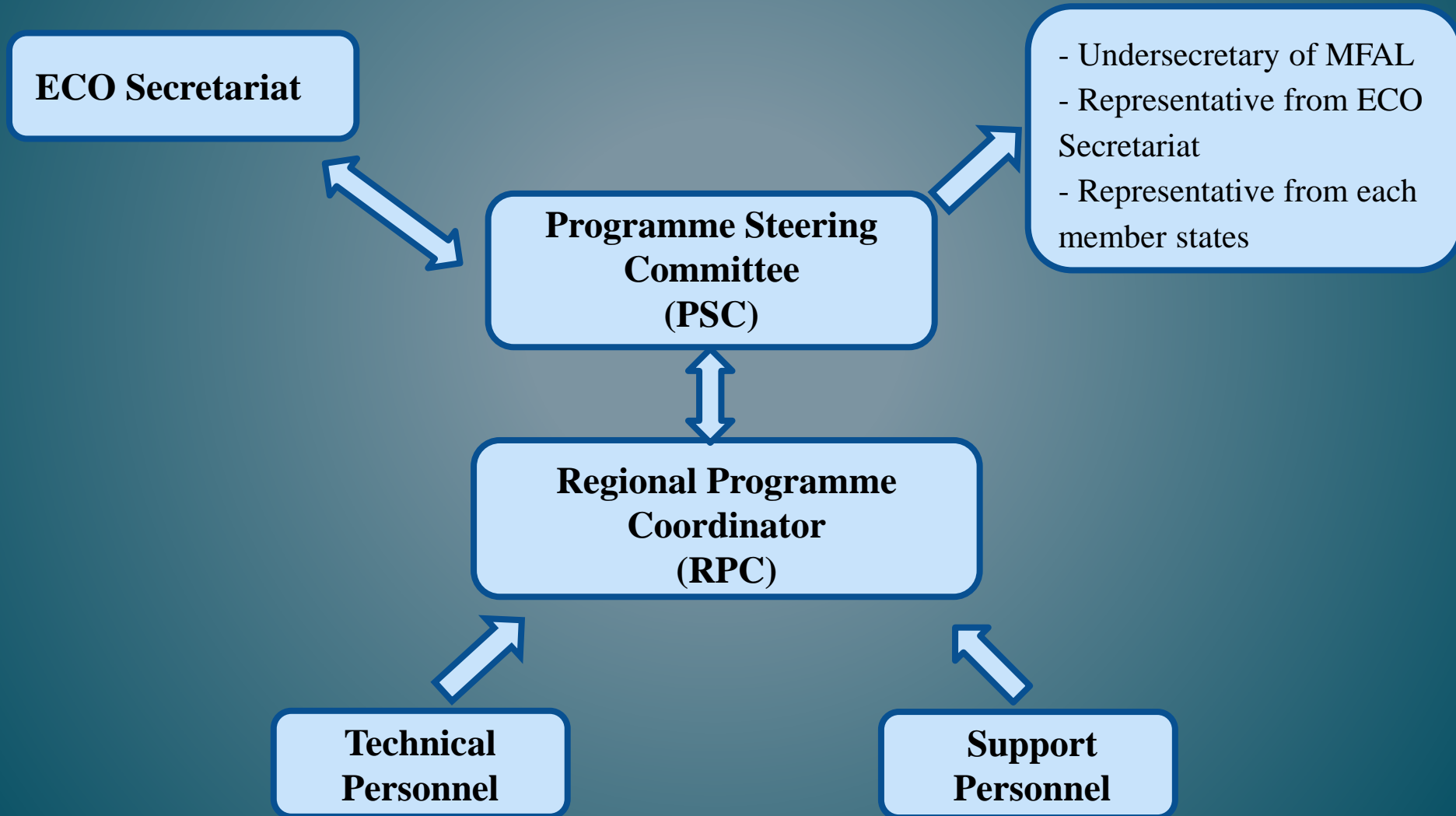
MAIN FUNCTIONS OF RCC - 2



- **Organizing trainings, seminars and workshops to strengthen institutional capacity on food security**
- **Contacting potential donors for funding projects**
- **Raising awareness on FS in ECO Region**



ORGANISATION & WORKING PRINCIPLES





RCC'S ACTIVITIES (PAST)



- **Training of trainees from member countries**
 - Writing skills and preparing presentation
 - OIC-COMCEC PCM Project Preparation
 - 1st Phase of the Food Security and PCM Training
(Ankara, 04-22 Nov 2013)
 - 2nd Phase of the Food Security and PCM Training
(Izmir, 02-13 June 2014)



RCC'S ACTIVITIES (PAST)



○ Attending food security related meetings

- *the focal points meeting of COMCEC*
- *G20 Agriculture Ministers Meeting*
- *G20 3rd Agricultural Deputies Meeting*
- *Workshop on Aligning the Costing Methodologies to End Hunger*
- *COMCEC Agriculture Working Group*
- *CFS 42 Session*
- *7. Meeting of OECD Food Value Chain Network*
- *COP21-Paris*



RCC'S ACTIVITIES (FUTURE)



- **2nd Programme Steering Committee Meeting**
(Ankara, 10-11 January 2016)
- **Training for Food Security, Project Cycle Management and Project Writing (2 phase)**
- **Missions to member states**



CONCLUSION & REQUESTS



- **Active participation in RCC's activities**
- **Redetermination of National Focal Points for RPFS**
- **Creating Food Security Projects in line with RPFS**
- **Help on Publicity & Visibility of RCC**
- **Finding donors**



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Regional Programme Coordinator



**Address by Mian Muhammad Adrees, President,
ECO CCI & FPCCI in the 26th Meeting of the
ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)
ECO Secretariat-Tehran**



- H.E. _____,
 - H.E _____,
 - _____,
 - Excellency, Head of Missions,
 - Distinguished guests,
 - Ladies & Gentlemen,
- Assalam-o-Alaikum,

REMARKS OF GRATITUDE

It is a great honour for me to represent the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the 26th meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC).

I am confident that under the collaborative and supportive role of the Business Community of the ECO Region, we will move rapidly towards realization of its cherished goals. I assure you the full support to your endeavors in this direction.

I would also like to thank the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca and his dedicated team, for their important contribution to the preparatory work of these events.

NEW ECONOMIC SCENARIO

My learned colleagues, we are aware, several important and clearly visible changes have been observed in the world political and economic scenarios. Creating a misleading image of Islam, war against terrorism, rapidly increasing poverty, growing number of uneven treaties and economic agreements, and cut-throat global competitions for survival of businesses are the phenomena of impulsive changes in the global economic environment.

Subsidies, taxation polices, protectionism, trade promotion through political agreements, demand-led business strategies and trade negotiations were the historical strategic tools of economic policies.

Now, all policies are based on supply side. In the present scenario, we have to develop long-term strategies for economic participation and infrastructure development to compete in free trade regime.

PAKISTAN AND ECO COUNTRIES

Ladies and Gentlemen, Pakistan has a policy of closer and growing relations with the Muslim world in general and the neighboring Muslim countries in particular. The establishment of RCD (Regional Cooperation for Development) in 1964 was a step towards this end. The renaming of RCD as ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) in 1985 has institutionalized the traditional relations.

The countries of the ECO and the area now known as Pakistan have centuries old trade relations. The caravans carrying goods from Indus to Persia and Central Asia used to bring back in return consumable goods to this area. So these countries had been trading with each other for centuries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the economies of the ECO region have the advantage of economic complementary besides their cultural, historical, religious and geographical closeness. For example Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are oil and gas producing and exporting countries while Pakistan and Turkey are oil and gas importing countries. The Central Asian Republics have significant potential for hydroelectric power.

Electricity demand in Pakistan is growing rapidly and is facing strain domestic supply. Similarly in Afghanistan, the underdeveloped power sector is a major constraint to economic and social development.

Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic have large untapped hydropower resources relative to their needs, which could potentially be developed into competitive regional power plants. There is immense potential for cooperation in this field.

Similarly, Pakistan and Kazakhstan are exporters of agricultural products like wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables while Iran and Turkey are importers of these agricultural commodities.

Pakistan's Textile Sector is in an advanced stage while countries like Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are trying to establish competitive textile industry. They can benefit from Pakistan who in turn can further strengthen its competitiveness in textile industry in collaboration with these countries.

Turkey has developed its automobile and construction industries and Pakistan's automobile and construction industries can benefit from their experience. The automotive sector of Pakistan has shown significant growth in the last couple of years.

Distinguished Guests, A lot of untapped and unexplored potential exists in the ECO region, which requires to be harnessed through collaborative plan and action to achieve the target of higher intra-regional trade within the region.

Our intra-regional trade is remain insignificant, socio-economic condition varies significantly in the region, rules and regulations for trade are very different from one country to other.

For enhancing regional economic and trade relations the implementation of ECOTA (which is a free trade agreement), Establishment of custom union, signing of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), linking of proposed Gwadar Kashgar motorways, harmonization in business and financial regulations etc. are requires that need to be focused by all member states.

CONCLUSION

I am sure that ECO CCI secretariat in Pakistan would be a pivot for generating socio-economic activities to take the region at the peak of prosperity.

Thank you.
Mian Muhammad Adrees
President FPCCI

26th MEETING OF REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL (RPC) OF ECO

December 13-17, 2015, Tehran- IRAN

Statement by

The President ECO Science Foundation, Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro

Excellency the Chairman of 26th RPC,

Excellency the Secretary General of ECO,

Excellencies the Ambassadors and Delegates from ECO Member States, The Observers,
Heads of Specialized Agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam-O-Alaikum and a Very Good Morning to you all!

It is indeed a pleasure for me to address this august forum of 26th RPC. At the outset, I congratulate H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça for assuming the responsibility as Secretary General of ECO. Indeed a challenging task but also a great opportunity to contribute towards the Peace & Prosperity of the Region and leave a legacy behind!

Excellencies, on behalf of the ECO Science Foundation and on my own behalf, I express deep gratitude to all the Member States and ECO Secretariat for their continuous support to the Foundation. Our special thanks are due to the Government of Pakistan for patronizing ECOSF through its Ministries of Science & Technology and Foreign Affairs.

Gentlemen and Ladies, I am pleased to report that the 2nd Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Science Foundation was held on 11 August 2015 in Islamabad co-sponsored by the Government of Pakistan. The BoT Meeting, preceded by the Executive Committee Meeting, was Chaired by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan through its Federal Secretary for Science and Technology, and was attended by the Deputy Ministers for Science & Technology, Representatives, Diplomats and High Officials of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan.

The ECO Secretary-General or his representative could not join the Meeting due to other pressing engagements. However, in his written statement sent to President ECOSF, Ambassador Dr. Shamel Aleskerov appreciated ECOSF initiatives and achievements as well as the Member States and especially Pakistan and Iran for financially supporting the Foundation. The representatives from ECOSF collaborators viz., UNESCO Islamabad and Ev-K2-CNR Foundation of Italy attended the Meeting as observers and made statements, while the Chairpersons of ISTIC Kuala Lumpur and the Inter-Academy Partnership Science Education Program (IAP SEP), Trieste-Italy, sent their written statements to the Foundation.

Excellencies, It is also important to mention here that in spite of budgetary difficulties, we are constantly pursuing our planned activities- thanks to the Governments of Pakistan and Iran and our collaborators for making financial and technical contributions which made those activities possible I highly appreciate the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan for paying their full annual mandatory budget contribution since year 2012. We are also grateful to Islamic Republic of Iran for paying budget contribution for the year 2012 and partial payment for 2013. However, we look forward to their continued support. I very much hope that Islamic Republic of Iran will soon pay their remaining share of budget contribution for 2013, 2014 and 2015. I also call upon the remaining three ratifying member states- Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to kindly make their mandatory contributions at the earliest.

I take this opportunity to urge other member states to ratify the ECOSF charter so as to benefit from its programs and let the Foundation function at fullest strength. Let me assure you Excellencies, that we are cognizant of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and all our current and future programmes have been tuned to SDGs. In fact we would be pleased to assist member states in pursuing their SDGs particularly of S&T research, Education, Gender and Environment. In this regard, the Foundation has submitted its recommendations to the ECO Secretariat for developing the ECO Vision for next decade.

Excellencies, you are aware that ECO Science Foundation has established a "Science & Technology Fund" for financing the collaborative research projects. As per requirement, all the modalities for utilization of this Fund had already been worked out and approved in the 20th meeting of ECO COM held in October 2012 at Baku, Azerbaijan. Although pledges for voluntary contribution to the Fund have been made by the Governments of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, actual contribution has not come through from any member state yet. Thus, I request member states the contribute generously please.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, I am very pleased to report that the Government of Pakistan – Ministry of Science and Technology has officially allocated a rent-free Office Space of around 2,500 square feet in its newly constructed building. I therefore would like to put on record my sincere appreciations to the Government of Pakistan for facilitating the Foundation.

Excellencies, I am pleased also, to report that ECOSF initiated the first scientific research collaboration agreed upon between two ECO member states; Pakistan and Tajikistan. It is among the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) of the University of Karachi- Pakistan and the Academy of Sciences of Republic of Tajikistan through its Institute of Chemistry and Botany. The collaboration was coordinated and co-sponsored by ECOSF and the institutes have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for joint research projects as well as exchange of scientists and students among them under the auspices and patronage of ECO Science Foundation. The ICCBS has offered 10 fellowships/scholarships (local hospitality only) to Tajikistan under the MoU. Similar interactions are being promoted among other member states as well and the Foundation would welcome proposals.

Excellencies it is compulsory to bring to your kind notice that ECOSF has developed good interaction with numerous international science and technology organizations and Donors including UNESCO, International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (ISTIC),

Kuala Lumpur- Malaysia, the *La main a la pate* Foundation of France, the European Union, ISESCO, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), COMSATS, EvK2CNR Foundation of Italy, Science Education Programme (SEP) of Inter-Academy Panel (IAP), ISTC Astana-Kazakhstan as well as many Pakistani institutions and has received in-kind technical support from them for programs of the Foundation.

In this respect, it is great pleasure to report that with the support of our international collaborators, a very successful International Capacity Building workshop on "Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE)" was jointly organized by ECOSF and the Committee of Science under the Ministry of Education and Science, Government of Republic of Kazakhstan on 22-25 June, 2015 at Astana-Kazakhstan. Follow-up activities of this initiative are planned in Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite financial and logistic difficulties, the Foundation undertook numerous important scientific activities during 2015. Details have been provided in the written progress report. The Foundation also circulates an electronic newsletter- *ECOSF NEWS*, issued every three months; however, highlights of some milestones are briefly included in my written statement circulated.

1. Since its establishment, ECOSF has signed MoUs for promotion of scientific research & capacity building in the ECO region with various organizations.
2. ECOSF nominated scientific experts from the member states to numerous International Forums. Those included:
 - a. **LAMAP**: Some 15 nominations from ECO countries were sent to LAMAP for its sixth International seminar on science and technology education in schools held in Paris (1-6 June 2015). Nine nominations were selected from Azerbaijan (01), Iran (02), Kazakhstan (02), Pakistan (02) and Turkey (02). It is imperative to mention that all candidates were fully sponsored by the organizers.
 - b. **IPBES**
 1. In the first call for experts in 2015, seven experts from Pakistan, Iran and Turkey have been nominated for different IPBES deliverables.
 2. ECOSF's five nominations (04 from Pakistan and 01 from Iran) were received/selected by the organizers for IPBES Work Programme.
 3. Nominations for expert reviewers for deliverable 3a: "Thematic assessment of pollinators, pollination and food production" were invited/circulated in June 2015.
 - c. **ISTIC**. One participant from Tajikistan joined ISTIC Certified Training Programme on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy and Management for Developing Countries (ICPS) 17 – 24 August 2015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
 - d. **International S&T Centre (ISTC)**: Six nominations from Pakistan were sent for a joint ISTC/STCU Meeting in France (September 2015); three were selected. The nominations were only asked from Pakistan by the organizers.

3. To mark the World Water Day (WWD) 2015, ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) in collaboration with the Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, Government of Pakistan, and many other multi-stakeholders organized a conference on March 27, 2015 focusing on this year's global theme, 'Water and Sustainable Development - Role of Youth for Sustainable Water Resource Management'.
4. ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) in collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office for Asia & Pacific-Jakarta, Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) and the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (ISTIC) Malaysia and the Federation of Engineering Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (FEIAP) organized International Meeting on "Developing the Roadmap on Engineering Qualification Standardization: Preparing Future Engineers for Sustainable Development" at Islamabad- Pakistan on 9-10 January 2015. Two participants from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan also participated in the meeting.
5. ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) triggered and embarked upon a new initiative in Afghanistan- the UNESCO's "Man and Biosphere (MAB)" Programme in June 2015. It began with an international training workshop on the concept of UNESCO's MAB Programme organized jointly by ECOSF, NESCO (Pakistan and Afghanistan) in partnership with the Pakistan National MAB Committee, and IUCN-Pakistan for the Afghan National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) in Kabul from 7-10 June 2015.
6. ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), UNESCO Islamabad and Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) celebrated the World Science Day on 11 November 2015 at PSF to create awareness and encourage students towards scientific education and research with a view of sharing ideas between the scientists and students. In this context, various awareness raising activities supported by ECO Science Foundation were also organized by the PSF Science Caravans across the country.

Excellencies, it's my pleasure to inform you that in pursuance of the decisions of its 2nd BoT meeting held on 11 August 2015 in Islamabad, a "Meeting of Eminent Scientists/Experts of ECO Member States to prioritize focus areas for research funding under S&T Fund of ECOSF" is scheduled to be organized from **28-30 December 2015** at Islamabad-Pakistan. Main Objective of the meeting is to ascertain the strengths and ongoing activities of scientific institutions in ECO member states and prioritize the focus areas for research funding under S&T Fund of ECOSF. So far, we have received nominations from the Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey. The Foundation is bearing all the travel and stay expenses of two scientists from each country and I urge other member states to send their nominations immediately so that the concrete plans pertaining to ECO region can be finalized.

The ECOSF BoT in its 2nd meeting in August 2016 also approved initiation of Travel Grants Programme of the Foundation; it has already been launched, and the information has been uploaded on ECOSF website. The desiring Researchers/ Scientists/ Engineers/ Technologists can apply for the grants through self explanatory Request Form (**ECOSF-TG1**), which can be downloaded from ECOSF website.

Finally, I would like to say that the Foundation is making all possible efforts to promote science, technology and educational activities in the region with the collaboration and support of International Organizations.; however, the greatest difficulty we are facing is; the slow response from the member states and the Focal Points need to be activated for timely response. If the response is faster, I assure you that despite shortage of funds, our activities would increase many folds.

At the end, I express my sincere thanks to ECO Secretariat for the commendable efforts in convening this 26th RPC meeting.

Thank you Excellencies!

Statement by: Dr. Sasan Rabieh, Coordinator of ECO-IEST, RPC 26, December 2015, ECO Secretariat

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor,

Your Excellency ECO Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Esteemed delegations of Member States,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my genuine pleasure for me, as the Coordinator of the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology to address the 26th Regional Planning Council on weeks we are on the verge of the 5th anniversary of starting the functions of the Institute within the framework of environmental agenda of the ECO region.

Just to refresh your memory, as you are well informed, on 9th February 2011, the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology hosted by the College of Environment in Karaj was inaugurated after a long process of establishment which was started in 2004 and following a proposal to the ECO Ministerial Meeting in Istanbul, 2004 and the consequent approval of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Almaty 2006 for starting the functions of the ECO-IEST, provisionally, on a project basis, until the Member States further decide on this matter on the basis of experience to be gained during four years of its functioning.

10 years after the brilliant idea of establishing an environmental arm for the Organization, on the 5th anniversary of our establishment; and at the beginning of a new era in the life of ECO as an organization of economic nature which is going to consider environment as a crosscutting issues in all its activities, significance and essence of such institute for the region is acknowledged more than ever. Depth and diversity of environmental related issues in today world generally and in our region specifically is so high that fulfillment of the ECO environmental agenda without an strong, active body which enjoys the full support of all the esteemed Member States could not be imagined.

Excellencies, as you all are well aware ECO-IEST has been established for our region in order to:

- generate knowledge through research and studies on environment ,
- strengthen human resources through training and educational programs ,
- promote scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of experiences,
- create a network of experts in the region,
- strengthen bilateral and multilateral co-operation to mobilize international assistance for environmental conservation.

And for achieving these target through

- Professional Training;
- Information Sharing and Technology;
- Networking;
- Scientific cooperation ;
- Resource mobilization;
- and CEPA

we have tried to strengthen the capacity of key actors in environmental conservation in the region, and promote exchange of information and experience with efficient management of resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are going to release our annual report in a few days and like the previous years, as well as the reports of all our activities, and environmental events within the region it will be available on our website, but to brief you about what we have been up to during the last year I want to mention some of the most highlighted activities of ECO-IEST in 2015:

- ▶ Contribution to the Safranbolu Climate Change Conference;
- ▶ Organizing ECO Consultation Meeting on SOEr in Istanbul;
- ▶ MoU with the Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA);
- ▶ Organizing 2nd Conference on Wetlands Management and Engineering;
- ▶ Daily coverage of environmental news and event within the region and beyond on the website;
- ▶ Conducting a preliminary study on desertification in the ECO Region;
- ▶ Developing draft policy paper for "ECO climate change roadmap to Paris and beyond";
- ▶ Participation in "Eye on Earth" Summit 2015, 16th WGEMA meeting, European REIN Conference, etc.

Pursuing the mandates given to us by the ECO Decision making bodies we have also been trying to start conducting a number of important regional projects including:

- ▶ The Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming;
- ▶ Regional Project to Combat Desertification with a Special Emphasis on Dust Haze and Sand Storm in the Region;
- ▶ Cooperation with the Secretariat in preparation of the ECO Bulletin on Environment;

- ▶ Developing the 1st State of Environment report for the ECO Region;

Excellencies,

Like the previous years, in 2016 we will do our best to be a part of many environmental events within the region and among others are going to cooperate in organizing the 6th Working Group Meeting on Environment, a workshop on Green Economy and the 3rd Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity.

All these tasks and duties takes much of effort, hard work and dedication, but my colleagues at the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology are looking to you for extending your kind support and are ready to continue to play an active role in performing our mandates and contributing to fulfillment of the ECO Environmental agenda.

We are here to answer any question and welcome any suggestion and proposition regarding improving the quality of our services and many thanks for your attention and time.