



**ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)  
SECRETARIAT  
(TEHRAN)**

**Report of**  
**The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers**  
**(Tehran, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2009)**

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The ECO Secretariat, Tehran

**Report**  
**of**  
**The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM)**  
(Tehran, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2009)

1. The Eighteenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, on March 9, 2009. The meeting was attended by delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. A delegation of the ECO Secretariat, led by the Secretary General, participated in the meeting. The representatives of ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions also participated in the meeting. In addition, present were the representatives of ECO's partner regional/international organizations. The list of participants is attached as **Annex-I**.

2. The meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) was preceded by the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) on March 7 – 8, 2009, under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Dr. Mohsen Talaie, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his opening remarks, Dr. Talaie extended a warm welcome to all delegations and expressed his thanks to the ECO Secretariat for making necessary preparations and documentation for the meeting. Dr. Talaie noted that the member states of ECO had vast potential in diverse fields and were, in a strong position to withstand the negative impacts of the current Global Financial Crisis. The potential could be realized faster by adopting agreed measures, including increased market access through the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), closer cooperation in energy, investment and banking, and greater regional connectivity.

3. The Secretary General of ECO, welcoming the Senior Officials, expressed the hope that their constructive contributions to the deliberations would make the COM a great success. He touched on the progress made in various fields. He mentioned some of the main goals achieved and the advancement made towards other objectives. The Secretary General expressed his thanks to the Government and the people of Iran, in particular, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for hosting this important ECO event and making excellent arrangements to ensure its success.

**Agenda Item No. 1**  
**Opening**

4. The meeting began with a recitation from the Holy Quran and the national anthem of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

5. The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He underlined the need to accelerate efforts for regional integration and cooperation and recalled that Member States had a consensus to further strengthen the process. The Foreign Minister listed important agreements and documents that ECO had concluded in diverse areas. He mentioned, in particular, the Transit Transport Framework Agreement, the ECO Trade Agreement, the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen and Transit Drivers, the Agreement on

Promotion and Protection of Investment, establishment of the ECO Trade and Development Bank and the ECO Reinsurance Company. He called for expediting their implementation. A copy of the Statement is placed as **Annex-II**.

Agenda Item No. 2

**Election of the Chairman and his statement**

6. His Excellency Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, being the incumbent Chairman of COM, opened the meeting with a brief statement. He expressed appreciation for the hospitality extended by the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He appreciated the progress that the Organization had made since the last COM meeting (Herat, October, 2007). He expressed the hope that ECO would gain greater height in the months ahead. The Afghan Foreign Minister proposed that His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, be elected as the new Chairman of the COM. The Council unanimously endorsed the election of Mr. Mottaki.

7. Assuming the Chairmanship of the COM, His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki thanked the Members of the Council for reposing confidence in him and outlined his vision for further enhancing economic cooperation in the region. He said that Iran remained committed to ECO's aims and objectives, and, with the support of the member states, would do its utmost to promote them further.

Agenda Item No. 3

**Adoption of the Agenda**

8. The Council adopted the following agenda, which was prepared by the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and endorsed by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) held on 7 – 8 March, 2009:

1. Inauguration
2. Election of the Chairman and his statement
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Report of the Secretary General
5. Statements by Ministers/Heads of Delegation
6. Statements by Heads of International Organizations
7. Statements by Heads of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies
8. ECO Agreements: Reports by Coordinating Countries/the Secretariat:
  - i. Status of Signing/Ratification/Implementation of ECO Agreements
  - ii. ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)/Fast Track Approach
  - iii. Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA)
  - iv. Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of Member States/Draft Protocol Amending the Agreement
  - v. MOU on establishment of ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM)

9. ECO Institutions:
  - A) Reports of the Heads of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies.
    - i. ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)
    - ii. ECO Trade & Development Bank (ETDB)
    - iii. ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECCI)
    - iv. ECO College of Insurance (ECI)
    - v. ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC)
    - vi. ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM)
    - vii. The ECO Re-insurance Company
    - viii. The ECO Science Foundation
    - ix. The ECO Educational Institute
  - B) Establishment of new Regional Institutions:
    - i. The ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM)
    - ii. The ECO Seed Association
    - iii. The ECO Nanotechnology-Network
    - iv. The ECO Tourism Promotion Fund
    - v. The ECO Representative Office for the Development of Science and New Technologies in Almaty
    - vi. The ECO Green Industry Award
10. Priority Projects/Programmes:
  - i. Study on Trading Patterns of ECO Region
  - ii. ECO-UNIDO Project on Trade Capacity Building of ECO Member States
  - iii. ECO Trade and Investment Network Web Portal
  - iv. Transport and Communications (Container & Passenger Trains from Istanbul to Almaty, Programme of Actions for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications, ECO Postage Stamp)
  - v. Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Train Project
  - vi. Reconstruction of Afghanistan.
  - vii. The ECO-Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS)
  - viii. The EC-financed project to fight illicit drugs
  - ix. The Almaty-Bandar Abbas Demonstration train project
11. Relations with other international organizations
12. Review and approval of ECO activities:
  - i. The Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)
  - ii. The Secretariat's budget for 2008-2009
  - iii. The scale of assessment of Member States to the Secretariat's Budget for 2009 till 2015
  - iv. The Secretariat's Audit Report for 2007
  - v. The status of unpaid contributions by member states to the Secretariat's budget
  - vi. The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), including:
    - a. The Annual Calendar of Events for 2008-2009

- b. The Work Program for 2008-2009
- vii. The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), including:
  - a. The Annual Calendar of Events for 2009-2010
  - b. The Work Program for 2009-2010
- viii. Sectoral Ministerial meetings held after the 17<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting:
  - a. The 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications (Antalya, 15-17 April, 2008)
  - b. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of ECO Interior Ministers (Ashgabat, May 2008)
  - c. The 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (Baku, September 2008)
  - d. The 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Tourism (Tehran, October 2008)
  - e. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy (Tehran, December 2008)
- ix. Implementation of decisions of the 17<sup>th</sup> COM meeting
- 13. The current World Financial and Economic Crisis: Turning it into Opportunities for the ECO Region
- 14. Administrative Matters/Amendments to Basic Documents:
  - a. Appointment of Secretary General
  - b. Appointment of Deputy Secretaries General
  - c. Appointment of President of ECI
  - d. Revision of Functional Methodology of ECO
  - e. Amendments in the Staff Regulations
  - f. Amendments in the ECO Rules of Procedure
  - g. Amendments in the Organizations Charts of the Organization/Secretariat
  - h. Amendments to the Basic Documents of ECI
- 15. Preparation for the 10<sup>th</sup> Summit:
  - i. Draft Agenda.
  - ii. Draft Tehran Declaration
  - iii. ECO Awards 2008
- 16. Any other business
- 17. Date and venue of the next meeting
- 18. Adoption of the Report
- 19. Vote of thanks and closing

Agenda Item No. 4

**Report of the Secretary General**

9. The Council appreciated the Report of the Secretary General on the activities of ECO since the last COM meeting (Herat, October, 2007). The report had been circulated to member states vide Secretariat's note verbale No. SG/10<sup>th</sup> Summit/2009/256 dated 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2009.

10. In his statement, the Secretary General reviewed ECO's activities highlighting the progress made since Herat, the progress made on projects and initiatives as well as the projections for the current year. The Secretary General dilated on the outcome of sectoral

Ministerial and other high-level meetings, and ECO's relations with other regional and international organizations. The statement also touched on the activities of ECO's Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies. A copy of his statement is attached at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 5

**Statements by Ministers/Heads of Delegation**

11. The Ministers/Heads of delegations delivered their statements, outlining their countries' economic and trade developments and views on ECO's performance and policy objectives. The statements are placed at **Annex-IV**.

Agenda Item No. 6

**Statements by Heads of International Organizations**

12. The Heads of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Afghanistan, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) made brief statements. They identified areas of on-going cooperation and prospects for further progress. These included, in particular, trade, investment, transportation and private sector development. They assured ECO of all possible support to its plans for closer regional integration. Copies of the statements are attached at **Annex-V**.

13. The Council welcomed the signing of a trilateral ECO-IDB-UNESCAP MOU on Transport Development.

Agenda Item No. 7

**Statements by Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies**

14. The Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies attended the meeting and made brief statements. These included, the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) and the ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECO TDB). Also circulated were the statements of the ECO College of Insurance (ECI) and the ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC). Copies of the statements are attached at **Annex. VI**.

Agenda Item No. 8

**ECO Agreements: Reports by Coordinating Countries/the Secretariat:**

15. The Council took note of the briefing made by the Secretariat and the Coordinating Countries on the latest status of ECO Agreements/MOUs. The details are as follows:

**i. Status of Signing/Ratification/Implementation of ECO Agreements**

16. The Council took note of the Status Reports on ECO initiatives and stressed timely action by the member states for signing and ratification in order to accelerate the process of regional integration.

**ii. ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)/Fast Track Approach**

17. The Council noted that the implementation of ECOTA tariff concessions, as agreed by the Contracting Parties, from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2009 had been delayed. It was the most important ECO initiative and its implementation should be accelerated in the interest of regional trade. It had to be pursued vigorously so that the goal of establishing a Free Trade Area in the region, as visualized under the ECO Vision 2015, could be achieved.

18. On the pending negotiations on Protocol to the Fast Track Approach, the Council agreed that negotiations among the Contracting Parties would be commenced in due course so that it could be implemented within a year of the implementation of ECOTA. It was also suggested that the Member States initiate negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to deepen concessions for grant of enhanced market access.

19. The Council, appreciating the progress being made by some of the Contracting Parties in early finalization of their ECOTA lists and Proof of Rules of Origin, urged the remaining Contracting Parties to submit their Lists. It also urged the Republic of Tajikistan to ratify the Protocol on Annexures to ECOTA as soon as possible.

20. The Council welcomed Pakistan's offer, as the Coordinating Country on ECOTA, for the technical assistance and capacity building of Member States.

**iii. Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA)**

21. The Council welcomed the ratification of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) by eight signatory member states and expressed the hope that Turkmenistan would ratify it as soon as possible. The Council looked forward to Uzbekistan's accession to this important Agreement.

22. The Council noted, with appreciation, that the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) and its auxiliary bodies achieved significant progress in the six meetings held during 2008.

23. The Council noted with satisfaction the establishment of the ECO Fund for Implementation of the TTFA and asked the Secretariat to mobilize resources from international organizations as well as voluntary contributions by Member States.

24. The Council expressed the hope that the ECO Council of Bureaux would be activated for achieving the desired results through ECO Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability Insurance Scheme (ECO White Card) which entered into force from July 2008.

25. The Council expressed satisfaction on the commencement of a Joint ECO/IDB Technical Assistance Project worth US\$512,000/-, for the implementation of the TTFA with IDB contributing US\$412,000/-.

26. The Council urged the Secretariat to pursue its proposed outlines for a TA Project on setting up a transit transport system in the ECO region and request the Bank for inclusion of the TA in its work programme for 2009.

27. The Council urged Kazakhstan to host the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TTCC and its auxiliary bodies in 2009, with partial coverage of the costs of the Meetings from the TTFA Fund as decided by the 3<sup>rd</sup> TTCC Meeting (Tehran, December 2008).

**iv. Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of Member States/Draft Protocol Amending the Agreement**

28. The Council approved the Additional Protocol to the Agreement on the Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen and Transit Drivers of ECO Member States and the Plan of Action endorsed by 141<sup>st</sup> CPR (November 2008).

29. Welcoming the signing of the Additional Protocol by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan during the 18<sup>th</sup> COM, the Council urged the remaining member states to sign the Protocol aimed at facilitating free movement of businessmen and transit drivers across the region.

**v. MOU on establishment of ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM)**

30. Welcoming the establishment of the ECO-RCRM, the Council called for finalization of the draft Statute prepared by the Working Group Meeting (Tehran, December, 2008). The Council also urged Turkey and Uzbekistan to expedite signing the MOU on establishment of ECO-RCRM.

Agenda Item No. 9

**ECO Institutions:**

**A) Reports of the Heads of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and affiliated bodies.**

31. The Council took note, with appreciation, of the annual reports submitted by the ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions and expressed the hope that the regional institutions/specialized agencies would continue to play a meaningful role in the progress and development of the region.

32. The Council, considering the need to infuse fresh dynamism into ECO's specialized institutions, took the following decisions in respect of the affiliated bodies:

**i. ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)**

33. The Council acknowledged a more active role being played by ECI in creating forums such as Union of ECO Heads of Printing Agencies and Broadcasting and National Libraries. It called on ECI to launch publicity drive for ECO as a function officially delegated to the Institute. The Council urged member states not yet party to the ECI Charter to join it in order for ECI to become a more dynamic culture promotion organization.

**ii. ECO Trade & Development Bank (ETDB)**

34. The Council appreciated that ECO Trade and Development Bank having become functional had already launched credit schemes for the development of SME sector and short-term trade-finance facilities. The Council urged the Bank to create a technical cooperation fund to assist development projects in the region.

35. The Council called on member states to join the ECO-TDB so as to benefit from its financial facilities. It welcomed the efforts of the Bank and cooperation extended by Iran and Pakistan for opening Representatives Offices of the Bank during 2009.

**iii. ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECCI)**

36. The Council noted with appreciation that ECO-CCI Statute had been finalized at the 12<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting (Karachi July 2008). It welcomed the establishment of five Committees comprising representatives from the national chambers of the member states and hoped that these committees would hold regular meetings to formulate recommendations on strengthening private sector cooperation.

37. The Council urged ECO-CCI to hold regular trade promotion activities including Business Forums, Trade Fairs and Market Research under its ten (10) Year Plan of Action.

**iv. ECO College of Insurance (ECO-CI)**

38. The Council welcomed the signing of MOU between the ECO College of Insurance and the Central Insurance of the Islamic Republic of Iran and expressed the hope that activities, training and research programmes and publications would pick a fresh momentum in the months ahead.

39. The Council authorized the CPR to approve three members for the Board of Trustees of the ECO College of Insurance on its behalf.

**v. ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC)**

40. The Council endorsed the RPC's recommendation urging Member States to accord priority to ECO-CEC while awarding contracts for projects financed from ECO resources. The Council while appreciating ECO-CEC's report, instructed the Secretariat and the ECO-CEC to make a study of the impediments faced by the ECO-CEC and make it a viable and effective agency of the ECO. The Council recommended that the study/assessment be made and completed before the 20<sup>th</sup> RPC and presented to it for consideration.

**vi. ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM)**

41. The Council urged the ECO-RCRM to formulate proposals for seeking cooperation of international organizations with the objective of upgrading its existing capabilities.

**vii. The ECO Re-insurance Company**

42. The Council noted the progress on establishing the Re-insurance Company and called on Pakistan for early convening of the Trilateral Meeting of the Heads of ECO Insurance Companies for signing the Articles of Agreement on the establishment of ECO Re-insurance Company.

**viii. The ECO Science Foundation**

43. The Council urged the Member States to convey approval of the Basic Documents and Budget Estimates of the ECO Science Foundation within the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009.

It also requested the remaining Member States to ratify the Charter so it could have the desired regional impact.

**ix. The ECO Educational Institute**

44. The Council noted the progress on the ECO Educational Institute and requested the Republic of Turkey to host the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Institute to finalize operationalizing the ECO-EI. It also requested non-signatory Member States to sign and ratify the Charter so that its full benefit could reach all countries of the region.

**B) Establishment of new Regional Institutions:**

**i. The ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM)**

45. The Council approved the Statute of RISCAM along with the Road Map for its provisional implementation and opened the Statute for signatures by member states. It called for early operationalization of the RISCAM as outlined in the Road Map.

46. The Council welcomed signing of the Statute of RISCAM by Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey during the 18<sup>th</sup> COM and urged the remaining Member States to join in and sign the Statute as early as possible.

**ii. The ECO Seed Association**

47. The Council welcomed the approval by the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture of the establishment of the ECO Seed Association in Turkey and its operationalization by the Committee responsible for the establishment process. It also endorsed the three regional schemes developed in the framework of the “ECO-FAO Technical Cooperation Program for Strengthening Seed Supply in ECO Region” for the harmonization of seed regulations of the member states. The Council called on the ECO Seed Association, the member states and the Secretariat to take necessary measures for timely and effective implementation in collaboration with FAO and ICARDA.

48. The Council requested member states to actively participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> ECO Seed Conference and Trade Exhibition to be held in Turkey on 4-6 December, 2009.

**iii. The ECO Nanotechnology-Network**

49. The Council endorsed the Project on the Establishment of ECO-Nanotechnology Network in line with the relevant decision of 137<sup>th</sup> CPR and called for its early implementation.

**iv. The ECO Tourism Promotion Fund**

50. The Council approved the Modality for the Establishment of ECO Tourism Promotion Fund and called on member states to activate it by providing their country contributions to it. It thanked Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey for their declaration (at the 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, Tehran, October, 2008) to provide financial contribution to the Fund as soon as it became operational.

v. **The ECO Representative Office for the Development of Science and New Technologies in Almaty**

51. The Council approved, in principle, the idea of establishment of ECO Representative Office for the Development of Science and New Technologies in Almaty and mandated the CPR to work out and approve the details of establishment of the Office in accordance with the basic documents of ECO, such as Modalities for Establishment of New Regional Centres. It also asked for determining its position vis-à-vis other ECO institutions that might have similar functions such as ECO Science Foundation and ECO Nanotechnology Network. It recommended that, in the meanwhile, Kazakhstan would operate the Office by providing initial infrastructure such as local staff, premises etc. The Council also recommended to CPR to consider allocating seed money from the ECO Feasibility Fund for opening the Office in 2009.

52. The Council recommended that Kazakhstan ratify the Charter of the ECO Science Foundation so that this Representative Office could establish linkages with the ECO Science Foundation and move forward in a more meaningful manner.

vi. **The ECO Green Industry Award**

53. The Council approved the draft modalities endorsed by the 145<sup>th</sup> CPR Meeting and urged Member States to support instituting the ECO Green Industry Award.

**Agenda Item No. 10**

**Priority Projects/Programmes:**

54. The Council took note of the Status Reports presented by the Secretariat and the briefing made by the Member States with regard to implementation of priority projects/agreements. The Council deliberated as follows:

i) **Study on Trading Patterns of ECO Region**

55. The Council appreciated the launching of the Study as a joint ECO-PIDE Project, encompassing additional activities for developing a deeper and broader understanding of the trade and economic policies of the Member States. The activities designed on the “Trade Policy Reviews” model of the WTO could be helpful in preparation of the Member States for their WTO accession. The Council urged the Secretariat to coordinate Trade Policy Review Sessions on annual basis to project Trade Policy goals and achievements of the Member States. It called on the Member States to extend all possible support to the Secretariat for timely completion of the first ever Study on regional trading patterns.

ii) **ECO-UNIDO Project on Trade Capacity Building of ECO Member States**

56. The Council appreciated the successful completion of the surveys and Expert Group Meeting (EGM) under the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of ECO-UNIDO Project on Trade Capacity Building of ECO Member States. It welcomed the financial and technical support offered by UNIDO for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the ECO-UNIDO Project on Trade Capacity Building of ECO Member States in Standards, Metrology, Testing and Quality (SMTQ), commencing from April 2009. The Council expressed the hope that the Project would succeed in imparting technical training to 60 – 70 technicians from each Member State and that the objective of moving towards a regional Mutual Recognition Agreement on Standardization would be achieved. The Council noted that the removal of Non-Tariff Barriers through the Project would help

upgrade the quality and standards of products, strengthen institutions particularly the ECO-RISCAM and boost regional trade.

**iii) ECO Trade and Investment Network Web Portal**

57. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's plan to hold Orientation Seminars on ECO Trade & Investment Network for imparting specialized training to National Focal Points along with 15-20 officials of the relevant ministries / departments. It also appreciated the plan to carry out an assessment of the existing IT infrastructure of the Trade and Investment Promotion Organizations of the Member States and compilation of a comprehensive study of the regional developments in IT fields.

**iv) Transport and Communications (Container & Passenger Trains from Istanbul to Almaty, Programme of Actions for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications, ECO Postage Stamp)**

58. The Council called for timely action on preparation of the new Programme of Action for ECO Decade of Transport and Communication (2009-2015); and stressed the need for early setting up of a financial mechanism to support transport infrastructure projects, including those to be anticipated. The Council noted, with satisfaction, the CPR's approval of a study worth US\$60,000 to facilitate regular operation of the Container and Passenger Trains on Istanbul-Almaty Route. The CPR may consider allocation of additional funds to this important Project upon request.

59. The Council welcomed the interest of the People's Republic of China in joining the ECO railway projects and the agreements reached with the en-route member states and China to launch a demonstration train on Istanbul-Urumchi-Istanbul route in 2009.

60. The Council urged the concerned member states to launch implementation of three regional projects, including upgrading the capacity of Sarakhs Station (Iran), improving Taftan-Quetta railway (Pakistan), and building a railway by-pass around Van Lake (Turkey). The Council asked the Secretariat to obtain financial support from IDB for these important regional projects and for the early inception of feasibility study of the two railway projects proposed by Afghanistan.

61. The Council expressed its satisfaction on the issuance of ECO Common Stamp by the Member States on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit.

**v) Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Train Project**

62. The Council welcomed the decisions of the Trilateral Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to launch an ECO Container Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Route and hoped that the first demonstration run of the Train be launched on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 from Islamabad.

63. The Council called for development of an efficient Corridor Management Mechanism to ensure regular operation of the Train. The ECO Feasibility Fund should be utilized to set up such a mechanism.

**vi) Reconstruction of Afghanistan.**

64. The Council welcomed the proposal of Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TICA), the Turkish Agency of Technical Aid, for signing an MOU with ECO to take up reconstruction projects in Afghanistan and authorized the CPR to examine and work out the proposed arrangement with the Agency.

**vii) The ECO-Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS)**

65. The Council stressed the importance of the implementation of ECO Regional Programme for Food Security and called on member states to contribute funds towards this end which would facilitate acquiring financial assistance from donor agencies. It thanked the Republic of Turkey for its pledge to do so particularly through the FAO Sub-Regional Office in Ankara.

**viii) The EC-financed project to fight illicit drugs**

66. The Council welcomed the Project financed by European Commission (EC) and called on Member States to extend necessary assistance to the Project Management Team for smooth implementation of the Project.

**ix) The Almaty-Bandar Abbas Demonstration train project**

67. The Council welcomed the decisions of the 19<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting to launch a Container Train run along Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route and instructed the CPR to support feasibility studies in this regard.

Agenda Item No. 11

**Relations with other international organizations**

68. The Council expressed satisfaction over the progress made by ECO in building stronger relations with UN Agencies and other international and regional organizations. The Council urged the Secretariat to prepare the comprehensive Plan for the Enhancement of External Relations as decided by the 16<sup>th</sup> COM (Baku, 2006). It also authorized the CPR to finalize and approve the plan in a three months' period.

Agenda Item No. 12

**Review and approval of ECO activities:**

**i. The Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

69. The Council adopted the reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) for its eighteen meetings (129<sup>th</sup> – 146<sup>th</sup>) held since the 17<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting (Herat, October, 2007) and appreciated the hard work done by the CPR.

**ii. The Secretariat's budget for 2008-2009**

**a) The Secretariat's budget for 2008**

70. The Council formally approved the Secretariat's budget for 2008 amounting to US\$ 2,703,481.00, which included US\$ 128,737.00 as Feasibility Study Fund (5% of the budget).

The budget was approved by the 131<sup>st</sup> CPR meeting (9<sup>th</sup> January 2008), on behalf of the Council of Ministers which could not meet during 2008.

b) **The Secretariat’s budget for 2009**

71. The Council formally approved the Secretariat’s budget for 2009 amounting to US\$ 2,924,248.00, which included US\$ 139,250.00 as Feasibility Study Fund (5% of the budget). The budget was approved by the 143<sup>rd</sup> CPR meeting, held on 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, on behalf of the Council of Ministers.

72. The Council discussed the issue thoroughly. Reservations were expressed by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. They stated that they would pay their shares of contribution at the level of 2008. The Council instructed the CPR to consider ways and means to overcome any possible shortcoming arising from the reservations made by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

iii. **The scale of assessment of Member States to the Secretariat’s Budget for 2009 till 2015**

73. After detailed deliberations, the Council authorized the CPR to pursue and finalize the fixed scale of contributions to the Secretariat’s Budget for all Member States, using the table proposed below:

| <b>Table of the fixed Scale of Assessment from 2009 till 2015</b> |                |  |
|---|----------------|--|
| <b>Sr.</b>  | <b>Country</b> | <b>Scale of Assessment from 2009 to 2015</b> |
| 1   | Afghanistan    | 1.28   |
| 2   | Azerbaijan     | 3.21   |
| 3   | Iran           | 22   |
| 4   | Kazakhstan     | 16 (2009)                                    |
| 5   | Kyrgyzstan     | 0.66   |
| 6   | Pakistan       | 22   |
| 7   | Tajikistan     | 0.66   |
| 8   | Turkey         | 22   |
| 9   | Turkmenistan   | 3.21   |
| 10  | Uzbekistan     | 8.98   |
| <b>Total</b>  |                | <b>100</b>                                   |

iv. **The Secretariat’s Audit Report for 2007**

74. The Council approved the Audit Report on the Secretariat’s budget for 2007 which had earlier been considered and endorsed by the 139<sup>th</sup> CPR meeting (15<sup>th</sup> September, 2008).

v. **The status of unpaid contributions by member states to the Secretariat’s budget**

75. **2008 Budget:** While appreciating the member states who had paid their contributions, the Council asked Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to expedite paying their contributions, especially as the financial year had already ended. The Council emphasized the need for Member States to make necessary arrangements for remitting their contributions in time,

preferably during the first quarter of the financial year, and in no case later than the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. The Council instructed the CPR to pursue this issue.

76. The Council took note of the status of unpaid contributions by the member states as indicated in the following chart and stressed early clearing of the arrears:

| <b>Status of Member States' contributions to the ECO Secretariat Budget</b> |                     |                                    |                     |                     |                     |                                  |
|---|---------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>(As of December 31, 2008)</b>  |                     |                                    |                     |                     |                     |                                  |
| <b>No</b>   | <b>Country</b>      | <b>Contribution</b>                |                     |                     | <b>Paid in 2008</b> | <b>Total Unpaid Contribution</b> |
|   |                     | <b>Arrears from previous years</b> | <b>2008</b>         | <b>Total</b>        |                     |                                  |
| 1   | <b>Afghanistan</b>  | -360.00                            | 34,686.00           | 34,326.00           | 34,328.44           | <b>-2.44</b>                     |
| 2   | <b>Azerbaijan</b>   | 10.30                              | 86,715.00           | 86,725.30           | 86,700.00           | <b>25.30</b>                     |
| 3   | <b>Iran</b>         | -1,986.06                          | 594,767.00          | 592,780.94          | 590,000.00          | <b>2,780.94</b>                  |
| 4   | <b>Kazakhstan</b>   | 123,264.59                         | 433,577.00          | 556,841.59          | 500,000.00          | <b>56,841.59</b>                 |
| 5   | <b>Kyrgyzstan</b>   | -1,794.60                          | 17,343.00           | 15,548.40           | 17,321.51           | <b>-1,773.11</b>                 |
| 6   | <b>Pakistan</b>     | 7,929.67                           | 594,766.00          | 602,695.67          | 601,740.34          | <b>955.33</b>                    |
| 7   | <b>Tajikistan</b>   | -485.00                            | 17,343.00           | 16,858.00           | 15,799.00           | <b>1,059.00</b>                  |
| 8   | <b>Turkey</b>       | 0.00                               | 594,766.00          | 594,766.00          | 594,766.00          | <b>0.00</b>                      |
| 9   | <b>Turkmenistan</b> | 80,338.00                          | 86,715.00           | 167,053.00          | 78,994.00           | <b>88,059.00</b>                 |
| 10  | <b>Uzbekistan</b>   | 1,207,403.00                       | 242,803.00          | 1,450,206.00        | 0.00                | <b>1,450,206.00</b>              |
| <b>Total</b>  |                     | <b>1,414,319.90</b>                | <b>2,703,481.00</b> | <b>4,117,800.90</b> | <b>2,519,649.29</b> | <b>1,598,151.61</b>              |

- vi. **The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), including:**
  - a. **The Annual Calendar of Events for 2008-2009**
  - b. **The Work Program for 2008-2009**

77. The Council reviewed and adopted the report of the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held at Islamabad on March 3-6, 2008, along with the ECO Calendar of Events for 2008-2009. The Council also approved the Work Programme of the Secretariat for 2008-2009. The Council decided that each member state should host at least two meetings in a year included in the ECO Calendar of Events and instructed the CPR to follow-up this decision.

- vii. **The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), including:**
  - a. **The Annual Calendar of Events for 2009-2010**
  - b. **The Work Program for 2009-2010**

78. The Council reviewed and adopted the report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held at Tehran on January 12 – 14, 2009, along with the ECO Calendar of Events for 2009-2010. The Council also approved the Work Programme of the Secretariat for 2009-2010. The Council reiterated that each member state should host at least two meetings in a year included in the ECO Calendar of Events and instructed the CPR to follow-up this decision.

**viii. Sectoral Ministerial meetings held after the 17<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting:**

79. The Council reviewed and took note of the reports of the following sectoral Ministerial meetings held since the 17<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting (Herat, October 2007) and urged the member states to take necessary measures to implement the decisions of those meetings:

- a). The 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications (Antalya, 15-17 April, 2008)
- b). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of ECO Interior Ministers (Ashgabat, May 2008)
- c). The 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (Baku, September 2008)
- d). The 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Tourism (Tehran, October 2008)
- e). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy (Tehran, December 2008)
- f). The Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul container train (Tehran, March, 2009)

80. The Council asked the Secretariat to actively follow up the implementation of decisions of those meetings on regular basis.

**ix. Implementation of decisions of the 17<sup>th</sup> COM meeting**

81. The Council appreciated the preparation of a comprehensive follow-up report on implementation of decisions of the 17<sup>th</sup> COM meeting. The Council laid emphasis on speedy implementation of agreed decisions of the COM.

**Agenda Item No. 13**

**The Current World Financial and Economic Crisis: Turning it into Opportunities for the ECO Region**

82. The Council appreciated the valuable inputs provided by the ECO TDB in analyzing the current Financial and Economic Crisis and its impact on the ECO region's economies. It appreciated the recommendations of the Bank to offset the effects of the crisis. The Council stressed that the member States prepare themselves for the aftermath of the global crisis.

83. The Council noted that opportunities and challenges associated with regional integration in this period of uncertainty could be handled effectively by strengthening the legal, institutional and structural framework. Moreover, the Council urged the member states to consider carefully their ability to undertake significant counter-cyclical spending and provide targeted support to exposed income groups, regions and sectors.

84. Finally, the Council strongly stressed that a Working Group meeting as decided by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy (Tehran December 2008) be immediately convened to study the possible impacts, opportunities and challenges and formulate short and medium term region-specific recommendations to turn this crisis into an opportunity for the ECO region.

85. The Council also decided to present the outcome of their discussions to the leaders of the Summit, through the presentation of the ECO-TDB. The Council recommended that the outcome of the initial results of the study be presented to the President of the ECO Bank for apprising the Heads of States and for possible guidance with regard to the task assigned to the Working Group.

Agenda Item No. 14

**Administrative Matters/Amendments to Basic Documents:**

**a. Appointment of Secretary General**

86. The Council appointed His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Yahya Maroofi, presently the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Tehran, as the new Secretary General of ECO, for a term of three years, effective from 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The Council congratulated him on his appointment and expressed the confidence that, given his vast experience in diplomacy and close familiarity with regional issues, he would take useful initiatives to enhance regional cooperation and promote ECO's image and activities.

87. The Council also decided that, on the expiry of the term of the Secretary General from Afghanistan (August 2009 – August 2012), the post of the Secretary General would go to the Republic of Azerbaijan and thereafter to the Republic of Turkey. The Council appreciated the understanding and cooperation of His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Gul, the President of the Republic of Turkey, and His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to help reach an amicable settlement.

**b. Appointment of Deputy Secretaries General**

88. The Council agreed with the decision/recommendations of the Council of Permanent Representatives/Senior Officials and:

- I. Appointed Mr. Fatih Unlu (Turkish National) against the post of Deputy Secretary General (Trade & Investment, Agriculture, Industry & Tourism and International Relations) in place of Mr. Mustafa Demirezen, effective from 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009, for three years.
- II. Nomination from Pakistan was still awaited. The Council authorized the CPR to approve, on its behalf, Pakistan's nominee against the post of Deputy Secretary General, in place of Dr. Serik Alybayev (Kazakh National), for a period of three years.

89. Furthermore, the Council expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing Deputy Secretaries General for their constructive and useful contributions in different spheres of ECO activities and expressed best wishes for their success in the future. The Council also expressed confidence that the new Deputy Secretaries General would make positive contributions to promoting the goals and objectives of the ECO.

**c. Appointment of the President of ECI**

90. The Council endorsed the recommendation of the 146<sup>th</sup> CPR meeting and authorized the CPR to approve, on its behalf, the nominee of the Islamic Republic of Iran as and when received.

**d. Revision of Functional Methodology of ECO**

91. The Council, on the recommendations of the 145<sup>th</sup> CPR (23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2009), approved the following amendments in the Functional Methodology of ECO:

**II- PREPARATION, APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ECO PROJECTS**

Para 18: There shall be an ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF) to cover the cost of pre-feasibility, feasibility and analytical studies and other activities relating to regional projects as well as for extra-ordinary cases. The ECO-FGPF will be financed from relevant Head of Account of ECO budget as well as other sources, such as voluntary contributions of member states, execution charge, grants, etc. Member states, other international organizations other partners can be also invited to co-finance the Fund.

30. The progress in implementation of projects shall be monitored by the Secretariat and reported to the CPR. Once the implementation phase is started, the Secretariat shall undertake coordination among participating member states, monitoring the progress of implementation and acting as a channel of communication between the implementation bodies and executive organs of ECO. The Member States may assign designated representative(s) from one or a group of member governments as project coordinator or establish special technical units or bodies to implement the agreed projects and monitor progress. The Secretary General shall include, in his annual report to the RPC and the Council of Ministers, a detailed progress report on each of the on-going projects.

30.1. In compliance with paras 21 and 30 and with the aim to streamline project monitoring, implementation and replenishment of the ECO FGPF at sustainable level, a Project Monitoring Unit shall be established within the Secretariat to act according to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Projects which will be approved by CPR (Annex No.1)

30.2. To harmonize internationally the criteria for recruitment of consultants and evaluate their performance, the Terms of Reference for Recruitment of Consultants shall be followed (Annex No.2)

30.3. The Secretariat shall, in line with relevant modalities to be adopted by the CPR, circulate details of the project to the member states and, if it does not receive any objection within a specified period of not less than three months, will implement the project.

**e. Amendments in the Staff Regulations**

92. The Council, on the recommendations of the 145<sup>th</sup> CPR (23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2009) approved the following amendments in the Staff Regulations of ECO:

**I. Increment**

10.3.3. Good – implies performance that meets the requirements of the position. The full responsibilities of the position and the agreed performance goals have been carried

out in a satisfactory manner. The number of staff to be graded in this category shall not exceed 40% of the total staff who shall be eligible for receiving 50% of annual increment.

- 10.3.4 Unsatisfactory – implies performance that does not substantially meet the significant requirements of the position and the agreed performance goals, either because of lack of ability, poor work attitude or some other serious problems including misconduct and doubtful integrity. The staff to be graded in this category shall not be eligible for annual increment.

## **II. Installation/Transfer Grant and Advance Payment**

- 17.1. Installation/transfer grant...
- 17.2. The Secretary General may pay upto 2 month of the monthly emoluments of the newly installed staff for her/his installation expenses, in advance. This advance payment would be deducted from her/his first four salaries.

## **III. End of Service Gratuity**

- 23.1. At the time of the termination of the tenure/service, staff members with a minimum of 2 years period of their tenure in the Secretariat shall be paid as “End of Service Gratuity” an amount equivalent to 15 days last salary and allowances (excluding house allowance) for every completed year of satisfactory service subject to a maximum of 20 years. Fractions of year may be calculated proportionally. This will be applicable to all, from the Secretary General to the lowest level of staff. No end of service gratuity shall be paid in case of termination of service of a staff member on disciplinary grounds.

## **IV. Compensation for Death, Injury or Illness**

- 23.4. Staff members shall be entitled to compensation in the event of death, serious injury or illness attributable to their performance of official duties on behalf of the ECO, in accordance with the modalities which will be adopted by the CPR.

## **V. Daily Subsistence Allowance**

- 24.3. The Staff of the Secretariat and other officials authorized to travel on duty on behalf of the Organization under an approved travel order, shall be entitled to a Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA), in accordance with the scales approved by the Council, as shown in Annex III. If lodging is provided by the host Government or Organization, 50 percent of the Daily Subsistence Allowance shall be admissible. If the lodging is not provided, the Secretary General, Category-I and Category-II officials will be paid the actual accommodation charges of single-room accommodation not exceeding the amount of the Daily Subsistence Allowance admissible upon presentation of hotel invoice plus 50% of the respective DSA”

## **VI. Medical Care for Cosmetic Treatments**

- 29.1.5. Expenses for cosmetic surgeries and treatments such as plastic surgery, teeth implantation, teeth orthodontics, skin beauty creams and relevant medicines, are not covered under this scheme.

VII. **Medical Care for Disabled Children of the ECO Member Staff**

29.3. For the purpose of this medical scheme, immediate dependents must be resident in Tehran with the staff members, and include wife and three children upto the age of 21 years. Age limitation in this Para shall not apply to disabled children.

VIII. **Medical Care/Health Insurance**

Article – 29

29.1 Staff members of the Secretariat including the Secretary General and their immediate dependents as mentioned in Para 29.3 below, except resident staff in Category-III who shall be covered under an appropriate social security scheme vide Article 23.3, are entitled to medical and dental treatment at the Secretariat's expense vide modalities proposed by the Secretary General and adopted by the Council of Permanent Representatives, within the following limits: (Articles 29.1.1 to 29.1.4 of the ECO Staff Regulations).

f. **Amendments in the ECO Rules of Procedure**

93. The Council, on the recommendations of the 146<sup>th</sup> CPR (4<sup>th</sup> March, 2009) approved the following amendments in the ECO Rules of Procedure:

**Chapter – XII**

**Modalities**

48) The activities of the ECO main organs, ad hoc arrangements, regional centres, ECO Funds, as well as any other specific activity of the Organization shall be conducted in accordance with the modalities drawn up by the CPR and approved by the COM.

49) The Secretariat shall compile a compendium of all the approved modalities which shall be circulated to the Member States. This compendium shall be considered as an integral part of the ECO Rules of Procedure.

g. **Amendments in the Organizations Charts of the Organization/Secretariat**

94. The Council, on the recommendations of the 145<sup>th</sup> CPR (23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2009) approved the amendments in the Organizations Charts of the Organization/Secretariat which is attached at **Annex-VII**.

h. **Amendments to the Basic Documents of ECI**

95. The Council endorsed amendments to the Basic Documents of ECI as recommended by the 144<sup>th</sup> CPR Meeting (8<sup>th</sup> February, 2009) which are placed at **Annex –VIII**.

Agenda Item No. 15

**Preparation for the 10<sup>th</sup> Summit:**

**i. Draft Agenda.**

96. The Council deliberated upon and agreed to recommend the following draft agenda for the 10<sup>th</sup> Summit meeting to be held in Tehran on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2009:

1. Inauguration
2. Election of the Chairman
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Report of the Chairman of the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers
5. Report of the ECO Secretary General
6. Statements by the Heads of State/Government/Delegation
7. Statements by the Special Invitees and Secretaries General of UN and OIC
8. Retreat Meeting on “The current World Financial and Economic Crisis: Turning it into Opportunities for the ECO Region”
9. Any other business
10. Date and venue of the next meeting
11. Consideration and adoption of the Tehran Declaration
12. Vote of Thanks; closing address by the Chairman
13. Closing of the meeting and photo session

**Additional Events (after the closing of Summit)**

- Ceremony for ECO Awards 2008
- Ceremony for the issuance of special postage stamp on the occasion of the Summit
- Press Conference

**ii. Draft Tehran Declaration**

97. The Council deliberated and agreed to submit the draft Tehran Declaration to the 10<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit for adoption, as prepared by the Senior Officials Meeting. The Representative of Uzbekistan stated that they would follow the provisions of the Declaration to the extent these did not contradict the national legislation of Uzbekistan.

**iii. ECO Awards 2008**

98. The Council approved the names of nine winners of ECO Awards 2008 from member states, comprising eight nominees recommended by the 143<sup>rd</sup> CPR Meeting (5<sup>th</sup> January, 2009) and an additional nomination received directly from Turkmenistan of Dr. Marsa Ashirmammedov in the field of Science and Technology. The Council congratulated them for doing excellent work in their respective fields. The names of the winners of ECO Awards 2008 are as follows:

| <b>Sr. No.</b> | <b>Name of Country</b> | <b>Name of Nominee</b> | <b>Field/Category</b> |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1              | Pakistan               | Dr. A.R. Kemal         | Economics             |
| 2              | Tajikistan             | Dr. Talbak Nazarov     | Economics             |

|    |              |                             |  |
|----|--------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 3  | Kazakhstan   | Dr. Meruert Abusseitova     | History, Culture, Literature & Fine Arts |
| 4  | Kyrgyzstan   | Dr. Akylbek Kylychev        | History, Culture, Literature & Fine Arts |
| 5  | Azerbaijan   | Dr. Vaqif Abbasov           | Science & Technology                     |
| 6  | Afghanistan  | Dr. Gholam Jelani           | Education                                |
| 7  | Iran         | Dr. Mojtaba Khayyam Nekouee | Agriculture & Environment                |
| 8  | Turkey       | Dr. Ismail Koyuncu          | Agriculture & Environment                |
| 9. | Turkmenistan | Dr. Marsa Ashirmammedov     | Science & Technology                     |

Agenda Item No. 16

**Any other business**

99. No issue was discussed under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 17

**Date and venue of the next meeting**

100. The Council requested the Secretariat to ascertain the willingness of Member States for hosting the (19<sup>th</sup>) Meeting of the Council of Ministers. The exact dates and venue of the meeting would be conveyed to Member States.

Agenda Item No. 18

**Adoption of the Report**

101. The Council unanimously adopted its report.

Agenda Item No. 19

**Vote of thanks and closing**

102. The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations in a smooth and efficient manner, and to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and for the warm traditional hospitality extended to all delegations. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Secretary General and his team to prepare comprehensive documents and to assist the hosts in making the 18<sup>th</sup> COM meeting a complete success.

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