

# The 16<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers

## Report

( Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 04 May, 2006 )

No. COM/16<sup>th</sup>/2006/01

1. The Sixteenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on May 04, 2006 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. The meeting was attended by the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey and Republic of Uzbekistan as well as the ECO Secretary General along with his relevant staff and the representative of the ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC) as well as the representatives of regional/international organizations. List of the participants is attached at **Annex-I**.

2. The Council of Ministers' meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials' meeting on May 02-03, 2006, under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In his opening remarks, Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Guliyev thanked the ECO Secretary General and his colleagues for making necessary preparations and documentation in an excellent manner to facilitate the successful organization of this meeting. He pointed out that the member states of ECO should carefully analyse the impediments which were hindering the progress of ECO and come forward with ideas and proposals to overcome the same.

### **Items No. 1 & 2**

#### **1) Inauguration of the meeting:**

#### **2) Election of the new Chairman and his statement:**

3. His Excellency Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. K. Tokayev, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan who was the incumbent Chairman, opened the meeting with his brief statement, expressing appreciation of the hospitality extended to the participating delegations by the Government and the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In his statement, he highlighted the progress that the Organization has made in the last one year and appreciated the work done by the ECO Secretariat and the outgoing Secretary General. He expressed the hope that under the able guidance of the new Chairman of COM and the new Secretary General, the Organization will get closer to its objectives. Later, he proposed that His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan be elected as the new Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The Council unanimously endorsed the election of the new Chairman.

4. In his statement, H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, thanked the Council for reposing confidence in him and outlined his vision for further cementing economic cooperation within the region. In this context, he assured the continued commitment and support of his government to the goals and objectives of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

### **Item No. 3**

#### **Adoption of the Agenda**

5. The Council adopted the following agenda of its meeting, which was reviewed/ endorsed by the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) as well as by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM):

1. Inauguration of the meeting.
2. Election of the New Chairman and his statement.
3. Adoption of the Agenda.
4. Report of the Secretary General.
5. Statements by the Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions.
6. Statement/Comments by the Ministers/Heads of Delegations.
7. Status Report on the Implementation of Projects/Designation of Coordinators:
  - i. ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)
  - ii. Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA)

- iii. Feasibility Study on Interconnection of Power Systems of ECO Member States
  - iv. ECO Trade and Development Bank and ECO Reinsurance Company
  - v. Container and Passenger Trains from Istanbul to Almaty
  - vi. Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of ECO Member States
8. Review, approval, adoption and consideration of the ECO activities:
- i. The meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)
  - ii. ECO Secretariat's budget for 2006
  - iii. ECO Secretariat's Audit Report for 2005
  - iv. Status of unpaid contribution of Member States for the Secretariat budget and mechanism to avoid further delay in payment of Member States dues.
  - v. 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), including:
    - i. ECO' Annual Calendar of Events for 2006-2007; and status of its implementation.
    - ii. ECO Secretariat's Work Programme for 2006
  - vi. Other sectoral Ministerial meetings held after the 15<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting:
    - i. Second Ministerial Meeting on Industry held in November 2005 in Istanbul
    - ii. Sixth Ministerial Meeting of Transport & Communications in April in Tehran
  - vii. Follow-up of the implementation of decision of 15<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting
  - viii. Status of the ECO Agreements.
    - a) Status of signing, ratification and accession of Agreements.
    - b) Status of implementation of Agreements.
  - ix. Follow-up on the implementations of decisions of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings held earlier.
9. Administrative Matters:
- a) Appointment of Secretary General of ECO.
  - b) Appointments of Deputy Secretaries General of ECO Secretariat.
  - c) Appointment of the President of ECI for the new term (2006-2009).
  - d) Amendment in the Staff Regulations of the ECO Secretariat
10. Preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit:
- a) Draft Agenda
  - b) Draft Baku Declaration
  - c) ECO Awards 2006
11. Action Plan to enhance external relations of ECO
12. Statute of RISCAM.
13. Any other business.
14. Date and venue of the next meeting.
15. Adoption of the report.
16. Vote of thanks and closing of the meeting.

#### **Item No. 4**

#### **Report of the Secretary General**

6. The Council appreciated the detailed report of the Secretary General on the activities of ECO that have taken place since the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers and took note of his recommendations. This report was circulated to the member states vide Secretariat's note No. SG/16<sup>th</sup> COM/2006/503 dated 27 March 2006.

7. In his statement, the Secretary General expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the government and the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. He expressed the hope that under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan, ECO would continue to march towards realization of its cherished goals. He also conveyed his thanks to the outgoing Chairman, H.E. Mr. K. Tokayev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, for the valuable support and guidance that he provided during the course of his Chairmanship. A copy of Secretary General's statement is placed at **Annex-II**.

8. While appreciating the annual report submitted by the Secretary General, the Council unanimously endorsed his recommendations, particularly with regard to the staffing of the Secretariat. The Council was of the view that the selection and appointment of the staff should be based on merit and that the member states while conveying their nominations for appointments in the Secretariat should carefully consider the professional qualifications and experience of their candidates, enabling the Secretariat to build its capacity building so that it could be able to face the challenges posed by global developments.

9. The Council noted that the Secretary General H.E. Mr. Askhat Orazbay will complete his tenure in August this year and that this was his last Annual Report to the Council. The Council paid rich tribute for the excellent work that he had done as the head of this Organization during his tenure and extended best wishes for his success in his future assignments.

#### **Item No. 5**

#### **Statements by the Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions**

10. The Council took note of the annual reports submitted by the ECO Cultural Institute, the ECO College of Insurance and the ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC) and expressed the hope that the regional institutions/specialized agencies would continue to play a meaningful role in the progress and development of the ECO region.

11. The Council appreciated the attendance and presentation by the representative of the ECO-Consultancy & Engineering Company (Pvt) Limited (ECO-CEC).

#### **Item No. 6**

#### **Statements/Comments by the Ministers/Heads of Delegations**

12. The Ministers/Heads of delegations delivered their statements expressing the views/comments of their respective governments on the ongoing and future activities of the Organization which are placed at **Annex-III**.

#### **Item No. 7**

#### **Status Report on the Implementation of Projects/Designation of Coordinators**

13. The Council took note of the status reports prepared by the Secretariat on the implementation of the following projects:

##### **(i) ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)**

14. The coordinating country, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, briefed the meeting about the latest developments with regard to ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and requested the member states' views on the Action Plan prepared by Pakistan and the removal of the bottlenecks with regard to the fast-track approach. The Council requested the concerned member states to finalize that Protocol at their earliest.

The Council urged the member states, who had signed the agreement, to ratify it and requested other member states to consider signing ECOTA. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed the Council that it has ratified ECOTA and that formal instrument of ratification would be sent to the Secretariat shortly through diplomatic channels. The Republic of Turkey informed the meeting that they have started the process of ratification of ECOTA. The Council underscored the need for the projection of benefits to be accrued from ECOTA, particularly for the countries of Central Asia and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Tajikistan to host a Seminar on ECOTA in Dushanbe in that connection. The Council also welcomed the offer of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to extend technical assistance to the member states for compilation of sensitive, negative and prohibited list under ECOTA.

##### **(ii) Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA)**

15. The Council welcomed the coming into force of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), effective May 2006, with the ratification of six member states, namely: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran also informed the meeting that they have also ratified this agreement and they will formally notify the Secretariat. Republic of Turkey also indicated that they were in the final process of ratification of this agreement.

16. The Republic of Azerbaijan, being the coordinator country, informed the meeting that they would suggest a number of activities in order to further the objective of this project and requested the member states to nominate their representatives for the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) so that the meeting of this Council could be convened and deliberate on the relevant issues.

**(iii) Feasibility Study on Interconnection of Power Systems of ECO Member States**

17. In view of the importance of the feasibility study on inter-connection of power systems of ECO member states, the Council recommended that a coordinating country could be designated to ensure early implementation of this project. Some member states stated that they would consider to be the coordinating country for this important project and they would inform the Secretariat accordingly.

18. The Council requested, in order to facilitate the timely execution of the project by the Consultant M/s NESPAK, those member states who have not yet nominated their focal points should designate the same as soon as possible and provide necessary data requested by the Consultant to complete the said feasibility study. The Council was informed that M/s NESPAK has agreed to send its representatives to the member states to offer them technical assistance in the preparation of necessary data. The Council requested the member states to fully cooperate with the Consultant so that the feasibility study could be prepared at the earliest.

**(iv) ECO Trade and Development Bank and ECO Reinsurance Company**

19. The Republic of Turkey, being the coordinating country, informed the Council that the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Board of Governors of the ECO Trade and Development Bank has been proposed to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2006 to deliberate the relevant issues with regard to the establishment of the Bank. The Council emphasized the importance of this project since financing of ECO projects could be achieved through the Bank which also will encourage the project-oriented approach with regard to other ECO activities.

20. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan proposed that consideration may be given to the simultaneous establishment of the ECO Reinsurance Company with that of the ECO Trade and Development Bank. In this regard, Pakistan will shortly propose a date for hosting the meeting of the Trilateral Interim Committee which would finalize the draft agreement on the establishment of ECO Reinsurance Company so that it could be signed at the earliest possible.

21. Some member states also welcomed the establishment of these institutions and stated that they may also consider joining these institutions in future.

**(v) Container and Passenger Trains from Istanbul to Almaty**

22. Islamic Republic of Iran, being the coordinating country, briefed the meeting and stated that the infrastructure for this project were already existing but there were some technical and non-technical impediments in the way of regular running of Container Train and operation of a Passenger Train in Trans-Asian Railway main line route which would be discussed and removed. Islamic Republic of Iran also informed that the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Transport & Communications which was recently held on 24-26 April 2006 in Tehran also discussed the aforesaid issue and decided that the working group meeting, which was established to discuss issues relating to the above projects, should carefully identify physical and non-physical barriers which hamper the smooth operationalization of these projects and give its recommendations to the member states for overcoming the problems. The Council was informed that the first meeting of the working group is going to be held in Tehran in June 2006.

23. The Council urged all the member states which fall on the route of these trains to take all possible measures for the early realization of these projects.

(vi) **Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of ECO Member States**

24. The coordinating country, Islamic Republic of Iran, informed the meeting that they had forwarded Action Plan for the implementation/review of the Agreement and they were awaiting the views and comments of the member states. After receiving the views/comments, they would convene the meeting of the relevant experts in the third quarter of 2006 on the above issue. The Council emphasized that the full implementation of this agreement would help people-to-people contact in ECO member states and would facilitate the travel of businessmen and boost trade and tourism in the region. Therefore, the Council requested that the member states should send their views/comments to the Action Plan at the earliest possible.

**Item No. 8**

**Review, approval, adoption and consideration of the ECO activities:**

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

25. The Council adopted the reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) for its eight meetings (105<sup>th</sup> to 112<sup>th</sup>) held since 15<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting.

**ii. ECO Secretariat's budget for 2005**

26. The Council formally approved the Secretariat's budget for the year 2006 amounting to US\$ 2,404,039 plus an amount of US\$ 120,202 (5% of the budget) as Feasibility Study Fund (Total: 2,524,241). The budget was approved by the 108<sup>th</sup> CPR Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006, on behalf of the Council of Ministers.

**iii. ECO Secretariat's Audit Report for 2006**

27. The Council approved the Audit Report for ECO Secretariat's budget for 2005 which was also considered and endorsed by the 112<sup>th</sup> CPR meeting.

**iv. Status of unpaid contribution of Member States for the Secretariat Budget and mechanism to avoid further delay in payment of Member States dues**

28. While appreciating the member states who had paid their contributions and expressing concern over the continued delay of payments by some member states, the Council approved the following recommendations made by the Task Force and endorsed by the 111<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives on the subject and directed that these recommendations be implemented in letter and spirit and be inserted in the Financial Regulations of the ECO Secretariat as Article 11.5:

"11.5 The Secretary General will report to the Council of Ministers concerning the member states which are in arrears for two years and through his contact and communication will do all possible efforts to encourage the relevant country to pay all mandatory contribution. If the Secretary General's efforts could not be succeeded within six months, further measures will be taken as follows:

- i. The member states, which are in arrears in the payment of their contributions to ECO Secretariat's Budget for more than two years:
  - a. are not eligible for ECO Award;
  - b. cannot utilize Special Support Fund (SSF);

- c. cannot be involved in any discussion relating to financial issues including the issue of ECO Secretariat's Budget, Audit Report, etc.
  - d. cannot nominate for any vacant position in the Secretariat.
- ii. For those member states which are in arrears in the payment of contributions to the Secretariat's Budget for five years or more, the following will be implemented:
  - a. All the above mentioned measures; and
  - b. Suspension of the right to participate in decision-making and the right to vote.
- iii. The above measures may be applied progressively by the Secretary General informing the CPR in each case and shall be lifted as soon as the concerned member state settles its dues.
- iv. The above measures may not be applied in force majeure case. The CPR shall determine such cases."
- v. **16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), including:**
  - a. ECO's Annual Calendar of Events for 2006-2007; and Status of its implementation
  - b. Work Programme of the Secretariat for 2006.

29. The Council reviewed and adopted the report of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran, on January 30—February 02, 2006. The Council also reviewed and adopted the ECO's Annual Calendar of Events for 2006-2007 and Work Programme of the Secretariat for 2006. The Council also took note of the Status of implementation of ECO Calendar of Events for 2006-2007 and requested that the Secretariat may continue to prepare the status of these documents in future as well.

**vi. Other sectoral Ministerial meetings held after the 15<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting:**

30. The Council reviewed and endorsed the reports of the following sectoral Ministerial meetings held since the 15<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting and requested the member states to take necessary measures to implement the decisions of the same.

- 1) Second Ministerial Meeting on Industry (November 25, 2005, Istanbul, Republic of Turkey).
- 2) Sixth Ministerial Meeting on Transport & Communications (April 24-26, 2006, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran)

31. Furthermore, the Council emphasized that since the success of the Organization totally depended on tangible achievements of the ECO projects, all member states were urged to extend their wholehearted support and cooperation for the implementation of the said projects.

**vii. Follow-up of the implementation of decisions of 15<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting**

32. The Council appreciated the Secretariat for preparing the follow up report on the implementation of the decisions of the 15<sup>th</sup> COM meeting and took note of its contents.

**viii. Status of the ECO Agreements**

- a. Status of signing, ratification and accession of agreements
- b. Status of implementation of agreements

33. While reviewing and taking note of the Status of ECO Agreements, the Council expressed their concern that some of the important agreements including the Treaty of Izmir were still not ratified by some member states and observed that the member states may give priority to the speedy process of ratification of agreements they had signed for their early implementation. The Council also instructed the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and the ECO Secretariat to study reasons/causes for the delay in signing/ratifying the approved agreements in case of each member state and present the result along with the recommendations to the next Meeting of the Council of Ministers for further action.

**ix. Follow-up on the implementations of decisions of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings held earlier**

34. The Council expressed gratitude and appreciation to the Secretariat for preparing the useful paper and observed that the member states would take steps to implement decisions of the sectoral ministerial meetings. In this regard, the Council requested that the Chairman of the Council of Ministers may bring the importance of agreed decisions to the attention of higher authorities of the member states whenever it is possible

**Item No. 9**

**Administrative Matters**

**a. Appointment of Secretary General of ECO**

35. The Council appointed Mr. Khurshid Anwar, presently Additional Foreign Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in-charge of ECO Region, as the new Secretary General of ECO, for a term of three years, effective from 13<sup>th</sup> August 2006. The Council congratulated him on his appointment and expressed confidence that due to his vast experience in diplomacy and familiarity with the regional issues, he would be in a position to take initiatives to enhance and accelerate the regional cooperation and promote the ECO's image and activities.

**b. Appointment of Deputy Secretaries General**

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

- i. extended the tenure of Dr. Sohrab Shahabi (Iranian National) as the Deputy Secretary General (Administration, Energy, Mineral and Environment) for one year, effective from 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2006;
- ii. appointed Mr. Serik Alybaev (Kazakh National) against the post of Deputy Secretary General (Transport & Communications, Project & Economic Research), to be vacated by Mr. Masroor A. Junejo (Pakistani National) after the arrival of the new Secretary General from Pakistan; and
- iii. appointed Mr. Mustafa Demirezen (Turkish National) against the post of Deputy Secretary General (Trade & Investment, Agriculture, Industry, Tourism and International Relations), to be vacated by Mr. Orhan Isik (Turkish National), effective 13<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

37. Furthermore, the Council expressed its gratitude and appreciation to outgoing Deputy Secretaries General for their constructive and useful contribution to the spheres of the Organization and expressed best wishes for their success in their future life. The Council also expressed confidence that the new Deputy Secretaries General will put in constructive contribution in achieving the goals and objectives of ECO.

**c. Appointment of the President of ECI the new term (2006-2009)**

38. The Council appointed Dr. Mohammad Rajabi as the new President of ECO Cultural Institute, for a term of three years and congratulated him on his appointment and expressed hope that under his

leadership the ECI will make strides towards attaining its goals and objectives. Furthermore, the Council extended the tenure of Dr. Mehdi Sanaie, the present President of ECI, for a period upto the time of Dr. Rajabi's arrival, but not later than August 2006.

**d. Amendment in the Staff Regulations of ECO Secretariat**

39. The Council, on the recommendations of the 112<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives, approved the following amendment to be inserted in Chapter III of Staff Regulations of the Secretariat as Article 6.11:

*'A staff member sent on deputation to the ECO Secretariat should not, by reasons of such appointment, lose his/her seniority or promotion prospects in his/her home service. The sending country should regulate its national legislation accordingly.'*

**Item No. 10**

**Preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit**

**a) Draft Agenda**

40. The Council deliberated and agreed, with slight amendment, to recommend the following draft agenda for the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit meeting to be held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, on May 5, 2006:

1. Inaugural Ceremony.
2. Election of the Chairman.
3. Adoption of the Agenda.
4. Statements by the Heads of State/Government/Delegation.
5. Report of the Chairman of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Council of Ministers (COM).
6. Report of the Secretary General.
7. Any other business.
8. Date and venue of the next meeting.
9. Consideration and adoption of the Baku Declaration 2006.
10. Ceremony for ECO Awards 2006.
11. Vote of thanks and closing address by Chairman.
12. Closing of the meeting.

**b) Draft Baku Declaration**

41. The Council deliberated and agreed to submit the draft Baku Declaration to the 9<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit for adoption, as finalized by the Senior Officials Meeting.

**c) ECO Awards 2006**

42. The Council approved the names of eight winners of ECO Awards 2006 from member states as recommended by the 112<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and congratulated them for doing excellent work in their respective fields. The names of the winners of ECO Awards 2006 are as follows:

S. No.	Country	Name	Field
1.	Afghanistan	Mr. Mohammad Nasser Stanikzai	Economics
2.	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mamedyarov Magerram Ali oglu	Science & Technology
3.	Iran	Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour	Agriculture & Environment
4.	Kazakhstan	Dr. Baipakov Karl Moldakhmetovich	History, Culture, Literature and Fine Arts
5.	Kyrgyzstan	Dr. Karataev Oljobai Kubatbekovich	History, Culture, Literature and Fine Arts
6.	Pakistan	Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhry	Education



7.	Tajikistan	Dr. Makhmadsharif Khakdodov	Science & Technology
8.	Uzbekistan	Dr. Mukhammadkhan Khamidov	Agriculture & Environment

#### **Item No. 11**

##### **Action Plan to enhance external relations of ECO**

43. The Council reviewed and approved the Outline Plan of Action, with the amendments proposed by some member states. A copy of the approved text is placed below as **Annex-IV**.

#### **Item No. 12**

##### **Statute of RISCAM**

44. The Council welcomed the preparation of the draft Statute of the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) by the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Standardizations of ECO Member States in Tehran and observed that further consultations were required in connection with the finalization of the Statute of RISCAM. It was, therefore, decided that the issue may be finalized during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Industry to be held in Pakistan later this year and submit it to the next COM meeting for approval.

#### **Item No. 13**

##### **Any Other Business**

- **Establishment of ECO Regional Centres**

45. The Council took note of the proposal of the Republic of Turkey with regard to the establishment of the ECO Regional Centres and instructed the Council of Permanent Representatives to consider it thoroughly and develop appropriate rules and regulations for the establishment and activities of such Centres. A copy of the Turkish proposal is placed below as **Annex-V**.

#### **Item No. 14**

##### **Date and venue of the next meeting**

46. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to host the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) in Kabul. The Secretariat, in consultations with the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, will communicate the exact dates for the said meeting.

#### **Item No. 15**

##### **Adoption of the Report**

47. The Council unanimously adopted its report.

#### **Item No. 18**

##### **Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting**

48. The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks of the participating delegations, expressed profound and deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended by the Republic of Azerbaijan and the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. They also expressed their appreciation to Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for the efficient manner in which he steered the Meeting to a successful conclusion.

49. The Council also expressed thanks and appreciation to the Secretary General and other members of the ECO Secretariat for the preparation of documentation and their invaluable services to facilitate the work of the Meeting.