

## The 15<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers

### ECO Vision 2015

( Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan, 01 October, 2005 )

#### *Annex-IX*

We, the Foreign Ministers/Representatives of the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), today in Astana, reaffirm our commitment towards achieving the aims and objectives of the organization as set forth in the Treaty of Izmir 1996, guided by the need to promote sustainable economic and social development, raise living standards of our peoples and bring them closer through mobilization of the potential for regional cooperation in various fields.

Recognizing that our rich human and natural resources as well as deep-rooted historical and cultural affinities are important contributing factors for the development of regional cooperation and for enhancing economic growth and prosperity;

Being at the beginning of the new Millennium after the expansion of the ECO into ten member states in 1992, we wish to adopt a Vision for ECO, taking into account the opportunities and challenges of the globalization process, the rapid social, economic, political and technological developments in the world and the prospects in the decades ahead which need to be addressed adequately through a common and collective approach;

Reaffirming that promotion of regional peace and stability are among the necessary prerequisites for economic cooperation and progress of our member states;

Recognizing that the enhancing of friendly bilateral relations on the basis of good neighbourly policies would strengthen the process of regional economic cooperation;

Acknowledging that sustained and intensified efforts are needed within the framework of ECO to implement social, economic, legal and administrative reforms and to provide for the efficient functioning of markets;

Keeping in view the priorities laid down in the Economic Cooperation Strategy, we affirm that the ECO is an effective organization for the modernization and development of the region and would facilitate the regional integration as well as gradual integration of the member states into the world economy;

Reiterating our determination to enhance regional economic cooperation in line with aspirations of our peoples, we have resolved to undertake the following:

#### **Trade and Investment**

- We commit ourselves to gradually reduce tariffs to the extent already agreed in ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and remove para tariffs and non-tariff barriers in trade among the ECO member states by the year 2015 so as to increase intra-regional trade from the present level of 6% to 20% and are determined to move towards establishment of a Free Trade Area in the ECO Region as a priority task. Therefore, we attach importance to the accession and/or the ratification and the implementation of ECOTA at the earliest and to the active participation of member states in liberalization of trade policies, harmonization of customs laws and regulations and simplification of visa procedures particularly for the businessmen.
- We also recognize that other trade facilitation measures such as E-trade and Investment Information Networking could play a vital role in promoting trade exchange among Member States.
- We recognize that inter-governmental dialogue and programmes on technical cooperation in the areas such as transport and trade promotion, use of ICT in business transactions and training

seminars on these topics are needed for trade facilitation and improvement of the competitiveness of the ECO Member States enterprises. We also recognize the importance of the development of a joint strategy for development and regulation of the service markets in the ECO region.

- We reiterate our belief that in achieving all the set goals of the ECO, private sectors in ECO member states should become more active and play more important role. The relations among the private sector of the member states should be enhanced through cooperation among the Chambers of Commerce of the member states by activating ECO-CCI and by participating in trade fairs and business fora.
- We note the vital role of the banks and financial institutions in the ECO region in financing and accelerating economic growth, as well as promoting privatization process and structural reforms. To this end, we reiterate that the ECO Trade and Development Bank and ECO Re-insurance Company should be established within one year.
- We encourage the promotion of investment in the ECO region particularly in the priority areas of trade, transport and energy. In this regard, we shall implement other related instruments such as "Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement in the ECO Region" as soon as possible.

### **Transport and Communications**

- We re-emphasize the importance of transport and communications infrastructure in promoting regional economic growth and cooperation as well as the fact that seven member states are landlocked countries. We commit ourselves to the removal of physical and non-physical barriers in transport and communications among the member states as well as to the completion of reconstruction of missing links in road and railway transportation to facilitate the movement of people and commodities within the ECO region.
- We will implement the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) within one year to boost the cooperation among the member states in the fields of transport and trade.
- We reaffirm our resolve to operationalize the container and passenger train projects/initiatives connecting the landlocked countries of Central Asia with Europe through different routes in the region including the route through Iran and Turkey and the one through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkey.
- We will support initiatives towards development of projects in a framework of North-South, East-West, TRACECA and the Asian Highway Network transport corridors in the ECO region.
- We fully commit ourselves for the realization of the goals and objectives set forth in the Almaty Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the UN Conference of Ministers of Transportation of the landlocked countries in 2003 and approved by the UN General Assembly in its 58th session in 2004

### **Energy**

- We resolve our commitment towards establishing interconnection of electric power systems by 2015 in the ECO region to achieve better patterns of production, exchange and trade of electricity, facilitating development of oil and gas pipeline networks in the region to meet the entire region's energy requirements as well as to provide outlets for access to international markets, and promoting cooperation for the development of new and renewable resources of energy and enhancing of efficiency in energy production and use.

- We decide to develop cooperation in the minerals sector with emphasis on facilitation of the intra-regional trade and investment in this sector and enhanced exchange of the sector-related resource and technological information and experience.
- We decide to establish the parallel functioning of electric power systems in the ECO region by the year 2015 based on the outcome of the necessary studies in this field with a view to achieve better patterns of production, exchange and trade of electricity; to launch and/or facilitate the development of multiple oil and gas pipeline networks/routes in order to meet region's energy requirements as well as to increase outlets for access to international market; to enhance utilization of renewable and alternative sources of energy, increase energy production and efficiency, establish intra-regional energy market, boost cooperation in promoting investments to energy sector and promote human resources, exchange of the sector-related technological information and experience.

### **Finance and Economy**

- We are resolved to harmonize the financial and monetary policies of member states with a view of enhancing regional economic cooperation and accelerating regional economic growth.

### **Project and Economic Research**

- We emphasize upon the importance of the economic and project research for ensuring the feasibility and timely execution of ECO projects and programmes. Properly researched projects could effectively contribute towards enhancement of cooperation between the ECO member states.

### **Industry**

- We are determined to accelerate the pace of industrial development of our countries and the region and to that end, we would engage in mutual cooperation at the regional level, coherent with the ECO Regional Cooperation Strategy of Industry.
- We intend to adopt policies and strategies for the promotion and attraction of Foreign Direct Investment in the region in conjunction with effective privatization policies and measures.
- We will create a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ECO industrial region where there is a conducive environment for freer flow of goods, services, investment and capital for the realization of the ECO Investment Area by 2010 and free flow of investment by 2015.
- We will promote a modern and competitive small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector in ECO, which will contribute to the industrial development of the region.
- We will accelerate the development of science and technology including information technology by establishing a regional IT-Network and centers of excellence for dissemination of and easy access to data and information.

### **Agriculture**

- We commit to make our region secure in food supply by the year 2015 by increasing accessibility and availability of food through enhancing food production, preventing food losses at different stages of production and diversification of food resources through the utilization of new technologies.
- We will adopt a common and effective approach to prevent the spread of animal diseases and pests of plants and plant products through integrated policies/plans.

- We will enhance efficient use of natural resources especially water resources of the region through water management policies/programmes/plans, utilization of new technologies and increasing the water use efficiency in the region.

### **Environment**

- We will intensify cooperation in the field of environment by jointly addressing common concerns and regional problems and taking necessary actions in cooperation with relevant international organizations with a view to contribute to sustainable development and improve the quality of life of our peoples.

### **Human Resource Development and Poverty Alleviation**

We commit to:

- Take necessary measures for the development of human resources and to improve social, educational and health standards of our peoples,
- Drastically reduce the poverty and hunger,
- Upgrade the training of the workforce, so as to make it competitive, especially in hi-tech industries, including, inter alia, information technology,
- In compliance with the UN Millennium Development Goals, intensify poverty reduction efforts through human resource development, special programmes at national and regional levels to accelerate development of areas lagging behind in economic growth and appropriate income redistribution policies,
- Ensure that all the girls and boys of the member states are able to complete primary schooling by the year 2015,
- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five and reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio by the year 2015.

### **Drug Control, Organized Crimes and Related Matters**

- We will intensify coordinated regional activities, by establishing an institutionalized network for drug demand reduction and combating illicit drug trafficking in the implementation of the ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control.
- We reiterate our commitment to create a healthy economic environment through concerted efforts and to harmonize policies for combating terrorism and transnational organized crime such as drug and human trafficking and money laundering that undermine peace and stability in the region.

### **Tourism**

- We will facilitate the movement of people throughout the region and the development of appropriate infrastructures at the national and regional levels as well as take necessary steps to promote ECO region as a tourism destination and increase the ECO region's share in the global tourism, keeping in view our shared history and cultural affinities. To that end, we shall consider the possibility of adopting a simple and expeditious visa process to encourage people to people contact in the region taking into account the experiences of other regions.

### **An Outward-Looking ECO**

We envision the ECO to play a vital role in all relevant international fora to project and advance ECO's common views and interests. We also envision that ECO will intensify its relationship with relevant international and regional organizations as well as financial institutions.

We also envisage considering the possibility of closer cooperation between ECO and other development partners through establishing appropriate mechanism as enshrined in the Treaty of Izmir in order to benefit from their technical and financial assistance for the implementation of the ECO projects and programs.

We pledge to our peoples our determination and commitment to make the ECO a successful, dynamic and development-oriented regional cooperation organization particularly in areas where the Member States possess comparative advantage, and through such cooperation improve the living standards of the ECO community.

Astana  
October 01, 2005