

## The 13<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers

Statement of H.E. Mr. Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyz Republic

( Bishkek, 11 June, 2003 )

*Annex-II*

*Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Esteemed Mr. Secretary General,  
Honourable Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure for me to cordially welcome delegations of the Economic Cooperation Organization member states and representatives of international organizations who take part in this high level forum. I would also like to express gratitude to the ECO member states and ECO Secretariat for the high trust laid with our country to hold the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Council of Ministers in Bishkek, the capital of the Kyrgyz Republic.

At present when the world is in search of new model of the system of international relations, the role of regional economic cooperation and regional relations is considerably growing. At all the ECO events we have been constantly stating that Kyrgyzstan attaches extremely great importance to the Summits of ECO Heads of State and Government as well as to meetings of ECO Council of Ministers. And holding of this high level forum in Bishkek is a new illustration of the adherence of the Kyrgyz Republic to the regional integration in the frameworks of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Our regular meetings convincingly prove the ongoing character, wish and will of our states to implement the idea of establishing the common economic area that stretches from Central Asia to Persian Gulf, from Black and Caspian seas to Indian Ocean and which may serve as a bridge between European and Asian states. This makes the fundamental meaningful platform of our meetings based on the commonly accepted norms of international law and economic cooperation on the principles of mutual benefit. The Kyrgyz Republic completely shares and supports them and, moreover, in its foreign economic policy firmly understands the necessity of harmonic coherence of national and regional interests.

With great satisfaction I may mention sufficient volume of cooperation among ECO member countries and the Kyrgyz Republic, active exchange of delegations and Summit meetings which usefully enrich the existing level of bilateral relations and make us be convinced ever more in the expediency of partnership with ECO. We welcome the outcomes of the First Meeting of ECO Ministers of Ecology and Environment, successfully held in December, 2002 in Tehran, the capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is pleasant to know that during this meeting the actions and events under the International Year of Mountains which were undertaken in Kyrgyzstan in 2002 under the auspicious of the UN, were highly appreciated by the international organizations.

*Dear participants of the Meeting of the Council of Ministers,*

The ECO region has a truly inexhaustible potential for the further social and economic growth of our countries, which may and should be used further through strengthening and enhancing the integration regional economic relations.

I am pleased to mention that for the period elapsed since extension and transformation of ECO from trilateral into the large regional organization of ten member countries, the Economic Cooperation Organization has passed the stage of its

organizational formation, laid down the legal and regulatory grounds according to the priority directions of regional cooperation in the sphere of trade, transport and communications, energy, agriculture and industry. The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization has established close relations with many authoritative international organizations and financial institutions and won recognition of the international community, having obtained the observer status in the UN and WTO.

Just about over half a year passed when the 7<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit of Head of States and Governments was held in Istanbul in October of 2002, which marked a decade jubilee of extension of the Economic Cooperation Organization. I truly believe that our Organization has entered a qualitatively new stage of its development, which, in its turn, requires more active participation in the whole scope of work of the Organization and practical fulfillment, by its member countries, of the objectives and tasks laid down by the Izmir Treaty and set forth in declarations and communiques adopted at the previous seven ECO Summits.

I am confident that our friendly states will explore every avenue for the further fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation to raise it to a qualitatively new level, that will tally with the potential and needs of peoples of our region for the sake of their prosperity, and I sincerely hope that the principle of mutual cooperation based on cultural and regional commonness of our peoples will help us further overcome all emerging difficulties in the process of embodiment of hopes for economic development of 350 millions' population of the ECO region.

We all realize that regional security and stability are the predominant factors of development of regional integration. At the Istanbul Summit of Heads of State and Government and the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers there were made significant decisions on joint assistance of member countries in rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan through the establishment of an ECO Special Fund. These days the economic resurrection of ever-suffering Afghanistan should become the principal direction of the activities of our Organization.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

We are sure that our high level forum will become an important historical milestone in the development of our Organization and give impetus to the development of new more fruitful ways of cooperation among our countries.

I hope that the outcomes of this meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers will greatly contribute to conversion of the Organization into the effective instrument of regional economic integration, and the Bishkek Communique to be adopted today, will ensure the execution of our mutual aspirations for implementing the concrete steps of cooperation.

I wish all the participants of this high level forum the constructive and fruitful work, every success and a pleasant stay on the ancient land of Kyrgyztan.

Thank you for attention.