

The 11th Council of Ministers

Adoption of the Report of 1st WGSO

(Dushanbe, 04 May, 2001)

Annex-VI

RECORD OF TWO MEETINGS OF WORKING GROUP OF SENIOR OFFICIALS, HELD IN TEHRAN AND DUSHANBE, TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION AND ITS REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 10th COM, held in Tehran in June 2000, the first Working Group of the Senior Officials (WGSO) met under the Chairmanship of H.E. Dr. Seyed Mohammad Hossein Adeli, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 5-6 February, 2001. The meeting as mandated by the Council of Ministers discussed proposals to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of ECO and its Regional Institutes and Specialized Agencies with a view to realizing the ECO goals and objectives expeditiously.
2. While noting the achievements made in the past nine years and the growing regional stature of the Organization, the Working Group of the Senior Officials (WGSO) observed that there was room to improve the performance of the ECO and its related institutions. Some Member States emphasized the need to specify time frame for a target for establishing of free trade area within ECO region as a catalyst for early free flow of goods, people and capital. The ECO Secretariat was directed to make a comparative study of the Work Plan of similar organizations to determine whether setting up a target had motivated the other similar organizations to implement their agreed programmes speedier.
3. The Member States were also recommended to draw the attention of the national authorities to expeditiously build missing road and rail links as identified in the ECO documents. The Secretariat was tasked to produce a report on the implementation of the Quetta Plan of Action and other ECO documents pertaining to the Transportation Sector for consideration at the 2nd meeting of the Working Group of the Senior Officials.
4. Also, the Secretariat was advised to compile a list of ECO agreements, further bifurcating them in the following three categories for circulation among the Member States for their views:
 - a. Agreements signed, ratified but not implemented.
 - b. Agreements signed but not yet ratified.
 - c. Others required actions for speedy implementation of non-operational agreements.
5. Another important decision was to raise the level of participation in the approved events/activities. The CPR and the 11th RPC were advised to consolidate the on-going events and also to evaluate the Calendar of Events in the light of national priorities to determine a list of projects which should either be given priority or deleted.

6. Also, the ECO Secretariat and ECO Cultural Institute were asked to jointly prepare a status report proposing appropriate methodology to raise public awareness within the Member States about the effectiveness and utility of ECO.

7. It was also agreed that where needed professional consultancy would be hired for execution of some ECO projects, in conjunction with international donor agencies. All ECO Regional Institutions and Agencies were asked to provide a detailed report of that performance for evaluation in the 2nd meeting of Working Group of Senior Officials.

8. The meeting further decided that there was no need to propose any amendments in the ECO Basic Documents regarding the decision-making mechanism of ECO. However, the Member States were advised to send their proposals to COM through the existing approved channels.

9. In continuation of performing its task, the Working Group of the Senior Officials held its 2nd meeting on 2 May 2001 in Dushanbe and followed up the implementation of its previous decisions and new proposals.

10. The second meeting recommended that the Member States would convey their respective national versions of ECOTA and the proposed target and timeframe for establishment of a free trade area to the Secretariat to be reviewed by the HLEG to be held this year. The meeting also decided to re-categorize the agreements into two, first those which had not secured sufficient ratification due to lengthy and complicated legal procedures but still enjoy Member States' support and secondly those which had not yet been ratified due to change of priorities or considered not in line with national interests. The Member States were requested to propose a deadline for ratification of those agreements, which enjoy Member States support. It was recommended that depending on receipt of comments of Member States, MOUs in respect of each individual agreement may be signed for early enforcement of the agreements pending ratification.

11. The meeting proposed that the Status Report of "Transport and Communications" prepared by the Secretariat should be forwarded to ECO Permanent Commission on Transport and Communications (PCTC) for their views to be submitted to the next meeting of WGSO.

12. The meeting also recommended that a detailed report on the participation in the approved ECO activities enlisting low participation may be prepared and the list of events approved by 11th RPC meeting should be reconsidered by CPR with a view to reducing the number of events substantially.

13. The meeting agreed that ECO Secretariat should prepare a list of projects in all priority areas, which need professional consultancies. The list should be circulated among Member States to get their views for consideration of CPR.

14. The meeting proposed that the methodology to raise public awareness of ECO as prepared by ECO Cultural Institute should be circulated to the Member States for their views so the Institute could further review the paper and determine which proposals should be implemented. Within the framework of promotion of awareness of ECO, Iran offered to host a meeting on Dialogue among Silk Road Civilization. The meeting also requested the Secretariat to update its Website periodically as it proved to be an effective mean of promoting ECO.

15. It was agreed that the Presidents/Chairmen of the already operational ECO Regional Institutions/Specialized Agencies should be invited to future COM meetings to present reports on the activities of their institutes/agencies.