

The 11th Council of Ministers

Dushanbe Communiqué

(Dushanbe, 04 May, 2001)

Annex-VIII

1. The 11th meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan on 4 May 2001. The meeting, chaired by H.E. Mr. Talbak Nazarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic State 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.
2. The meeting was inaugurated by the message of His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. The message, conveyed to the COM meeting, contained valuable guidance and direction for the COM in achieving the goals and aspirations of ECO.
3. The Council of Ministers reviewed progress made in important areas of cooperation such as transport & communications, trade & investment, energy, mineral & environment, industry, agriculture and health and gave new policy guidelines for development of future programmes, plans and projects for further strengthening cooperation among the Member States.
4. The Council approved the recommendations of the first Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum, held on 8th November, 2000 in Islamabad (Pakistan) and requested the Member States to take necessary measures for the implementation of the Plan of Action for energy/petroleum cooperation in the ECO region (2001-2005).
5. The Council approved the report of the 11th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran on 1 March, 2001, and welcomed the positive work done by the RPC in preparing and formulating useful recommendations and relevant proposals to enhance regional cooperation within the overall policy framework laid down in the Treaty of Izmir and other relevant basic documents. The Council impressed upon the relevant authorities in the Member States to fully cooperate with the ECO Secretariat towards implementation of the 11th RPC's recommendations and the ECO Calendar of Events (2001).
6. The Council noted that pursuant to its decision in the 10th COM meeting, the Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) met twice during the year 2001 in Tehran and Dushanbe. The Council noted the positive work done in these meetings and directed the WGSO to continue its activities.
7. The Council approved the reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and appreciated the valuable work undertaken by it, on behalf of the COM,

during the intervening period since the 10th Council of Ministers Meeting held in Tehran in June, 2000.

8. The Council expressed satisfaction over the growing ECO cooperative relationship with other regional and international organizations. To further enhance meaningful relationship with regional and international organizations, the Council called upon the Secretariat to continue its efforts to consolidate its cooperation with these organizations. The Council also asked the CPR to review the progress of different projects undertaken with the help of international organizations such as UNDP, UNDCP, UN-ESCAP, UNFPA, UNCTAD, IDB, OIC, WTO, ITC, FAO, etc. on quarterly basis.

9. The Council took note of the importance of development of multifaceted transport corridors for the economies of ECO Member States and early construction of the missing road and railway links.

10. Acknowledging the important role of private sector in the development of economic cooperation of the ECO Member States, the Council emphasized the need for an enhanced interaction of the private business communities of ECO and welcomed the holding of the first joint ECO-ITC Workshop on Product Selection in Tehran on 13-15 March, 2001 and two planned Buyers/Sellers meetings on Textile and Clothing (Turkey) and Agro-Business and Food (Pakistan) as part of implementation of the joint ECO/ITC Project on "Promotion of Intra-ECO Trade".

11. The Council stressed the importance of the international exhibitions and conferences, annually held by ECO countries and of active participation of the ECO Member States in these events. It noted with satisfaction that the 2nd ECO Chamber Trade Fair and the 4th Trade Fair organized by ECO-CCI and the Export Promotion Bureau of Pakistan will be held in Karachi in September, 2001.

12. The Council highlighted the importance of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), which was signed in Almaty in May 1998, and requested the remaining Member States to accelerate its ratification, making it operational.

13. The Council recommended that in the interest of promoting regional economic growth, the Member States may:

a) Strengthen cooperation in the further development of transport and communications in the ECO region and consolidate mutually beneficial cooperation in the vital sectors i.e. energy, minerals, agriculture, industry, health, information technology and tourism.

b) Gradually eliminate intra-regional tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, through finalization of a regional agreement on trade (i.e. ECOTA) without prejudice to international obligations of the Member States.

c) Encourage comprehensive cooperation in the protection of environment for the promotion of sustainable development.

14. The Council approved the proposals that meetings of the ECO Ministers of Industries and the ECO Ministers of Agriculture will be held in Iran and Pakistan respectively this year.

15. The Council called upon the concerned Member States to complete the pending formalities for the early establishment and operationalization of the ECO Trade & Development Bank and ECO Reinsurance Company.

16. The Council welcomed the readiness of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to hold the 1st Meeting of the Board of Directors of ECO Science Foundation expediting its operationalization.

17. Referring to the decision of the 10th RPC meeting regarding cooperation in the information technology sector, the Council asked the ECO Secretariat to expedite preparation of a strategy paper on the subject for submission to the appropriate ECO Ministerial Meeting.

18. The Council emphasized that continued peace, stability, confidence and security in the ECO region were essential for carrying forward the ECO goals and objectives.

19. The Council appreciated the valuable efforts made by H.E. Dr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, during his Chairmanship of ECO and felicitated H.E. Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan on assuming the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers from May 4, 2001. The Council assured him of its full support and cooperation during the period of his Chairmanship.

20. The Council expressed profound gratitude and thanks to His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and all other Government officials of the Republic of Tajikistan for their valuable support and contribution in the successful organization of the meeting in the beautiful and historic city of Dushanbe. The Council also thanked the ECO Secretary General and his staff for their relentless efforts to make it a successful meeting.