

The 9th Council of Ministers

Baku Communiqué

(Baku, May 18-21, 1999)

Annex-IX

1.The Ninth Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan on May 18-21, 1999. The Meeting, chaired by H.E. Mr Tofik Zulfugarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of other Member States i.e. 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 Heydar Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The message, conveyed to the COM Meeting, contained valuable guidance for the COM in achieving the goals and aspirations of ECO.

3.The Council of Ministers being the highest policy-making body of ECO 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 strengthening cooperation among the Member States.

4.The Council adopted the report of the 9th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) that was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 19-23 February, 1999 and welcomed the valuable 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 further requested the relevant authorities in the Member States to fully cooperate with the ECO Secretariat in implementation of the 9th RPC's recommendations and the ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings of 1999.

5.The Council approved the reports of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and appreciated the valuable work done by it, acting on behalf of the COM, during the intervening period since the 8th Council of Ministers Meeting held in May 1998.

6.The Council took note with satisfaction that the restructuring and reorganization process of the Secretariat has almost been completed.

7.The Council also took note with satisfaction that during the year 1998, ECO benefited from its cooperative relationship with the other regional and international organizations such as UNDP, UN-ESCAP, UNFPA, IDB, OIC, WTO, FAO etc. To further enhance relationship with other regional and international organizations, the Council called upon the Secretariat, to continue its efforts regarding its cooperation with all those organizations to benefit from their resources and potentials.

8.The Council took note of the importance of development of multifaceted transport corridors for the economies of ECO Member States, particularly for the Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan, including the construction of pipelines for transportation of hydrocarbon resources to the world markets.

9.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 at these exhibitions and conferences and mentioned in this regard the upcoming Sixth International Caspian Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference, to be held in Baku on 1-4 June, 1999.

10.The Council highlighted the importance of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) which was signed in Almaty in May 1998 and requested the ECO Member States to accelerate the procedures including the finalization of the Annexes for entering into force of this Agreement.

11.The Council took note of the importance of the high level International Conference on restoration of the historical Silk Road, held in Baku on 7-8 September, 1998, during which was signed the Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for Development of Europe-the Caucasus-Asia Corridor, and welcomed early implementation of this document.

12.Acknowledging the important role of private sector in the development of economic cooperation of the ECO Member States, the Council admitted the necessity of activation of work in attracting the private sector and investment in ECO projects and programmes.

13.The Council stressed that the interests of economic prosperity necessitate the establishment of peace, stability, confidence and security in the ECO region.

14.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;

b) Gradually eliminate intra-regional tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, through, including possible elaboration of regional framework agreement on trade without prejudice to international obligations of the Member States.

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

d) Cooperate in elimination of consequences of natural and man-made disaster;

e) Strengthen mutual cooperation in the vital sectors of energy, industry and agriculture.

15. In order to associate the Member States' Ministers with the relevant priority sectors activities of the Organization, the Council approved the recommendations that a Meeting of ECO Commerce & Trade Ministers may be held this year in Iran in addition to the Transport Ministers' Meeting, which is being held every two years. In this connection, the Council welcomed the proposals for holding the meetings of Energy Ministers in Pakistan and Industry Ministers in Iran next year.

16. The Council appreciated the valuable efforts made by H.E. Mr Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan during his Chairmanship of ECO and felicitated H.E. Mr Tofik Zulfugarov, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan on assuming the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers from May 21, 1999 and assured him of its maximum support and cooperation during the period of his Chairmanship.

17. The Council expressed profound gratitude and thanks to His Excellency Mr Heydar Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and all other Government officials of the Republic of Azerbaijan for their valuable support and contribution in the successful organization of the Meeting in the beautiful and historic city of Baku. The Council also thanked the ECO Secretary General and his staff for their untiring efforts to make it a successful Meeting.

18. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan to host the 10th Council of Ministers' Meeting and the 6th ECO Summit in the year 2000.