

## The 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Ministers

Inaugural Speech of H.E. Dr. Hassan Habibi, First Vice President

( Tehran, 22-23 May , 1991 )

*Annex-II*

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

*Excellencies,  
Distinguished Audience*

It is a great pleasure for me to open, in the name of God, the first Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization, that was formed in accordance with Izmir Treaty in order to foster and consolidate economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the three great countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey. This meeting that is held under such a condition that our three neighboring countries enjoy the best friendly relations with each other constitute a substantial contribution to regional cooperation.

Today after 13 years thanks to the three countries' efforts and the Secretariat's endeavours, ECO, enjoying an appropriate status and a solid legal basis, opens its highest executive and decision-making council.

In the course of 27 years since its inception, ECO has seen many vicissitudes. What has always been proved as an inalterable principle in all such circumstances and especially under the present conditions is the fact that the three members, sharing many common interests in myriads of areas are in need of close and expanded relations. In other words, this Region's history and geography testify to the fact that the common borders between our three countries have always been the most secure borders, which itself is the best token of good neighborliness in this whole.

A point that I wish to underline as an undeniable fact and in a way free from formalities commonly existing among the countries is that in our world today there exist or is about to come into existence tens of regional organizations with objectives more or less similar to those of ECO. But I daresay that in few regions of the world one may see the positive incentives and affinities that prevails the ECO's geographical region.

Dear Guests, Many sister regional organizations bring together such members that used to be blood foes of each other up to a decade ago. But thanks God, for hundreds of years the common borders of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey have been borders of peace and friendship. Many of regional cooperation organizations comprise such a body of states that together have a population not even equal to even 1/3 of the population of only one of the ECO members. With genuine development of ECO's activities that include a population of 230 million people, this organization will become one of the most important regions and markets.

The existence in our region of a great poet and master like Molavi, known in our three countries as a great poet and the father of Islamic mysticism or a revolutionary scholar like Iqbal whose works were for the first time published by RCD cultural institute, or the Turk poet, Soudi's commentary of Hafiz, betoken the many common cultural points shared by our peoples.

In this same connection, one may also refer to many common words used by the people of our region. Furthermore our region's contribution to the world civilization in the course of its more than 7000 years of history has made it one of the important centers of culture throughout the world.

Therefore, the many common points shared by our three countries necessitate that a relationship at its highest level exist in our tripartite and regional ties. On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I reiterate my government's firm determination for the overall enhancement of these relations that I believe to be a solid basis for the three countries' development and advancement. In this connection, I believe that our multilateral relations have the potential to provide for many of our existing shortcomings at the same time national planning can also be carried out with due attention to regional plans. For this purpose, we should pay due attention to rapid developments taking place in our world, and speed up the process of cooperation.

*Distinguished Audience,  
Dear Guests,*

With a deep study of ECO's treaties and agendas, one can arrive at this conclusion that if efforts are founded on Izmir treaty, if ECO's problems are diligently followed by the three governments, and if more attention is paid to the important question of time, considerable progress and success can be expected in the future. We may thus pave the way for the membership of other Muslim countries of the region.

In this whole, there is no doubt that due attention to important infrastructural issues like communications, exchange of goods – produced in the three countries, scientific, agricultural -and industrial cooperation, and expansion of tourism are the principal foundations ensuring ECO's success. I hope this important meeting, taking into consideration the new trend and the special attention of the

three head of states- pay to the organization, will succeed in fixing a date for the ECO's summit. Because such a meeting in addition to stimulating the ECO, will be a successful turning point for the three countries.

During the recent visit of H.E. President Hashemi Rafsanjani to Turkey, important discussions were held with H.E. President Ozal on the expansion of ECO and the ECO's summit. We are confident that H.E. President Gholam Ishaq Khan has similar views on this subject.

I take this opportunity to once again renew my greetings and wish every success for all delegates, and thus call to order the first session of the council of ministers.