

**ECO Secretariat
Tehran**

Report

**Official visit of the ECO Secretary General to New York
(September 22-26, 2014)**

1. A delegation of the ECO Secretariat led by H.E. Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, ECO Secretary General, visited New York from September 22-26, 2014 to participate in the sixty-ninth regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and represent the Organization in the capacity of observer in the session's meetings.
2. The Secretary General represented the Secretariat in the 21st Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers and the 14th ASEAN-ECO Joint Ministerial Meeting, which were held on the sidelines of the General Assembly Session.
3. Additionally, the Secretary General held bilateral meetings with the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), the Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council), Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Participation in the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly

1. In line with the established practice, the Secretary General participated in the General Assembly session and represented ECO in the capacity of observer in the meetings of the sixty-ninth regular session of the General Assembly.

21st Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers

1. The 21st Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held on September 26, 2014 in New York on the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The Meeting was organized by the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN at New York, and chaired by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his capacity as the current Chairman of the ECO COM.
2. The Informal Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers/Representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey.

3. The proceedings of the Informal COM Meeting followed an agenda approved by the 195th CPR meeting held on July 13, 2014 at the ECO Secretariat. A press release was endorsed which was issued to the media at the close of the meeting. A summary record of the meeting is being circulated separately.

14th ASEAN-ECO Joint Ministerial Meeting

1. The 14th ASEAN-ECO Joint Ministerial Meeting was held on September 25, 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Dato' Sri Anifah Hj. Aman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia (country coordinator for ASEAN-ECO relations) and H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Chairman of ECO COM) on behalf of ASEAN and ECO respectively. It was attended by the Foreign Ministers/Representatives of ECO and ASEAN Member States. The Secretariats of the two Organizations were represented by H.E. Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov, ECO Secretary General and H.E. Mr. Le Luong Minh, ASEAN Secretary General.

2. The proceedings of the meeting followed an agenda approved by the two Secretariats. A joint press release was also endorsed by the meeting and issued at the meeting's end. A summary record of the meeting is being circulated separately.

Bilateral Meetings of the Secretary General

Meeting with the Director General of UNIDO

1. The ECO Secretary General held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Li Yong, Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on September 23, 2014.

2. The two sides exchanged views on the status of ongoing cooperation between ECO and UNIDO and took note of the growing collaboration between the two Organizations.

3. The Director General briefed that the United Nations post-2015 development agenda has reinforced the international community's commitment to poverty eradication through, among others, inclusive and sustainable industrial development, as emphasized in Sustainable Development Goal 9 featured in the proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The concept of inclusive and sustainable industrial development was endorsed by UNIDO Member States through the Lima Declaration during the 15th session of the Organization's General Conference held in Lima, Peru, in December 2013.

5. The Director General also informed about the Partnership Forum being organized by UNIDO in Vienna from 4-5 November 2014. The forum will be a major international event aimed to pilot the establishment of innovative partnership-based business models to implement strategies for inclusive and sustainable industrial development. The forum would be attended by major financial institutions and stake holders from the international community. The UNIDO Director General also invited the ECO Secretary General to participate in the event.

6. At this forum, UNIDO will highlight the cases of Senegal and Ethiopia, the two selected pilot countries for the development of the inclusive and sustainable industrial development programme for country partnerships. These programmes would be expanded to other countries if met with positive results.

7. The ECO Secretary General thanked the UNIDO Director General for the detailed information provided and briefed about the third phase of the Trade Capacity Building Project aimed at enhancing quality standards of the member countries. He informed that the kick-off meeting for the project had recently been held and expressed the hope that the project would prove useful for the ECO countries in building their capacities in the relevant areas.

8. The Secretary General informed that the ECO member countries were characterized by resource-based economies and there was a need to promote industrial development through appropriate activities and industrialization strategies. In this regard, he emphasized that there was a great potential for UNIDO and ECO to collaborate on conducting important projects in the relevant areas.

9. He also briefed the UNIDO Director General about the measures being taken for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the project for fighting drug trafficking to/from Afghanistan. In this context, he informed that within the framework of ECO, emphasis is being laid on alternative development strategies for Afghanistan. By developing the agricultural and non-agricultural industrial sector, alternate livelihood options can be provided to the poppy-cultivators. In this regard, the Secretary General requested UNIDO to provide its assistance and expertise to the ECO region. He also mentioned that small-scale projects to support the agro-industry can be initiated in Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, as pilot projects for the ECO region, with the assistance of UNIDO.

10. The Secretary General highlighted the importance being attached to renewable energy sector within ECO's framework and requested UNIDO's support for enhancing the region's capacity in this sector. The UNIDO Director General appreciated the ECO initiatives in the renewable energy sector and informed that in this area, new partnerships are being explored with OFID and that UNIDO is striving to secure significant resources for projects in this field.

11. The UNIDO Director General mentioned that UNIDO attaches importance to the ECO member countries and requested the ECO member states to develop

country programmes which can be considered by UNIDO in the coming time. These may include development of agro-industry in Kyrgyz Republic and high-tech industrial sector and renewable energies in Kazakhstan. He informed that support from donor countries in the region can be acquired for funding such projects.

Meeting with Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States

1. On September 23, 2014, the ECO Secretary General held a meeting with Mr. Ramil Hasanov, Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council). The ECO Secretary General briefed about the recent activities in the ECO region in various areas and discussed ways to develop cooperation between the two sides.

2. Later, a ceremony was held to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two Organizations, which envisions cooperation between the two sides in the areas of: economic integration and trade, transport and customs issues, sustainable development, environment, tourism, energy security and education.

3. The Secretaries-General of the two Organizations expressed satisfaction over the signing of the MOU between the two sides which would structure the cooperation between them, and discussed ways to further strengthen this cooperative relationship.

4. The two Secretaries-General mentioned that since the members of the Turkic Council were also represented in ECO, there was a need to coordinate the activities of the two sides to avoid unnecessary duplication and achieve synergy. The Secretary General of the Turkic Council informed that the scope of activities of Turkic Council was considerably broad, with the exception of security issues, which made it possible to cooperate with ECO in a whole range of areas.

5. The ECO Secretary General informed his counterpart about the Joint ASEAN-ECO Tourism Forum which was planned to be held in Antalya in November 2014. He also mentioned that an invitation would be sent to the Turkic Council to participate in the event. The ECO Secretary General also briefed about the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute based in Tehran and proposed to consider establishing cooperation between the Turkic Council and the ECO Cultural Institute.

6. The two sides agreed to support each other in pursuing their common goals within their respective mandates. To this end, it was agreed that the Secretariats of the two Organizations would extend necessary assistance to each other.

7. It was agreed during the meeting that a Work Programme to implement the MOU between the two organizations would be prepared in the coming three months. A meeting between the technical officials of the two Secretariats may also be held for this purpose, for which the two Secretariats would do the necessary coordination.

Meeting with the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

1. The ECO Secretary General held a meeting with Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) on September 24, 2014 at the latter's office in New York.

2. The Secretary General presented a brief overview of the recent activities of ECO, especially related to the transit trade and transport sectors. While highlighting the development challenges being faced by the seven landlocked countries in the ECO region, the Secretary General mentioned that there exists considerable scope for joint initiatives aimed at promoting cooperation in the transit trade and transport areas in this region.

3. The Secretary General apprised the Under-Secretary-General of the transport related activities in the ECO region, especially highlighting the initiatives for the development of regional road and rail networks. With regards to the railway networks, the Secretary General informed about the progress achieved on the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway projects and the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) route. He also briefed about the work being carried out on the regional road corridors and mentioned that the ECO member states are gradually moving ahead in the transport sector and are making considerable contribution to the cause of Landlocked Developing Countries.

4. The Secretary General also highlighted the importance of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) aimed at supporting the ECO member states in enhancing the inter-regional trade and developing transit transportation networks, respectively. The Under-Secretary-General was informed that further to the successful completion of the ECO/IDB Joint Project and preparation of the ECO Road and Railway Development Plans, a partnership forum is being organized with assistance of the ECO Trade and Development Bank for implementation of the envisaged projects.

5. The Under-Secretary-General thanked the Secretary General for the briefing and mentioned that the peculiar challenges being faced by the landlocked countries of the region had considerable effects on their socio-economic development and were impacting their overall economic growth and resilience to vulnerabilities. He expressed concern over the fact that tariff rates in the Central Asian countries, which are part of the ECO region, are among the highest in the world. While appreciating that considerable progress had been achieved in developing the physical infrastructure in the region, he mentioned that the high tariff rates and cumbersome rules and regulations are hampering the regional economic growth.

6. The Secretary General noted the concern expressed by the Under-Secretary-General and in this regard, sought the assistance of UN-OHRLLS in addressing these problems. In particular, he asked UN-OHRLLS to offer its support in assisting the ECO member states in effectively implementing the ECO Trade Agreement.

7. The Secretary General also referred to the project proposals which were shared earlier by the ECO Secretariat with the UN-OHRLLS for regional studies related to the (i) needs assessment of the landlocked member states of ECO; and the (ii) transit trade procedures for cooperation in trade facilitation. The two studies are aimed at assisting the ECO landlocked countries to develop efficient transport links through transit countries and evaluating the customs regimes and procedural requirements for enhancing regional trade, respectively. While mentioning that a reply from UN-OHRLLS is still awaited in this regard, he requested the Under-Secretary-General to expedite sending his Office's response to these proposals. The Under-Secretary-General mentioned that these proposals were under consideration and a response in this regard would be shared in the coming time period. He also reaffirmed the commitment of his Office to work with ECO in addressing the challenges faced by the region's landlocked countries.

8. The Under-Secretary-General apprised the Secretary General about the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) which will be held from 3 to 5 November 2014 in Vienna, Austria. He informed that the main objective of the Conference is to assess the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and to reaffirm the global commitment to addressing the special needs of the landlocked developing countries, in particular those related to infrastructure development, transit and trade facilitation and policy framework. He also invited the ECO Secretary General to participate in this important event. The relevant officials of UN-OHRLLS also informed about the side events being organized by Governments, UN system and other Inter-governmental Organizations, and major groups, which will be held during the Conference to highlight their activities for the supporting the development needs of the landlocked countries. The Under-Secretary-General also proposed ECO to consider organizing a side event for showcasing information related to the Organization's activities and programmes.

9. The ECO Secretary General thanked the Under-Secretary-General for the invitation, and expressed the confidence that the Conference would be successful in realizing its objectives. The Secretary General also welcomed the idea of organizing a side event by ECO on the sidelines of the Conference and requested more information from UN-OHRLLS in this regard. He also invited the Under-Secretary-General to participate in the upcoming ECO Summit and Council of Ministers Meeting, scheduled to be held in Pakistan and mentioned that an official invitation would be sent to UN-OHRLLS in due time.

Meeting with the Secretary-General D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation

1. On the sidelines of the General Assembly Session, the ECO Secretary General held a meeting with H.E. Seyed Ali Mohammad Mousavi, Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation on September 24, 2014.

2. During the meeting, the Secretaries-General discussed various issues of mutual concern, reviewed the current status of cooperation between the two sides and considered ways to further enhance the cooperative relationship between the two Organizations.

3. The meeting, inter alia, focused on proposals to jointly organize events such as workshops and training courses in the areas of Transport and Communications and Agriculture, Industry and Tourism. It was also agreed to ensure greater engagement of the two sides in each other's relevant events and activities in the aforementioned areas and participation of the two sides in each other's technical/ministerial level meetings in the priority sectors.

4. The ECO Secretary General stressed on the need for organizing joint activities for capacity building of the two Secretariats in relevant areas. Emphasizing the importance of agriculture and food security sectors for the two Organizations, the Secretary General proposed greater engagement of ECO in the activities of D-8 in the field of agriculture, especially the D-8 Seed Bank Project. He also invited the D-8 Organization to participate in the relevant initiatives of ECO, especially the activities and conferences related to agriculture, food security and seed sector development. An updated calendar of ECO events was also shared with the representative of D-8 for greater coordination in this regard.

5. The Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization invited Ambassador Aleskerov to attend the 9th D-8 Summit scheduled to be held in December 2014 in Turkey. Ambassador Aleskerov thanked the Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization, and invited him to participate in the third ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, scheduled to be held in November 2014 in Antalya, Turkey.

Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan

1. On the sidelines of the General Assembly session, the ECO Secretary General held meeting with H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

2. The ECO Secretary General briefed the Minister on the ECO activities, state of affairs and process of reform. He thanked the Government of Turkmenistan for supporting the ECO and timely transferring annual contributions to the budget of the organization.

3. The Minister and Secretary General discussed the possibilities for strengthening the ECO's role as the regional organisation for economic cooperation, enhancing its effectiveness and performance as well as Turkmenistan's greater engagement in the ECO activities.

Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

1. On the sidelines of the General Assembly session, the ECO Secretary General held meeting with H.E. Mr. Özdil Nami, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

2. In view of the observer status granted to the Turkish Cypriot State at ECO by the 20th Council of Ministers' Meeting, the two sides discussed issues of mutual interest. The Foreign Minister expressed hope that cooperation between the two sides would be strengthened in the coming period.

3. H.E. Mr. Özdil Nami briefed the Secretary General about the ongoing negotiations process with the United Nations regarding the Cyprus issue.

4. He specifically highlighted the increasingly important role being played by the universities and educational institutions in supporting the economy of Northern Cyprus. It was also informed that these universities and institutions are producing qualified professionals in various sectors of the economy for ECO member states..

5. In his discussion with the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Nami raised the issue of recognition of the degrees/diplomas granted by the universities/institutions of Northern Cyprus by the educational authorities of ECO Member States. The Secretary General recommended that the issue might be taken up with the ECO Educational Institute, based in Ankara.

6. H.E. Mr. Nami also briefed the Secretary General about the progress made by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in various areas. He mentioned that the investment procedures had been simplified to attract foreign investment. He said that a shipping port had been established and work on a modern airport was about to be completed. A water pipeline was being built to carry water from Turkey that would address the problem of water scarcity in Northern Cyprus. He also informed that within two years, work on an electricity grid would be completed which would enable electricity from Turkey to be imported.

7. H.E. Mr. Nami requested the ECO Secretary General to support the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in organizing a promotional activity within the framework of ECO to highlight the developments made in various sectors such as tourism and investment.

8. The Secretary General suggested the chamber of commerce of Northern Cyprus could hold fairs and exhibitions to showcase its commodities and services

sectors. H.E. Mr. Nami welcomed the idea and informed that trade fairs are held by the relevant authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and information in this regard would be shared with the ECO Secretariat for circulation among its Member States.

9. In order to promote interaction of the businessmen and private sectors of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus with those of the ECO Member States, the Secretary General opined that it may be considered between the Northern Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industries and the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ECO-CCI).

10. The two sides also discussed possible activities in the field of renewable energy resources. Referring to the climatic conditions and natural resources of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the Secretary General enquired about the initiatives launched by the Turkish Cypriot authorities in the field of renewable energy. H.E. Mr. Nami informed that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has been investing in solar energy and the renewal of the transmission grid is also underway.

11. At the end of the meeting, the H.E. Mr. Nami thanked the ECO Secretary General for taking time out of his schedule for the meeting.
