

The Informal COM Meeting

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bekzhasar Narbayev, Secretary General of ECO

(UN - New York, 02 October, 2003)

Annex-IV

Excellencies,

As I said in my opening remarks, I would continue now on ECO activities under this agenda item.

Expanded ECO has traveled a long way in last ten years and we know that now, it is more integrated and near to its objective compared to before. But it is natural to have some disillusionment with its performance. Of course some expectations could not be met and all potentials could not be realized.

As a result Eminent Persons Group was instituted by the 13th COM. We would want it to deliberate and deliver. This group would be an advantage to ECO. We look forward to its establishment as early as possible and we hope eminent persons of international experience would be appointed.

In Afghanistan, as stabilization is underway, ECO has prepared a Plan of Action for reconstruction in Afghanistan and submitted to the member states. Unfortunately its most important ingredient, that is creation of Support Fund has not taken place because every time a financial expert group meeting is planned, it could not be convened due to lack of quorum. Our Ministers and representatives can send instructions in this regard to the concerned authorities in their capital.

In Trade and Investment sector, five ECO ministers have signed ECO Trade Agreement in July this year and three other member states have shown willingness to sign. Now the next step is to ratify and implement it. Similarly the Transit Transport Framework Agreement is also waiting to be implemented. In this sector, there is also the issue of ECO Visa Regime which also needs to be expanded or updated. The ECO Trade and Development Bank also needs to be established at the earliest as it will finance trade. All these things are of critical importance to expansion of trade between ECO countries.

Transport is no longer considered to be just a support sector of trade. Advancement in the field of transport services has created its own dynamics. International cooperation in multifarious transport services are taking place. ECO is also moving in the direction of negotiation for standardized transport facilities in ECO region with more and more utilization of Information Communication Technology. ECO has found in a study some inadvertent hindrances in the transit trade at the border posts by Customs and Immigration authorities. Taking this opportunity, I request the esteemed Ministers and Representatives to convey the concern of this meeting to their national authorities. Most importantly we all know that several rail and road links are missing

between ECO countries. I cannot over emphasize the importance of this transport issue and hope this meeting will send a strong signal to respective capitals in this regard.

In the field of agriculture we concluded a good Ministerial meeting last year in Islamabad. We need to implement its decisions. Similarly member states are also requested to participate at an appropriate level in the senior officials meetings in order to follow up on the decisions of our Agriculture Ministers meeting.

We are also in the process of organizing first ministerial meeting on Industry in early January 2004 in Iran. This meeting will help mobilize political will for cooperation in the field of industry and with the help of UNIDO we intend to draft a Plan of Action/Strategy. We request our Ministers of Industries to participate in this meeting.

Energy is another important ECO sector. We convened 6th Special Task Group meeting but unfortunately we are still away from developing a consensus in this regard. Secretariat is trying to facilitate the negotiations. Member states would greatly facilitate the process by instructing their concerned authorities to approach the issue with the spirit of give and take by keeping in view the long term interest of their countries which is embedded more in good neighborly relations rather than national interest defined narrowly. I have spoken on long term advantages of making sacrifice in my initial comments and I am sure these are the principles with which everyone agrees as its veracity is too self-evident. Advantages and disadvantages also have queer habit of changing places with the passage of time and way of management.

Excellencies,

Our leaders have agreed to cooperate also on subjects such as Science and Education. In the field of Education there is some due action for Republic of Turkey to carry out, that I hope, the esteemed minister/representative of Republic will send instruction to Ankara. Similarly all our members are also requested to send their views regarding Pakistan's proposals on ECO Science Foundation.

You may, Excellencies, also agree to call upon the concerned authorities to implement the decision of the Ministerial, Experts or Technical Groups meetings.

With this, I have tried to be as brief as possible in order to not to burden your excellencies with too much details as these are already with officials of your country and to give a mere glimpse of urgent matters that you may address quickly.

Thank you.