

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Arif, President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)  
at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr. Chairman,  
H.E. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,**

It is a distinct honor for me to participate, once again, in this meeting on behalf of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI). I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretariat for their efforts and I hope that the meeting would succeed to achieve its envisaged goals and objectives.

**Excellencies,**

“The deep-rooted historical and cultural ties among the peoples of the countries in ECO Region,” is one of the main pillars of this organization. Hence, according to the Treat of Izmir, “promoting active regional collaboration and mutual assistance in economic, cultural, technical and scientific fields and, in particular, “further strengthening historical and cultural ties among the people of the ECO region” are basic objectives of the organization.

In the past 18 years, ECO Cultural Institute has aimed to realize its noble objectives and goals outlined in the Treaty of Izmir and ECI Charter through various cultural activities in the Member States. In this regard, the institute has deeply examined and followed the recommendations made by RPC in its meetings.

In an attempt to diversify its programs during the last year, the Institute has put forth new initiatives in other fields including sports, which has been recurrently addressed in RPC meetings. An instance of such initiative is the first ECO Chess Cup which was held in Tehran according to the international standards of the championship with the presence of chess masters from all 10 ECO countries in collaboration with the Chess Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The tournament which was run at optimum level was accredited and registered in FIDE official table of events. ECI bore the cost of the air tickets and accommodation of the representatives of the four member countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran undertook all the charges for the representatives of other six ECO countries as well as the organization of the competition.

In the fields of poetry and literature, several literary programs were held with the presence of distinguished poets and representative literary figures of the region among which are ECO Winter Poetry Night and Ashura Poetry Night.

Among other activities of the Institute are collaborations in holding cultural seminars and specialized meetings on the issues in the region with the goal of creating interaction between the scholars and researchers in ECO region.

Holding the exhibitions of photography, paintings, calligraphy and handicrafts of the artists from Member States along with are programs like Qawwali performance have smother the ground for the introduction of such arts. Also, ECI With the cooperation of the member States have implemented programs to better introduce the prominent figures of the region like Mowlana Jallal-eddin, Mir Ali Hamadani, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal Lahori. Here I would like to extend my thanks to the Ministry of National heritage of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for organizing a great ceremony on Iqbal Day in Lahore that was held with the cooperation of ECO Cultural Institute. The ceremony was aired directly from more than 25 television channels in Pakistan. ECO Cultural Institute with poets and scholars from ECO Member States participated in the event.

In regard with ECI publications, the Institute has produced literature with a focus on the main cultural fields including civilization, literature, architecture, music and handicrafts. To this end, the two previous issues of ECO Heritage Quarterly were respectively dedicated to culture and civilization, poetry and literature, and the next issue is to be released on architecture. In each issue of the ECO Heritage an article is published independently from each of the 10 ECO countries; to provide an instance, an issue has been submitted to the participants in this meeting. Besides, with the cooperation of the scholars from Iran, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan, the Institute published two books on literature last year which were unveiled in Tehran International Book Fair. " The Architecture of ECO Member States", " The Afghan Figures", "Persian Biography of Iqbal", and "The Anthology of Modern Persian Poets in English" are the titles of the books that will soon be published by ECI.

A detailed report on ECI activities is provided in the activity report of the secretariat and in the Institute brochure as well. But the point I wish to draw your attention to, is that as part of our policy is to encourage 6 members of ECO to accede to ECI, we intend to promote activities in all the 10 Member States without imposing any charges on ECI Member States.

As I strongly believe, in case that all ECO Member States accede to ECI, the capacity and effectiveness of the Institute would grow, more than ever before, towards the development of cultural relations. However, our response to any requests made by all ECO Member States for cooperation will be positive. Still, in the current status, the 10 Member Countries can utilize ECI's capacities to promote their cultural activities at regional and international levels.

In line with the policies adopted by the Institute in the last two years including the promotion of administrative and budgetary management, staff cut and saving cost in favor of program budget, without negative effects on the quality and quantity of the programs, ECI has managed to minimize the current expenditures by 75% comparing to the situation in two years ago, to triple its program budge planned budgetary and to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.

Undoubtedly, with the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the host country for resolving the remaining issues relating to the building of ECI Headquarters and restoring to the earlier conditions by the assistance of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, ECI would be able to implement considerably a broader range of activities in various fields. I thank you very much.

**Statement by Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President of ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)  
at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Excellency the Chairman of 25<sup>th</sup> RPC,  
Excellency the Secretary General of ECO,  
Excellencies the Ambassadors and delegates from ECO Member States, Heads of  
Specialized Agencies,  
Gentlemen and Ladies.  
Assalam-O-Alaikum!**

It is indeed a pleasure for me to address this august forum- the RPC.

Excellencies, on behalf of the ECOSF and on my personal behalf, I express our gratitude to all the member states and ECO Secretariat for their continuous support to the Foundation. We are especially grateful to the Government of Pakistan for patronizing ECOSF through the Ministries of Science & Technology and Foreign Affairs. I take this opportunity to share with the august house the good news that the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2014 ratified the Charter of ECO Science Foundation and its additional protocol. I congratulate and thank the Government of Afghanistan for this action. Therefore, now, there are five ratifying members of ECOSF charter.

Excellencies, the Foundation has been making efforts to pursue the planned activities, though there have been some difficulties of various kind. But, I am pleased to report that by the end of 2014, the Governments of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran, both had made full payment of mandatory budget contributions for the year 2012 and partial payment for 2013; for which I am grateful to both the member states. However, the budget contribution for the year 2014 is awaited from both- Pakistan and Iran. I very much hope that it too will be released sooner. The mandatory contribution from remaining three ratifying member states viz., Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan is still awaited. I take this opportunity to urge other member states to ratify the ECOSF charter so that the Foundation functions at full strength and the members can benefit from its programs.

Excellencies, you are aware that the Foundation has a "Science & Technology Fund" for financing the collaborative research projects. As required, we prepared the modalities for utilization of the S&T Fund, which were approved by the 20th meeting of ECO COM held in October 2012 at Baku, Azerbaijan. Pledges of voluntary contribution have been made by the Governments of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan but the payment has not come through from any member as yet! Thus no research project proposals can be invited so far!

I would like to emphasize that ECOSF has developed good interaction with numerous international science and technology organizations and Donors to support the programmes of the Foundation. Those include; UNESCO, International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (ISTIC), Kuala Lumpur- Malaysia, the La main a la pate Foundation of France, the European Union, ISESCO, COMSATS, EvK2CNR Foundation of Italy, Science Education Programme (SEP) of Inter-Academy Panel (IAP) and a numerous Pakistani institutions. But we could only be able to attract support from them, if we have some funds available in our S&T

Fund. Thus I urge member states to please contribute generously to the S&T Fund of the ECO Science Foundation, so that collaborative research projects can be invited soonest.

Nevertheless, I am pleased to share with you that we received in-kind support of the EU, worth over US\$45,000 for our very successful three days International Conference on "Emerging Trends in Life Sciences for Sustainable Development" held in Lahore in October 2014. I seek the support of ECO Secretariat and this Forum to support us in further stronger interaction with EU.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to note that the ECO Secretariat delegation recently visited the Islamic Development Bank and the Secretariat is negotiating with them for supporting ECO projects. I put on record our appreciation of the initiative by ECO Secretariat and propose that ECO Science Foundation be included in the larger project and negotiations with IDB. I would also like to emphasize that ECO is an observer member of UNESCO and the two signed MoU in 1995. Thus participation by an ECO Delegation in the next- 38th Session of UNESCO, would be a step in right direction and very useful for the region by being part of the International Programmes especially in the fields of Science, Education, Culture and Biodiversity & Environment- the mandate of UNESCO.

Excellencies, despite financial and logistic difficulties, the Foundation undertook some important scientific activities during 2014. Details have been provided in the written progress report just circulated and an electronic newsletter- ECOSF NEWS is issued every three months; however, I would like to highlight some milestones briefly.

1. I as President ECOSF have been appointed as member of two international scientific forums:
  - a. **ISTIC Governing Board** and attended its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in September 2014. ISTIC is a Category-2 UNESCO Centre. Eminent Scientists, Engineers and Heads of Organizations from southern hemisphere are elected and appointed as members of ISTIC Governing Board to steer the International Organization
  - b. **Global Council of Science Education Programme (SEP)** of the Inter-Academy Panel (IAP) for next five years. IAP is a network of 107 National Academies of Sciences around the world.
2. ECOSF signed MoU with ISTIC Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and EvK2-CNR Foundation of Italy for promotion of scientific research & capacity building in the ECO region.
3. ECOSF nominated scientific experts from the member states to numerous International Forums. Those included:
  - a. IPBES- Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Eight nominations from Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Turkey were accepted.

- b. *La main a la pate* (LAMAP) Foundation-France Foundation for implementation of Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE). Two nominations one each from Iran & Pakistan were accepted.
- c. ISTIC Training Workshop on "Preparing R&D Proposal and Technopreneurship" in Kazakhstan. Two nominations each from Azerbaijan and Pakistan were accepted by organizers.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

4. ECOSF in collaboration with COMSATS organized a Seminar on Science Communication & Journalism on 6 April 2014 in Islamabad Pakistan. The seminar key objective was to emphasize on the need to promote knowledge-based societies and a culture of science by effective science communication.

5. ECOSF participated in the international Forum on Environmental Ethics at Department of Environment, Tehran - Iran on 6 Sept 2014. The International Forum was jointly organized by the Iranian Department of Environment (DoE), the University of Environment (UoE), Iran and ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) in collaboration with ECOSF, ECO Secretariat, UNESCO, UNDP and numerous other Iranian and international organizations.

6. ECOSF in collaboration with Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore, organized an International Conference on "Emerging Trends in Life Sciences for Sustainable Development" from October 9-11, 2014 in Lahore. The conference was co-sponsored by the European Commission-EU, COMSTECH, Pakistan Academy of Sciences and others. Main Objective of the conference was to facilitate life scientists from ECO member countries to share their experiences and develop collaboration & networking within the ECO Region and with the International Scientific Community.

7. ECOSF and COMSATS in association with UNESCO- Pakistan, commemorated the World Science Day 2014 and organized a seminar in Islamabad on 12 November 2014. The theme was; 'Quality Science: Securing a Sustainable Future for all'. The renowned physicist and former Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Science & Technology Dr. Ishfaq Ahmad graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

8. ECOSF in collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific Jakarta, Pakistan Engineering Council, Federation of Engineering Institutions in Asia & Pacific and ISTIC Malaysia organized an international meeting on "Roadmap for Engineering Qualification Standardization in ECO & Asia-Pacific Region" in Islamabad on 9-10 January 2015.

Dear participants, our next strategic and mega event is a Capacity Building workshop in Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) at Astana- Kazakhstan on 23-25 June 2015 in collaboration with the Science Committee of Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, LAMAP Foundation France and ISTIC Malaysia. And I seek support of the member states please.

Finally Excellencies, I would like to say that the Foundation is making all possible efforts to generate science, technology and education activities in the region with the

collaboration and support of International Organizations but the greatest difficulty we are facing is; the slow response by the member states in general, may be because the Focal Points need to be more active and responsive. If that is done, I can assure you that our activity despite shortage of funds would increase many folds because of our linkages with international organizations and forums. I also offer to facilitate interaction of scientific communities among member states under any bilateral programmes.

At the end, I express my sincere thanks to ECO Secretariat for the commendable efforts in convening this 25<sup>th</sup> RPC meeting and the logistic arrangement.

Thank you Excellencies very much!

**Statement by Dr. Hossein Ghazavi, President of ECO Trade and Development Bank  
(ECOTDB) at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr. Chairman  
Mr. Secretary General  
Distinguished Delegates  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a great pleasure and honor for me to participate to the 25<sup>th</sup> RPC meeting and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the ECO Secretariat and organizers for the excellent arrangements provided for this meeting.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I would first like to start by commenting on some points regarding recent developments in global economy and financial system. Despite very low interest rates and highly accommodative monetary policy environment, a moderate global economic growth of 3.3 percent which is unchanged from 2013 was observed in 2014. The recovery in the world as a whole is expected to continue in the years immediately ahead, although at a slow rate. Global growth in current year and 2016 is projected at 3.5 and 3.7 percent respectively. On the other hand, global growth will receive a boost from lower oil prices in general but unsustainable prices projected to offset this boost by negative factors including investment weakness and pose serious challenges for oil-exporting countries. In advanced economies public debt in relation to DGP is at a historically high level and necessary measures are required in managing the risk of stagnation and low inflation. Yet there is still need to strengthen the coherence of normalization of monetary policies and enforcing structural reforms for strengthening global productivity. Particularly, it remains essential to further exploring efforts to appropriately monitor and supervise the systemic risks in restructuring a stronger and more resilient global financial system. It may be summarized that world economy is certainly in a better place now than it was six years ago but shifts in business sentiments and volatility in global markets would continue until a more sustainable debt levels, liquidity and interest rate environment is reached.

**Excellencies**

These rapid developments throughout the world would have negative spill over effects on some developing economies including ECO countries in the form of excessive capital outflows, downward pressure on exchange rates, increase in the risk premium for external financing, and threaten international competitiveness. It is, therefore, important for ECO countries to be vigilant and continue fiscal, financial and structural reforms that would put economies in a far better position in the current post crisis-era.

The ECO region rebounded mildly from its lowest economic growth performance since the global economic crisis of 2009 and recorded a moderate 3.3 percent increase in its real GDP in 2014. The regional nominal GDP hit USD 1.9 trillion in 2014 which is almost four times the level observed a decade ago. On the other hand, the regional per capita DGP in PPP terms is

projected to reach double digits for the first time in history while five of the ECO member countries are in double digit per capita incomes. All in all, the average economic growth of the region depicted some improvements compared to previous year however the growth is still far from satisfactory levels. The ECO region needs to achieve an annual economic growth rate close to 7 percent in order to catch up with other country groups as well as to accommodate the huge labor force entering into their economies every year.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We are living in an irreversibly interconnected world and unprecedented changes are taking place in the history of humankind. However, facing these challenges is far more an opportunity to forge our cooperation and partnerships by means of shared responsibility. Fortunately, the ECO region has all the essential elements to become one of the most prosperous regions of the world with its rich natural resources, trained manpower, deep-rooted culture and tradition. Our responsibilities and enlightened regional-interest compel us to act. We need to mobilize our forces to make optimum use of these opportunities particularly promoting intra-regional trade. Based on the available statistics, the total foreign trade of the member states in 2014 is estimated around USD 890 billion including USD 440 billion export and USD 450 billion import. However, only 7 to 8 percent of the foreign transactions of the member states were intra-regional trade. I hope our Organization can make further efforts for preparing the ground towards implementation of ECOTA and enhancement of customs cooperation whereby realizing the goals and objectives already set for regional trade.

**Excellencies,**

There is no doubt that deepening and broadening our commercial exchanges can be the driving force for sustainable regional growth. But we need to immediately address other key issues such as enhancing investment in regional infrastructure, connectivity, human capital, productivity, R&D and innovation that would ensure sustainable development in the region. The region should serve as an efficient harbor to new investors, global brands, and productive enterprises. I sincerely believe that it is important for us to indulge urgently into the necessary structural reforms and furthering cooperation among our private sectors.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The economies of the region have marked important achievements in promoting prosperity for their people. However, the recipe for sustainable development calls for further strengthening regional cooperation, deepening business relations, taking advantage of the scale economies and improving competitiveness. We need to take appropriate measures to encourage businesses to invest, grow, and create decent jobs. This is a critical time for us to work together and it is important that the ECO region to take its rightful place in this emerging new global development architecture. It compels new heights of multilateral action based on experience and building on shared values, principles, and priorities to unlock the regional potentials. In this respect, drawing from the achievements and principles of Quetta Plan of Action, ECO Long-Term Perspectives and current ECO Vision, the new ECO Vision for 2015-2016 is expected to reinforce and further catalyze regional solidarity for sustainable development. At this point, I would like to underline that international community is engaged in a process of adopting a new vision for meeting the global challenges of the post-2015 era



and beyond with a new development agenda. The transformation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with renewed ambition through a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be adopted in September shall also inspire and guide our efforts in deliberating an optimal ECO Vision. To this end, as a member of the ECO family, the ETDB would remain committed to contribute and facilitate resource for successful achievement of goals of the new Vision.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Let me now shed briefly a light on the activities of ETDB. Here, I prefer not to delineate on the details of our operations which have already been provided as a comprehensive report to the respective Council. But, let me state that we are committed to ensure that each and every operation of this bank achieves development results, contributes genuine additionality, and catalyzes investment to the critical development needs of the region. Since 2008, which the Bank started its operations, the total amount of loans disbursed and committed to various operations in the member states amounted to about USD 851 million by the end of 2014. The Bank has been posting a positive net income without having any non-performing loan in its well diversified portfolio. Based on preliminary results, the Bank posted a positive net operating income of about USD 8mln in 2014. I should add that Bank's expertise and ability has been earning ever increasing recognition from the regional and global development community. I should admit that it is not a small achievement for a young regional institution. However, considering the challenges and substantial development needs of the region there are a lot more ground for us to cover.

We are putting efforts to forge strategic alliance with regional and global development partners to leverage and mobilize additional development assistance to the region. In this context, we have started to work on a new initiative under the name of 'ECO Regional Partnership Forum'. It is a continuing process and requires time to institutionalize a well-established substantive Forum. But I am confident that in collaboration with ECO Secretariat and member states we will realize this objective.

**Mr. Chairman,**

As I move towards my closing remarks, let me state that Your Institution, ECO Bank is expanding its operations and membership base confidently. We have clear mandated and vision to become the financial pillar of economic cooperation among the ECO member states with a sound business perspective. Recently Azerbaijan and Afghanistan became the new members of the Bank and Kyrgyzstan has signed the "Articles of Agreement" establishing the ETDBG on 12 February 2015. Within joining of the Kyrgyz Republic, the current membership structure of the ETDB will to expand to include six ECO member states. In this respect, I would like to reiterate my invitation o the other ECO Member countries to join the Bank. This would certainly help the Bank to further expand its operations and development influence across the region effectively.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Dr. Atousa Goodarzi, Dean, ECO College of Insurance (ECOCI)  
at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It's my great honor, as the Dean of the ECO College of Insurance to present College's achievements and prospective challenges to the 25th Regional Planning Council (RPC).

In accordance with the 1989 Treaty of Izmir, the ECO-CoI was established to meet the needs of an evolving the ECO countries in 1991. It revives the former RCD International School of Insurance, which was set up in 1970. The college is one of the regional institutions of the ECO, according to the statute approved by the COM and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Now, the College based in Tehran and affiliated with the Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU), a leading university in Humanities, and Social Sciences in Iran and Middle East. The statute of the ECO College of Insurance was approved by the Council of Ministers (COM) .The College receives its funding from the Allameh Tabataba'ie University. Hence, the college is responsible to the University for the delivery of its teaching and research programs, as well as the Economic Cooperation Organization.

It is the only academic institutions with English based curriculum in Iran. Its program spreads over a period of four years education leading to BS. Degree in Insurance Management .It also offers two courses of MS. and MA. degrees in the Actuarial Science and the Area Studies.

The main objective of the ECOCI is providing an academic environment with the highest standard of the education, training qualified students, establishing formal links with research centers and other well-reputed universities in the region and the world.

**Past year's events and activities**

- 1- After 8 years, English has become the official academic language of the college since new academic year. Hence, two-step selections process was applied in this summer. At first, students, for both BA. And MSc. Levels were introduced by the National Organization for Educational Testing to the college. Next, student's English knowledge was evaluated by the college through written and oral examinations.
- 2- The college has improved its international relations through holding meetings with universities officials from India, Zimbabwe and etc.
- 3- The college held a seminar as part of the university's special program for "Research Week". Officials from ECO secretariat, ECO Cultural Institute, and faculty members made a speech about different topics related to the ECO, culture and Insurance.

- 4- The college held some meetings with General Manager of non-Iranian students of Student Affair Organization of ministry of science, Research and Technology of Iran, Officials of Imam Khomeini International University and other related organizations in order to attract international students. It is worth mentioning that the college welcomes applications from ECO member country residents. Interested students can fill out online application form through ECO College of Insurance link:  
<http://www.atu.ac.ir/en/formHtml/fillForm/fill/42/fill.form.html>
- 5- The college spent more than \$10,000 in order to enrich its library through buying valuable books related to insurance, risk and actuarial science. Today, the College is in possession of more than 7200 English and more than 3200 Farsi books.
- 6- Faculty members attended/presented their papers in some national and international conferences, including:
  - a. 2014 Annual Conference Asia-Pacific Risk and Insurance Association, Moscow, Russia.
  - b. Hitotsubashi University International Seminar, Tokyo, Japan.
  - c. Development of financing system in Iran, Tehran, Iran.
  - d. International conference of insurance development, Tehran, Iran.
  - e. Actuarial valuation in pension funds conference.
  - f. 30<sup>th</sup> International Actuarial Association Congress, Washington, USA.

**Current status of ongoing activities are:**

- 1- Our main mission is the development of high quality graduates who demonstrate ethical and effective practice. Members of the College and staff are committed to original scholarship, continuous improvement of teaching, innovative uses of technology and on-going renewal of professional practice.
- 2- The College is fortunate to utilize the academic services of the best faculty members of the university and has also invited other highly qualified instructors from other universities and insurance industry.
- 3- The number of scholarships offered by the Islamic Republic of Iran Government for the students of the Member States becomes 40, therefore College tries to advertise this opportunity to talented students of Member States by cooperation of ECO Secretariat and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 4- Publishing the first volume of scientific-research journal of "Insurance Researches" during next few months.
- 5- Holding the international meeting of "Actuarial Sciences and Pension Funds".
- 6- Participation of the College faculty members in the 7<sup>th</sup> conference of "Development of Financing System in I.R. of Iran" holding by Sharif University.

- 7- Reviving of the position of the College as a center of the Society of Actuaries examinations. Students taking MS. in Actuarial Sciences have participated in the examinations (in May and November each year).
- 8- Revitalization of the scientific relationship and connections with Chartered Insurance Institute (CII), to return College accreditations.
- 9- Following of financing and providing scholarships for the PhD students of "Insurance" with cooperation of the Central Insurance of the I.R. of Iran Research Center.

**Recommendations and new proposals for the future work may presented as follows:**

- 1- Greater participation from the ECO Member States in seeking admissions, giving donations, providing library books to the College.
- 2- Member States are invited to avail the 40 annual scholarships offered by Iranian government together with accommodation arrangements, exclusively for qualified non-Iranian applicants from the ECO Region.
- 3- Circulation of necessary information to the Member States regarding academic sessions, recognition of degrees within the region and outside as well as scholarship programs offered to students from Member States. Utilization of the website link of the ECO College of Insurance containing required information can provide proper accessibility by the Member States.
- 4- Member States are requested to closely monitor College progress toward its mission and provide corrective advices where needed.

**Statement by Mr. Majid Habibi, Head of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management  
for Natural Disasters at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Your Excellencies,  
Dear Representatives of ECO Member States and Specialized Agencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am obliged to thank respectfully the ECO secretariat for hosting "the 25<sup>th</sup> ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC).

This Meeting helps us enhance our coordination in the region's natural disasters monitoring and early warning, using the experiences and capacities of Member States. Regarding the challenges ECO Member States are facing, I would like to address a number of important issues such as natural disasters, climate change, information exchange, and enhancement of regional cooperation:

Natural disasters have a complicated nature and most of them are beyond human control, but the amount of human vulnerability to these disasters is dependent on the quality of human responses to them. So, increasing knowledge and public information is an important factor in mitigating the effects of natural disasters. The appropriate understanding of these disasters can result in better prediction, prevention, and a logical reaction to them. In other words, the risks of natural and unnatural disasters which are sometimes human-made can be minimized through applying scientific and effective approaches.

In order to draw the attention of authorities, policy-makers, and the public to the issue of natural disasters, the United Nations and the World Meteorological Organization have designated the 1990's as "the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" and asked for all countries' cooperation.

This international invitation can be considered as the first focused and comprehensive step taken by international organizations towards human training in all research, planning and implementation dimensions of mitigating the effects of natural disasters.

The present reactions which are totally based on help after disasters have been changing into prevention before disasters. This change needs a special management, training, and cooperation.

So, in order to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, the approaches have been changing to public awareness and informing the people before the disasters occur. This change has been one of the main goals of natural disaster mitigation program in the last two decades.

**Dear Colleagues,**

Here, I would like to address a number of related figures:

According to the international statistics, in the last 27 years, about 6.3 million people have died of natural disasters and more than 3 billion people have been injured. Also, a loss of property, more than 240 billion dollars has been reported.

These statistics show that natural disasters have been increasing.

Considering to the geographical and climatically variety of Iran and ECO region It is recognized the consisting of 31 disasters of total 42. With the position of 6<sup>th</sup> ranking in the world. For example heavy Snowfall and Avalanched killed more than 200 people in Afghanistan. Therefore I want to condolence to the afghan delegates and all Members.

**Dear Guests,**

The need of enhancement on regional cooperation for natural disaster contrast and reduction is emphasized. Meanwhile it provides more collaboration, cost reductions and regional scientific progress.

Regarding to the importance on study and monitoring of natural disaster on weather and climate, specifically, the enormous drought, flood and dust phenomena in regional countries during the last few years, recently delegations including of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran representatives holding Joint sessions on dust problem in Ankara and Tehran, accompany with important decisions.

I would like to mention, IRIMO with cooperation of ECO secretariat proceeded to establish Regional Center of Natural Disaster Risk Management of ECO countries in Mashhad Regional Climate Center and the other research Centers. It indicates increasing interests and important situation of weather issues among the educational people, specialists and authorities.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Finally, I would like to mention that, MOU of "4th September 2007 - Mashhad, I.R. of Iran" and MOU of "1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 - Rasht, I.R. of Iran", signed by Members, must be followed up seriously, and become operational and facilitate through possible activities like allocation of financial resources, capacity building, coordination of international expert organizations and make use of WMO resources.

In addition to ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM), I.R. of Iran Meteorological Organization, has followed up establishing of a Regional Climate Center in Regional Association II- Asia within last three years, and major part of infrastructure is prepared by now. This center is located in the same place of ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters which can enhance its capabilities

In this connection, ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM), has done correspondences with Members and asked for atmospheric-climatic information and has received responds from some Members so far. Hence, we expect acceleration on data sending process, by the Members..

In conclusion, I would like to welcome experts from Member States for implementing joint projects at Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters

I hope that this session would be a beginning for further cooperation amongst ECO Members to accomplish their highest efforts to improve meteorological basis in their countries.

Thank you all for your attention

**Statement by Mr. Vilayat Valiyev, Director, Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms, Ministry of Economy and Industry of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(1-5 March, 2015 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Excellency Mr. Chairman!**  
**Dear participants!**

Today, the first report on the activities of the ECO Research Center is being presented to you. As you know, the decision to establish Center was made by the 21<sup>st</sup> Council of Ministers Meeting on November 26, 2013, in Tehran. Since this date, a number of actions have been taken with support of the Government of Azerbaijan to prepare for the organization of Centre's operation.

First of all, to take initial steps to organize the work of the Center was taken by the Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms under the Ministry of Economy and Industry who is responsible body for operation of the Center.

Such that, to rooms with a single entrance in the administrative building of the Institute were separated and a small working group was hired for dealing routine work.

In accordance with the Charger of the Center, it should be integrated in implementation of the ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research, Projects and develop long-term economic strategies and policies for well being of the region countries, member states. Thus, the Center was mandated to develop, economic and econometric models, analytical tools, economic and macroeconomic policy advices.

To carry out noted activities with higher academic value, Draft Operational Strategy of the Center was developed by independent experts. The strategy was first presented at the "2<sup>nd</sup> Baku Forum of Economic Think-Tanks of ECO member states" and the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on "Energy, Regional Integration and Socio-Economic Development" which held in Baku on October 1-3, 2014. The document was revised incorporating all the views and feedbacks received during discussions. To get further feedback and comments, the strategy was also submitted to ECO Secretariat.

The Action Strategy is based on the tree leading principles:

- Establishing research environment and promotion of innovations.
- Integration of education and research.
- Laying foundations of research center with high scientific standards.

For this purpose, the Strategy explores trends in global think-tanks and relevant examples, and provides recommendations on the organizational structure, long-term goals, operational and financial plans of the Center.

Center's Annual Work Plan includes the following steps for implementation in 2015:

- Resubmission of the Strategy of the Center based on the comments and feedbacks by the ECO Member States;



- Increasing cooperation in member states on the way of ratification of the Charter;
- Developing a webpage of the Center;
- Developing an Action and Financial Plans of the Center for the next year;
- To continue of establishing links with and carrying out promotions of the Center by Think-Tanks of the ECO Member States;
- Establishing contacts with scientific and education foundations and scientific centers of the ECO Member States and others.

Thank you for your attention!

**Statement by Dr. Sasan Rabieh, Coordinator of the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology at the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council (1-5 March, 2015 - ECO Secretariat)**

**Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr. Chairman.  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Esteemed Secretariat and Delegations of Member States;**

It is a genuine pleasure for me, as the Coordinator of ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology to address the 25<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council on the background, status and prospect of the ECO-IEST.

Just to refresh your memory, as you are well informed, on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2011 the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology hosted by the University of Environment in Karaj was inaugurated by the Esteemed ECO Secretary General and Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Head of Iran's Department of Environment.

Prior to this, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Environment, (Almaty, June 2006) had agreed that the functions of the ECO-IEST be carried out, provisionally, on a project basis, until the Member States further decide on this matter on the basis of experience to be gained during four years of its functioning.

Also, the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting (Islamabad, March 2008) requested the Secretariat to follow the decisions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Environment regarding IEST, taking into consideration the proposed modality for the establishment of ECO Regional Centers to be approved by CPR on behalf of the COM.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> RPC Meeting (at the ECO Secretariat in May 2013) recommended to change the status of the ECO IEST as an ECO affiliated institute, subject to the approval of the ECO decision making bodies.

Thereafter, the 21<sup>st</sup> Council of Ministers' Meeting (Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2013) in line with the above mentioned recommendation, authorized the CPR to implement the said recommendation regarding changing the status of the Institute into an affiliated body of ECO.

Consequently, on October 2014, the ECO-IEST provided the Secretariat with the revised charter and on November 2014 the ECO Secretariat via a Note Verbal requested all Member States to provide their views/comments on draft Charter as prepared by the ECO IEST.

Finally and most recently, during the 5<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment (December 2014, Istanbul) the Ministers/HODs acknowledged the excellent performance of the ECO-IEST in advancing the ECO environmental agenda. The Ministers/HODs also extended their support to the continued work of the Institute; and requested the ECO Secretariat to continue with the mandate given by the 24<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting on the issue of changing status of the ECO-IEST.

Excellencies, as you know the rationale for establishment of this Institute is:

- To generate knowledge through research and studies on environment ,
- To strengthen human resources through training and educational programs ,
- To promote scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of experiences,
- To create a network of experts in the region,
- To strengthen bilateral and multilateral co-operation to mobilize international assistance for environmental conservation.

And while the overall goal of the ECO-IEST has been to strengthen the capacity of key actors in environmental conservation in the region, and promote exchange of information and experiences with efficient management of resources; we have set

- Professional Training;
- Information Sharing and Technology;
- Networking;
- Scientific cooperation ;
- Resource mobilization;
- CEPA

As our main targets for pursuing the activities of ECO-IEST since its inauguration in 2011.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I do not want to bother you listing the diverse range of activities we have conducted in the last few years, because we have already provided the Esteemed Member States with report of our performance on regular basis, which is also available on the website of the Institute, but just to refresh your memory here I remind some of the most highlighted activities of ECO-IEST:

- The 6 week Postgraduate Certificate in Environmental Management (PCEM) in September- October 2011
- ECO Meeting on Transboundary Movement of Biological Specimens and Species in March 2012 in Tehran,
- Regional Asia Pacific meeting in preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of a plenary meeting on the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), March 2012 in Tehran
- Establishment of the Network on Trans-boundary Protected Areas, Since March 2012;
- Workshop on Ecosystem Management of Wetlands & the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Meeting on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, in February 2013 in Ramsar;
- Cooperation in Organizing the ECO Experts Meeting on Climate Change and Biodiversity in Islamabad , November 2013 in Islamabad
- Contribution to the Workshop on Harnessing Climate Change Financing for Forests in Central Asia; April- May 2014 in the ECO Secretariat;
- International Forum on Environmental Ethics; September 2014;

- Contribution to the Conference on Emerging Trends in Life Sciences for Sustainable Development October 2014 in Lahore
- Contribution to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Expert Group Meeting on Biodiversity, November 2014 in Antalya
- Launching the new Website for the Institute in November 2014;
- Contribution to the Senior ECO Environment Officials Meeting and the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, December 2014 in Istanbul

Pursuing the mandates given to us by the ECO Decision making bodies the way forward us in the coming year among all, involves:

- ▶ Interaction with UNEP;
- ▶ Interaction with international organizations;
- ▶ Preparation of the first SoE report for the ECO Region;
- ▶ Cooperation in organizing training workshops on Green Economy;
- ▶ Cooperation in organizing preparatory event on Climate Change in Safranbolu;
- ▶ Continuing with the implementation Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming;
- ▶ Developing the Regional Project to Combat Desertification with a Special Emphasis on Dust Haze and Sand Storm in the Region;
- ▶ Assisting the ECO Secretariat in organizing sideline events during COP21 of UNFCCC;
- ▶ Cooperation with the Secretariat in preparation of the ECO Bulletin on Environment;
- ▶ Cooperation in organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Environmental Science and Technology (ICOEST), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 09-13, 2015;

Excellences, here we honored to closely cooperate with all of you in pursuing the ECO Environmental agenda and also ask your kind support in the issue of changing the status of ECO-IEST into an ECO Regional Center, (Cat. B). Considering the capacity which has been built in this Institute and experience gained during our performance, the ECO-IEST does it best to serve as the environmental arm of the Economic Corporation Organisation. We are here to answer any question and welcome any suggestion and proposition regarding improving the quality of our services to the whole region.

**Excellencies, Mr. Chairman,**

Thank you for your attention.

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