

**Statement by H.E. Associate Professor Mr. Hukum Khan Habibi, Deputy
Minister for Technical Affairs, Ministry of Economy of the Islamic Republic
of Afghanistan, at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Excellency Chairman,
Excellency Secretary General ECO,
Honorable Ambassadors,
Most Distinguished Delegates of the Member Countries,
Respected Secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to represent my country, Afghanistan, in the 24th session of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) here in the beautiful city of Tehran. Foremost I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this Regional Planning Council and the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegate, I would also like to express my appreciation of the ECO Secretariat for well organizing of the RPC meeting.

Allow me to also thank Secretary General H.E. Dr. Shamil Aleskerov for his good leadership, cooperation and tireless support to the ECO member countries.

Excellencies and Distinguish Delegates;

The ECO represents almost 400 million population of an important and a strategic geo-economic landscape of the world with abundance of natural resources, complementary economic capacities, and energetic and human resource. Realizing our full potential and as a region to integrate in to the world economy requires inter-regional cooperation, to which end we hope that ECO continues to be and be effectively instrumental.

On this basis Afghanistan will utilize all efforts toward this end and is committed to work and objectives within this organization for the greater common good of the region in the areas of transport, trade and investment, energy, agriculture and human resources sectors. We observe that there are clear dividends to be gained by ECO member countries from regional cooperation in these core areas.

Mr. President and Distinguish Delegates,

In spite of the odds and challenges which everyone is aware of, Afghanistan has continued to make strides and progress in the period what we generally term as

the rehabilitation phase during the past decade, particularly in the areas of reconstruction and infrastructure development, energy, transmission, telecommunication services, billions of dollars has invested in some mega mines, private sector development and improvising an investment friendly fiscal regime, education, health, governance and justice system, freedom of speech and media, gender equality and human rights. All these positive changes happened with the great technical and financial assistance of the international community, and extendedly regional cooperation. From the early phase of “rehabilitation” which I pointed to Afghanistan has already entered the phase of transformation, this is socio-economically and politically. 10 years in to the transformation, what again termed as the “Decade of Transformation” our goals envisage achieving key objectives of regional integration and cooperation as aspired by all of us.

Distinguish Delegates,

Allow me to point out to some key achievement of the past decade in Afghanistan:

- In the education sector we have built around (15572) schools throughout the country where more than 9 million students are enrolled, among which over 3.5 million of them are female.
- 86% of the population has been covered by the health services. Child mortality rates and maternal mortality rates has decreased drastically by about 60%
- More than (8000) Km highways and roads are constructed and within a year our ring road which will serve to be instrument in regional connectivity will be completed. We have already connected with Uzbekistan vial railway, and the objective extension of this initiative with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Of course we envisage rail connectivity with all our neighbours and there is work in progress.
- The advances in the Tele-communications sectors have been phenomenal, nearly 20 million people are subscribed to mobile phones, and about 8 million people have been covered by internet access. Afghanistan is in the forefront of latest technological usage in this area, from private usage to e-governance etc. This will help for bringing facilitation in to the business, trade, transit and to regional cooperation at all.
- Our agricultural sector has continues to expand and develop, which is still remotely not enough. Of the 7.9 million hectare arable land only about 2 million is currently irrigated. Agriculture is an important sector for the wellbeing of Afghanistan’s economy and important base for sustainable and inclusive growth and development and poverty reduction. The sector absorbs about 60% of the population and 27% of the GDP is derived from

the sector. Our efforts are focused enhancing productive capacities within the sector for increased productivity and output and to structurally transforming the sector.

Afghanistan is rich of coal, copper, iron, gold, natural gas and many other reserves, where great potential for ECO members investment exist. We believe that intra-regional investments serve the interest of all us where there is increasing consumption need within the region.

So, there is greater potential lying ahead of us through regional cooperation, in all areas, through regional connectivity, Afghanistan serving as a land-bridge estimates are that import and export cost in the trade between central and South Asia could drop by 10-15%, and through application of the “gravity model” came out of the studies have concluded that by a decade time regional trade could increase to about 10 billion dollars, if adequate infrastructure could be provided.

While we continue to face challenges and snags as we move forward, some of these have regional dimensions which require regional efforts, such as insecurity, drug-trafficking etc. in which Afghanistan strongly requires regional efforts and cooperation.

Suggestion:

I have some important suggestion to iterate across the areas of cooperation which are as follows:

- We have observation on the proposed corridor of Chitral-Pakistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan. We believe that given the topography/terrain of the region, and against the backdrop return on investment will be difficult. The current Pakistan via Torkham-Afghanistan and Sher Khan-Tajikistan Bandar corridor is viable both for the three countries, and to importantly to connect other countries such as India within the region. Let us now focus on the non-physical barriers and challenges of connectivity within these countries, the physical options as and when they can be materialized, perhaps half a decade and even a decade, can always be availed as suited.
- According to TTFA agreement, we should activate the railway line, also should establish the logistical services of highway, and the road security, and also should remove problems in this regard.
- ECO Trade Agreement has already been signed by Member States, but still lacks of implementation, so, we hope this area is revised and seriously pursued.
- The ECO Visa Agreement which is most useful for traders has not yet been signed, so we request that during this August meeting to the issue is explored and the SAARC model could be something to be adopted.

- We kindly request to the Secretariat to follow that the ECO members should preserve implementation and regulation of ECO targets in member states.
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan proposing to this meeting and kindly requesting Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate and complete the remaining works of **Khwaf-Herat railway line**, which is as part of KTAI corridor and Afghanistan will connect with Iran which most suitable for both countries.
- Afghanistan requesting from ECO member states and the Islamic Development Bank to accept some railway development projects, because these projects are most important for trade and transit in the region.
- The ECO railway network development plan prepared up to 2025 by ECO Secretariat and approved in the 11th Session of railway meeting in 2012 in Turkey, the Afghan side requesting that the planned railway line of my country not yet included in the official corridors of ECO rail line, so from 6 railways, only one line has mentioned. Herewith I am requesting the ECO esteem member states to consider our request to review the plan and include the Afghan railway line into ECO networks.

On behalf of my respected delegates, I would like to call upon the member countries to utilize the great opportunities having Afghanistan in different core areas in line with ECO vision. Our door is open and looking forward for effective investment of the ECO members which is priority for us. We prefer regional share projects for sustainable development of the region. We have developed the investment support policy which will make the investment more easy.

Excellency;

Now I would like to draw the august meeting attention in relation to ECO funded projects status as follows:

- The project of Institute of A-Block MRRD has been completed and has been handover to relevant Ministry for utilization, the honorable representative of the Secretariat has participated in the submission ceremony.
- The construction project of Kabul Zoo has completed and has been submitted for utilization.
- But the construction works of the two projects are still going on under construction. We kindly requesting the Secretariat for paying attention to further instalments of the remaining fund.

Furthermore, during 21st, 22nd and 23rd RPC meetings, Afghanistan delegations submitted many projects proposals and herewith requesting this high meeting to consider the projects and requesting their cooperation to this matter.

Excellency;

With sincere wishes for the strengthening of economic ties with ECO and with cordial aspiration for 24th planning meeting, I would like to put an end to my statement with request of this to increase the economic relations among the ECO members' countries.

Thank you all for your attention.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Javanshir Akhundov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Dear participants,**

I am pleased to welcome all the participants to this Preparatory/Review Session of 24th ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC). I would like to thank ECO Secretariat for assistance in the organisation of this meeting.

I congratulate H.E. Mr Majid Bismark, Permanent Representative/Director General of ECO Affairs Bureau on his election as Chairman of the meeting.

As you know, the Republic of Azerbaijan hosted 12th Summit and 20th meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) in October, 2012 during which a number of decisions were made. During its chairmanship, the Republic of Azerbaijan made great efforts to improve efficiency of the Organisation. We prepared an analytical document entitled *Food-for-thought Paper “Improvement of the efficiency of Economic Cooperation Organization through the prioritization of cooperation fields”*, which was circulated by the Secretariat to the member-states. We do hope member-states will express their views on this document. At the same time, during the working group meetings held in the Secretariat under our chairmanship *Modalities for the appointment of the Secretariat Staff and ECO Staff Regulations have been discussed and improved.*

One of the important events during our chairmanship was Azerbaijan’s accession to the ECO Trade Development Bank (ECO TDB). As declared by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, our country as the stakeholder of the ECO Bank aimed at active participation in important ECO projects on infrastructure and economic development.

We do believe that priority should be given to establishment of economic-oriented specialized agencies/centers/institutions for enhancing the efficacy of cooperation within the ECO. Organization is to become project-oriented rather than unnecessary meetings-oriented and make every efforts to implement Regional Significance Pprojects successfully.

One of our main progresses, for the last year, was Establishment of the ECO Research Centre in Baku and approval of its Charter. Taking this opportunity, once again, we would like to thank those countries who supported us on this matter. The Research Centre while developing useful economic projects, research programs and also economic models for the region countries will contribute to the ECO development and its transformation into the project-oriented organisation. Thus, one of the main goals of the Organization will be the

successful implementation of economic projects to be prepared by the Centre. Our country needs support of the Organization in taking intensive measures for preparation and coordination of necessary rules and regulations, financial regulations and work programmes for early operationalization of the ECO Research Centre in Baku.

During the last ECO COM meeting our country suggested the ECO Secretariat to study ways and means for implementation of the UN initiative on green economy within the Millennium Development Goals. We do hope that the aforementioned issue will be discussed by working group meeting and taken relevant decisions by Council.

Dear participants of the meeting,

We do believe that the main efforts of our Organisation are to be aimed at establishment of railway-related uniform system, modernisation of railways, and development of transport infrastructure in the region and connection of ECO railway system with Europe and Near East railway networks. The Republic of Azerbaijan intends to extend “North-South”, “West-East” corridors through the direct railway connection till Iran and Turkey constructing new “Gazvin-Rasht-Astara” and “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars” railway lines. The international transport corridor “North-South” is considered as one of the important regional projects and early implementation of railway project on “Gazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan)” would provide new possibilities for the region countries. As you know the HLWGM was established under the railway project on “Gazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan)” and its first meeting was held in Baku, the second was in Rasht. We believe that HLWG meetings will facilitate the successful implementation of the project. Azerbaijan is currently preparing feasibility study for the Azerbaijan segment with relevant infrastructure and we will provide it to the ECO Secretariat for the further address to banks and financial institutions.

Taking into account expected growth of transit freight we started the construction of new modern international seaport in the suburbs of Baku. Since 2015 new port will be able to take over up to 20 million tons of cargo. In future, it's planned to establish international logistical centre and Free Economic Zone here.

For the last year, Azerbaijan submitted two projects: “Study on Applicability of General Equilibrium Model in ECO Countries and Capacity Strengthening” and “Exchange of Experience and Strengthening Inter-Agency Cooperation on the Development of Ecologically Clean Agriculture in ECO Member Countries”. For your information I would like to emphasize that Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) approved the allocation of US\$ 50.000 from the Special Support Fund (SSF) for financing the second project.

At the same time our country prepared the *Concept Paper of the Economic Journal of ECO* and submitted it to the Secretariat.

Last year Azerbaijan hosted 3rd ECO meeting of the Heads of the organisations/departments on blood transfusion, 1st High Level Working Group meeting on the railway project «Gazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan)», Coordination centre meeting of the 1st Baku economic brain-storm forum of ECO countries, International Conference on energy, regional integration and social and economic development, 2nd ECO expert group meeting on renewable energy sources, 4th ECO seminar on renewable energy sources and workshop on oil drilling.

The Republic of Azerbaijan this year is planning to host seminar/workshop on taxpayer services, 4th ECO Business Forum and 7th ECO International Conference on natural disaster management.

In conclusion I would like to wish successes in work of Regional Planning Council and its review sessions and once again thank the ECO Secretariat for the organisation of this event.

I thank you for your kind attention!

**Statement by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

**Mr. Chairman
Distinguished ECO Secretary General
Honorable Ambassadors,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This is indeed an honor for me to address the 24th meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your well deserved election as the Chairman of this important meeting. We are confident that under your able chairmanship, this meeting would achieve its expected outcomes. Let me continue with welcoming the distinguished delegates from all ECO Member States to Iran. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Esteemed ECO Secretary General and his colleagues for making excellent preparations and arrangements for this Meeting.

The RPC Meetings annually provides us with an opportunity to contemplate on the achievements of the past year and the agenda for the year to come. The Meeting is delineating positions on a vast number of important items which, I am pleased to note, will ultimately be both useful and pertinent.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always committed itself to follow an ECO advocacy policy. This has been the case since the last RPC meeting. With that in mind, let me now touch briefly upon the activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in line with the recommendations of the last RPC meeting as under:

In Trade, the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to intra-regional economic cooperation. Enhanced trade interactions among ECO Member States will not only boost regional economic cooperation, but also contributes to the economic development of each and every single Member States. During the period under review, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made all necessary preparations to host the meeting of the highest ECO decision making body in trade cooperation, the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Trade. However, this important meeting has been postponed three times due to lack of quorum. We hope ECO trade ministers would convene their 5th meeting very soon. Regarding the other trade-related events, we hosted the second regional event on Trade Facilitation and E-Business (REFACT) in Tabriz. The 18th “Specialized Committees’ Meetings” of the ECO-CCI were also held in Tehran in which rewarding decisions were made.

In Transport and Transit, the Islamic Republic of Iran has played a leading role in developing and facilitating transit transport in the ECO region. The 6th meeting of the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) together with the 6th meeting of the Road Committee (8-9 December 2013, Tehran) took concrete measures to assure implementation of the provisions of TTFA. The 2nd High Level Working Group meeting on Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) – Astara (Republic of Azerbaijan) Railway Project and Field Visit to the Gazvin-Rasht railway segments were also hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 17-18 November 2013. Tehran will also host four HLWGs and Committees on ECO container train projects such as Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI), Bandar abbas-Almaty, Istanbul-Almaty and Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran next week. Besides, several other ECO transport-related events, inter alia, the 12th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, 6th Meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC and 3rd HLWG on KTAI Road Corridor are scheduled to be hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran during 2014, as well.

In Communications, the Islamic Republic of Iran has extended full support to ECO regional cooperation on Information and Communication Technology through its significant contribution towards implementing the decisions made during first Ministerial Meeting (2012, Tehran). In this regard, the " Preliminary Report on Joint ECO Telecommunication Satellite " and the "Draft Statute of the ECO ICT Providers Association" have been prepared by the Islamic Republic of Iran and three meetings including 1st ECO Expert Group Meeting on ICT Security and Cyber Crime, 1st Meeting of the HLWG of ICT Communication Regulatory Authorities and 1st Preparatory Meeting for establishment of the ECO ICT providers Association planned to be held in 2014 in Tehran.

In Energy, as one of the ECO core cooperation area, the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted a training course on "An Introduction to Drilling Organization/Operation" in Oil and Gas International Training Center in Tehran. The 1st Expert Group Meeting on "Establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market" was also held in Tehran.

In Environment, as one of the vital areas of regional cooperation, the Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no efforts to put environment on the top of the ECO agenda. We have managed to initiate projects of regional significance within ECO and developed patterns of cooperation on environment. The ECO-IEST sponsored projects and activities have been instrumental in making ECO a candidate partner for outsiders. We are very much pleased and hopeful that this RPC meeting will make a decision on the change of status of ECO-IEST thereby enabling it to render wider services to the Member States.

In Agriculture, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been supporting the ECO activities and projects on this multifaceted important sector. We continued to work for establishment of the ECO Agricultural Biotechnology Network (ECO-ABN).

The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified the statute of the ECO Veterinary Commission (ECO-VECO) and soon will deposit its documents formally. Furthermore, Iran have offered to host the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Heads of Veterinary Organizations which awaits its needed quorum.

In Tourism, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in cooperation with ECOCCI, hosted the 2nd Coordination Committee Meeting on prospects of Health/Medical Tourism, in Mashhad and is ready to host the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ECO Tourism Promotion Fund in the first half of the year 2014. Our pledged contribution to the Fund will soon be made.

In Industry, I wish particularly to draw your attention to the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) which would facilitate intra-regional trade by reducing non-tariff trade barriers in the area of standards. The Islamic Republic of Iran is still the only ECO Member State which has ratified the RISCAM Statute and, expects other Member States to sign/ratify the Statute enabling the Institute to shift from provisional to permanent status and commence its full-fledged activities.

In health related matters, we offered full scholarship to two participants from each Member State for a one year Master Programme on Public Health in a leading medical university in Iran. Eight candidates from the Member States attended the Programme. The Islamic Republic of Iran will be ready to host the 2nd ECO Health Ministerial Meeting to be proceeded by the 3rd HLEG meeting on Human Development and MDGs on post MDG topics, in 2014.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has also been contributing technically, intellectually and financially in other areas of cooperation in the Organization since last RPC meeting which I do not elaborate here and leave it to the review committees.

Mr. Chairman,

Our important annual meetings within the RPC context are valued against the credibility of the planned programmes and their full implementation. This requires vigorous follow-up action, jointly by the Secretariat and all Member States. Our interest must not wane as soon as a meeting ends. That should indeed be the time to shift to a higher gear.

In conclusion, Excellencies, let me once more emphasize that our Organization has great potential to develop. Together, we have to realize it to the best advantage of our peoples. The RPC Meeting is the best platform to serve this purpose.

Thank you

**Statement by Mr. Alibek BAKAYEV, Deputy Director of the Asian
Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic
of Kazakhstan, at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Esteemed Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me express gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the warm hospitality extended to our delegation and thank the ECO Secretariat staff and its Secretary General H.E. Amb. Mr. Shamil Aleskerov for the excellent arrangements made to organize this meeting.

Since its joining the Organization, our country has been playing an active role and shown its strong commitment to gradual development of the regional cooperation.

We assume that integration is a vital call of the times and failure to pursue it would inevitably throw us back to the outskirts of global economy. The contemporary world requires performing joint efforts to adequately withstand challenges of the times.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Priority directions for Kazakhstan have been repeatedly announced and stated during and within various ECO events.

I won't wander away from the agenda of our session and would like to brief you on activities of the public authorities of Kazakhstan in line with decisions of the last RPC and COM meetings.

As it was announced earlier, Kazakhstan is ready to host the 4th ECO Ministerial meeting on Economics and Finance. We propose holding of the said meeting on 23rd May 2014 at the margins of the VII Astana Economic Forum in Astana. We hope that ECO member-states and, of course, the ECO Secretariat will support us in filling of the agenda of this meeting with a substantial and meaningful contents. We also hope that the outcomes of the Ministerial meeting will let shifting to absolutely new level of cooperation.

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to emphasize that substantial and meaningful agenda of the meeting as well as its outcomes will, to a certain extent, predetermine the expediency and continuation of its holding in future.

The public authorities of Kazakhstan are considering the possibilities of its joining to the ECO Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investments (APPI) as well as the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO TDB) and the ECO Tourism Fund.

We have completed a research project entitled “Prospects of Inter-Regional Trade in the ECO region” at the end of 2013. We do hope that that research will not be ignored and be thoroughly studied by the ECO experts as well.

Kazakhstan as being the coordinator-country on biodiversity and in line with a decision of the 23rd RPC meeting has prepared and submitted a country report to the Secretariat.

It is important to note that combating illicit drug production and drug trafficking is amongst the main challenges of the regional development.

In this regard, we are of the opinion that the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) for combating illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors should play an important role.

That unique structure had been established in Almaty under the UN auspices and already proved to be an effective mechanism for struggling against trans-boundary drug trafficking in the region.

Refer to cooperation with the Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (DOCCU), we would like to request providing us with an additional information on establishing of the ECO computerized information exchange network.

We always emphasize that transit transport industry remains one of the priority areas of cooperation for Kazakhstan. In line with a request of the Counsel, we have forwarded the latest versions of ECO Map of railway and road routes to the Secretariat.

Kazakhstan is implementing large-scale infrastructure projects in the said area and, if implemented, would ensure quality economic requirements of transport services as well as smooth integration of transport networks into the global transport system.

The West Europe – West China transit corridor, Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran railway route, new ideas within the “New Silk Way” initiative are contributions of our country to the regional integration.

Recently, together with our Iranian partners we have completed construction of Uzen – Kyzylkaya – Bereket – Etek – Gorgan railway segments thus linking of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran. In this regard, we express hope that our

Turkmen partners will also complete a railway segment in their territory and the project will start its operationalization as scheduled.

We are ready for joint consideration of new approaches to further implementation of the ECO projects on arranging movement of trains along Istanbul – Almaty and Bandar-Abbas – Almaty routes.

To this end, a dignified delegation of Kazakhstan will participate in the 3rd Tripartite Coordination Committee (TCC) meeting scheduled to be held on 2-3 March 2014 in Tehran.

Dear Colleagues,

Aktau seaport at Caspian Sea was selected as one of the most attractive "point" for development of transport-logistical infrastructure of the country and is being developed as a "Western Gate".

I would also like to inform you that "TransEurasia-2014" International Conference will be held within the framework of VII Astana Economic Forum. Therefore, we invite all ECO member-states to actively participate in those events.

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite a number of achievements, Organization also has a set of pending issues and delays in solving of them directly impact efficiency of the ECO Secretariat and its activities respectively.

First, a pending issue is the arrears of member-states to the Organization. We know about measures being taken by the Secretariat to resolve the issue but no positive results have been observed so far.

Second, one of the most urgent issues is permanently growing structural bulkiness of the Organization, which makes it more and more sluggish.

The Economic Cooperation Organization was established in the interests of regional integration and its activity expected to promote its practical implementation regardless of specific and momentary interests of different member-states. We should focus on issues of economic development of our member-states only.

We do hope that upcoming years of 2014-2015 will become indicative both for the Organization and for its regional countries. All basic documents of the Organization will be reviewed during that period. I am confident that internal reforms of the Organization will lead to positive results thus making it capable to respond the new challenges of the times.

We believe that reform process will be based on the EPG recommendations.

Thus, overall efforts to transform the Organization will allow it to implement its potential by consecutive and gradual economic integration, establishing of mutually beneficial intraregional cooperation and assistance in various fields of socio-cultural, scientific and technological development.

I fully agree with an opinion of the Secretary General that efficiency of the ECO is directly linked to implementation of our projects.

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Heads of delegations,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In conclusion, I would like to express our confidence that this meeting will be an important step on the way to efficient use of versatile potential of the member-states for the sake of well-being and prosperity of our countries and people.

I am sure that the ECO perspective activities will be aimed at practical implementation of the projects and achievement of tangible results.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Mr. A. M. Kylychev, Charge d' Affairs of the Embassy
of Kyrgyz Republic in Iran, at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Dear Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to represent Kyrgyz Republic at the 24th of RPC meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

On behalf of the Kyrgyz Republic delegation and on my own behalf I would like to welcome all participants and also express sincere gratitude to the ECO staff for excellent organization and to Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov for his skilful management.

I wish for all of us further success, progress and cooperation for improvement of economic and social relations among the ECO member-states.

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1 Year has already passed from the date of the last RPC meeting and during this year important meetings were held and promising decisions made this year were summarized by 21st ECO COM meeting held in Teheran. As you may notice last year Kyrgyz Republic actively participated in the activities of the Organisation and the following events were held in our country:

- 3rd ECO Permanent Steering Committee meeting on Economic Research held on 20-21 August, 2013;
- 5th Meeting of the Insurance Committee on 25-26 September 2013 in Bishkek;
- 2nd High Level Expert Group Meeting on road corridor Kyrgyzstan–Tajikistan- Afghanistan –Iran on 29-30 October, 2013 in Bishkek.

The Kyrgyz Republic has actively participated, no less, in the other ECO events held by other ECO member-states and presented itself at an appropriate level.

Dear Participants,

It would like to emphasise an important event of the last year which was the submission of the official appeal by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for the ECO Trade Development Bank accession which was considered positively and now internal procedures are being carried out in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Dear Participants,

In conclusion, I would like to underline, that the ECO countries possessing the most powerful potential and being in the centre of the EuroAsian continent are fully capable to implement the objectives of the Organization and become a full-fledged and important part of global economy system with good will of all our countries and people.

I wish for all of us successes and fruitful work.

Thank you for attention.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Noor Muhammad Jadmani, Ambassador of the
Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the I.R. of Iran at the
24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Honourable Chairman,
Excellency Secretary General ECO,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Asslam-u-Alaikum and very good Morning,

Mr. Chairman, please accept our sincere facilitation on your election, as the Chairman of the meeting. I pledge my delegation's full support, to you, in carrying out your work.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for excellent arrangements made for this 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council.

I wish to thank Secretary General for his detailed presentation on ECO's activities and accomplishments and also points regarding our attention.

The inaugural statement by H.E. Abbas Araghchi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran was very lucid and contained ideas and proposals that can supplement ECO's efforts – The statement sets the pace for deliberations over the next two days.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is satisfying that ECO has evolved, into a vibrant regional organization, which is evident from its growing international stature. This organization shall further contribute to the realization of our common objective to usher prosperity and stability in the region through crafting forward looking policies and programmes, while taking stock of what has been done in the past. This meeting carries more weight and significance with growing focus on projects implementation and to achieve the objectives through operationalization of ECO in its true spirit. I am confident this meeting will certainly be of great value for future cooperation among all ECO member states, and its activities for the coming years.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan offers immense opportunities for regional cooperation and integration. A big market of around 200 million inhabitants, a unique geographical location in terms of transit, a huge human resource capital as well as abundant potential of hydel, coal and solar energy resources make it a strong regional partner. So far these capacities have not been translated to the desirable extent, into real functions and outputs. We can't afford losing these opportunities. As the saying goes, "A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow". The establishment of this organization by member states is the right place where well-prepared policies and well organized follow-up actions shall be crafted to put the projects and activities on the right and accelerating track. We also need to prioritize between urgent and important areas. We need to realize sustainable economic growth and utilize the regional potential. This requires that ECO be provided necessary tools and mechanism to play an effective role and attain the targets and objectives set.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan, a developing economy, is fast adapting to the challenges of globalization. The economy has shown resilience when looked in the backdrop of challenges we have faced. In its campaign against terrorism, the country has been deprived of investments as well as utilization of its potential. Furthermore, while the economy and country's development has withstood the challenges, it can attain more progress with regional cooperation. For this purpose regional cooperation of friendly countries is highly appreciated. I invite you all for joining hands to carry forward the agenda of Regional connectivity for improving trade and economic growth.

Excellencies,

As a founding member of ECO Pakistan actively participates in ECO activities. It wishes to play its cooperative role to better utilize regional potential. The areas which need attention are infrastructure development and protocols for large-scale overland trade and similarities in the trade structure. We also need to benefit from the comparative advantage in the capital intensive and high value added intra-regional products.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Trade complementarities can be developed if the countries in the region are able to achieve vertical specialization through production sharing arrangements. Vertical specialization would not only allow the regional

trading partners to strengthen their trade ties, but also enable them to carry economies of scale by concentrating on a specific production process in the value addition chain. Enhanced Regional connectivity through establishment of Regional Transit and Economic cooperation is being pursued vigorously by the Government of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

Today's meeting provides us the opportunity to identify steps for expansion of Regional trade and economic cooperation. The Forum may therefore focus on the following issues in economic cooperation:-

- i. Creating regional markets by removing barriers to trade in goods and services;
- ii. Enhancing connectivity between people and economic sectors;
- iii. Opening access to finance as a means to facilitate financial risk mitigation.

Excellencies,

The present government has launched a long term plan known as Vision-2025 and 11th Five Year Plan (2013-18). We have identified key pillars of vision 2025 i.e.

- a) Energy Security.
- b) Sustained and inclusive growth
 - Resource mobilization
 - Investment
 - Exports
- c) Private Sector Led Growth
- d) Modernization of infrastructure
- e) Institutional reforms and governance
- f) Social Capital
- g) Strategic Regional initiatives

**Statement by Mr. Sayfidinov Islomiddin, Second Secretary, Consul,
of the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Iran at the
24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Chairman,
Honorable Secretary General,
Dear participants,**

First of all would like to thank the ECO Secretariat, personally, the Secretary General, H.E. Amb. Shamil Aleskerov for assistance in organizing this meeting and also greet all participants of the 24th Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

I congratulate H.E. Majid Bizmark with the election as the Chairman of the meeting.

As you know, common goals and objectives which serve the interests of all ECO Member States are already defined. They are clearly reflected in the ECO Vision-2015. There are, *inter alia*, the problems which are specified by Tajikistan as “crucial” ones. Namely, transport and energy infrastructure development, effective utilization of water-energy and natural resources, establishment of Free Trade Zones, creation of favorable environment for movement of people, transport and goods.

In order to achieve tangible results in these fields of cooperation, we need simplified and clear rules and procedures and also effective mechanisms for their implementation. ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) is one of the most serious and significant documents signed within the framework of the organization which envisages gradual removal of NTBs and also tariffs reduction in mutual trade and for establishment of Free Trade Zones in the ECO region by 2015. Transit transport projects aimed at launching railways and roads between the Member States merit overall support and encouragement.

One of such projects is the construction of the railway between five countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran and China. For Tajikistan as a land-locked country, the construction of this railway is vital. Substantial assistance in pre-feasibility study was provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Priority projects on road corridors including Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) route and also ECO container trains projects deserve the same support and early implementation.

In this context, last year the Republic of Tajikistan hosted the 10th annual meeting of TRASECA Intergovernmental Commission on 20-22 May, International Conference on Road and Transit in Central Asia on 17-18 September, the 38th annual IDB meeting and a workshop on Economic Cooperation Program and Development of IDB countries, Central Asia and Caucasus.

I would like to mention that the role and participation of the Economic Cooperation Organization in development and implementation of this project was fundamental and task-oriented. We expect realization of similar projects in energy programs by our Organization as well. Unfortunately, this area of regional cooperation is yet to find its due development and project activities on cooperation in this field, if any, are mainly based on bilateral level.

Dear participants,

One of strategic targets of State policy of the Republic Tajikistan at the current stage of development is achieving energy independence. Tajikistan possesses 60 % of water resources of the whole Central Asian region. This potential is enough not only to provide irrigation farming and other sectors of national economy of regional countries with sweet water but also is the major precondition for production of environment-friendly renewable energy.

Realization of some hydropower projects would allow full power supply not only to Central Asia but also to other countries of the ECO region by means of prospective power transmission lines which are being currently constructed. We hope that ECO as a regional economic organization will show keen practical interest towards energy infrastructure projects.

In this regards, Tajikistan hosted International High-level Conference on Water Cooperation 20-21 August last year.

Member States supported the need of implementation of «CASA-1000» project which is to connect power transmission lines of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is a prospect of extending these transmission lines to other regional countries in future. Utmost efforts should be made for early implementation of these vital projects.

As we all know, social and economic stability and sustainable development of the region mainly depend on the situation in Afghanistan. It is important that the issue of rendering help in restoration of peace and security, as well as in economic recovery of this country would remain in the agenda of the Organization and be followed-up with withdrawal of international coalition forces from Afghanistan in 2014.

Tajikistan also stands for measures taken to contribute to peace and security in Afghanistan. Joint project of our Organization with UNODC and European Commission aimed at strengthening of cross-border security and prevention of drug trafficking from Afghanistan to neighboring and other countries is one of the largest regional projects which merits support and encouragement. Close cooperation between Member States in this field could substantially contribute to counteracting this evil and promote strengthening of our general security.

In conclusion, I would like to wish successes in the work of Regional Planning Council and review committee meetings and again thank the ECO Secretariat for the organization of this meeting.

Thank you for attention!

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ahmet Yaman, Deputy Undersecretary,
Ministry of Development of Republic of Turkey
at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Your Excellency Shamil Aleskerov, Secretary General of ECO,
Ambassador Bizmark,
Honorable Delegates,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Assalamu alaikum ve rahmatullahi ve barakatuhu

I have great honor to address this esteemed gathering and to express my pleasure of being with my brothers and sisters on the occasion of the 24th Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for their invaluable exertions, warm hospitality and excellent arrangement of this meeting.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Underlying the cooperation potential of the ECO Member Countries and the great benefit of the regional cooperation, I would like to stress that enhancing regional cooperation endeavours among our brotherly countries would provide enormous synergy and dynamism for development of our countries.

Despite our longstanding efforts within the framework of ECO, intra-trade among the member countries has been below our potential. Unfortunately our intra-trade reached only 48,5 billion USD in 2012. Increasing intra-ECO trade would strengthen the ties among our Countries and also create a new dynamism and opportunities for our nations. We need to critically consider our approach to cooperation and we should adopt a more focused and result-oriented approach in our cooperation exertions.

As it is well known, the ECOTA Preferential Trade Agreement is the noble project of ECO for increasing intra-trade. Nonetheless, we couldn't operationalize this important project yet. The importance of early implementation of the ECOTA has been highlighted many times by different ECO for including the summits, Council of Ministers and Regional Planning Councils. I would like to call upon all relevant parties to fulfill their obligations to make the ECOTA operational.

Here I would like to put on record that the numbers of preferential trade agreements that are being implemented in the world have reached to 252 the year in 2013. And as a concrete outcome of intensive efforts of more than one decade, unfortunately ECOTA is not among those 252 PTAs. Several

Agreements, which were commenced years after the initiation of ECOTA, are now in force. When we lag behind in trade related issues that would mean we would lag behind in other critical sectors as well. Because trade cooperation, especially ECOTA would be fuelling our cooperation in almost all sectors.

Dear Delegates,

I am glad to note that the number of signing countries of the Agreement of ECO Bank is increasing with Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. We also appreciate the willingness of Kyrgyz Republic for signing this agreement. I am so optimistic that all Member Countries will do their best and give their valuable contributions to the Bank so as to ensure regional solidarity. The Bank is an important asset for our SMEs in terms of project financing. It has also taken crucial steps to be a stronger financial institution and with the accession of the new members the Bank would attract more resources.

Mr. Chairman

Dear Colleagues,

Having a well-functioning transport system in a region is a sine qua non for a successful regional cooperation. However, in the field of transport, we have still several setbacks and difficulties to be addressed. As you all know, transportation is closely related with tourism, trade and energy sectors, hence, it is necessary to facilitate the transport for the development of our entire region. In this respect, we are of the view that we need to focus on the effective implementation of TTFA for enhancing the mobility of people and goods among our member countries. In this regard, the efforts of the technical committees established under TTFA bear great importance for the realization of objectives of TTFA. In this way, I would like to call upon the member countries to actively participate in the cooperation efforts under these committees.

Mr. Chairman,

Esteemed Delegates,

Agriculture is one of the promising areas in our cooperation efforts. I am happy to inform the august body that in order to ensure the efficient implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS), ECO Regional Coordination Centre (RCC) has become operational in Ankara. Following the appointment of the coordinator of the center, the Steering Committee of RCC has successfully convened and started its activities. I would like to call our brotherly countries to actively participate in the activities of the center.

Our efforts in seed sector are also worth mentioning. I am pleased to state that ECOSA has been organizing International Seed Trade Conferences and Seed Trade Fairs regularly and successfully with the active participation of relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the implementation of the ECO/FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the region is currently under progress.

Dear Participants,

Harmonized and common standards will play a crucial role in furthering our regional cooperation. In this respect, I am of the view that the Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) would be very instrumental in harmonizing standards and developing new ones. I would like to inform you that my country will finalize the ratification process of the RISCAM Statute soon.

Considering our rich culture and history and diverse geography, tourism has a great potential for our cooperation under ECO. I would like to announce that Turkey will host the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on 3-5 November 2014 in Istanbul along with the 5th High Level Expert Meeting. Furthermore, the ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting will be held on the sidelines of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting. I would like to call upon all our Member Countries to actively attend these important events.

Honorable Delegates,

Energy is another important sector that we need to further our cooperation. Our region has abundant energy resources and the major energy supplier, which provides us a ground basis for enhancing our cooperation in this field. Cleaner and renewable energy are also the areas that we can build a sound cooperation.

Dear Delegates,

Education is one of the most challenging areas in our human development efforts. We attach particular importance to the ECO Educational Institute, which would exert its efforts to introduce contemporary educational technologies, coordinate exchange programs and promote public awareness for existing problems in the field of education in our region. Our member countries' valuable support to the cooperation efforts and activities of the institute is of particular importance for the institutionalization and the success of the Institute.

Distinguished Delegates,

I would also like to stress the importance of the implementation of the recommendations made by Eminent Persons Group that underline various steps to give an immediate boost to the Organization. We firmly believe that we should give urgent attention to at least some of these recommendations for their prompt implementation. We are of the view that, our priorities need to be as follows;

- a) implementing the road map devised on the EPG's recommendations
- b) increasing the percentage of allocation to Feasibility and General Purposes Fund within the total budget of ECO from 5 to 12 percent

- c) having a sharper focus for selected projects rather than expansion into new fields and projects
- d) building the capacity of Secretariat for realization of EPG proposals, including the finalization of the amendment of the Staff Regulations.

We also concur with the Secretariat's views that "it is unlikely that a new reform process being initiated will result in a positive outcome, if the road map prepared for implementation of the recommendations of EPG is not considered and approved". It would not be advisable to explore new sets of reform recommendations unless EPG's valuable recommendations that are readily available are implemented, at least partially. Hence, we are of the view that the ECO Secretariat may take the initiative to conclude the process and move on with the implementation of the road map on the recommendations of the EPG. Therefore, I would like to request the Secretariat to finalize the necessary preparations to start the implementation of the road map by August 2014 as set by 21st Council of Ministers. This issue may be highlighted in the report of our meeting.

Lastly, I would also like to draw your kind attention to an important point. We observe that the number of institutions under the roof of ECO has been increasing. Currently there are almost twenty institutions under the ECO. Nonetheless, their performance is under the desired level and some of them have not even become fully operational yet. Therefore, instead of establishing new institutions, we should focus on increasing the capacity and efficiency of the existing ones.

**Esteemed Delegates,
Dear Participants,**

While concluding my remarks, I wish a great success to this Council during 4 days of comprehensive working sessions.

Thank you

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Shamurad A. Mustafaev, Deputy of the Minister of
Economy and Development of Turkmenistan
at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished Head of delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to welcome all participants and extend my gratitude for proposal to take part in the work of 24-th RPC Meeting.

We highly appreciate the relation established between the ECO Member States and are interested for further cooperation of traditional cooperation relationship, close partnership interaction in solving of crucial and actual issues of our countries.

I do hope that format of negotiations will serve for strengthening of common partnership within framework of ECO, enrich its contents and give impetus to the relations of our States.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transformations which have been carried out in Turkmenistan allow our country to keep high rates of its development, directing efforts on diversification and economy modernization, increase of competitiveness in a domestic production, growth of the export capital and ensuring new quality of a life for people.

Growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) testifies that. In 2012 growth of GDP was 111,1 %, in 2013 it reached 110,2%.

Turkmenistan has all possibilities to increase mutual trade, investments, implementation of mutually beneficial projects in various fields of economy and intends not only to enhance the economic relations with the Central-Asian countries but also to create with them stronger trade relations. If total turnover of Turkmenistan with ECO countries accounted 26% in 2012, in 2013 it reached 28%. Today, more than 800 subjects of foreign trade activities from ECO countries take part in the important projects within various spheres of Turkmenistan economy.

Distinguished participants,

Turkmenistan attaches much significance to the gas transmission trunk TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India), urged not only to ensure a long-term supply of natural gas from Turkmenistan to major countries of South Asia, wherein can be observed a steady growth demand for energy resources, but also

to become powerful stimulus for further socio-economic development of the whole region.

Establishment of new high effective manufactures with deeper processing of raw gas is one of the important directions of diversification of gas sector.

Energy system of the country is connected with common energy system of Central Asian countries and is capable to export excess electricity to other countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Tajikistan and others.

Taking in beneficial geographical location and, being at the crossroads of strategic transcontinental trade routes, Turkmenistan is implementing major international projects for the development of transport and communication corridors together with other states and stakeholders.

I would like to note that Turkmenistan has put forward a number of new initiatives for the building of new transport corridors North-South which urged to be a "bridge" between Europe and Asia. This new main railway through the territories of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran would ensure comfortable and economic transportation of cargoes to the South Asia and sea ports of the Persian Gulf and backwards through Russia to the Eastern Europe, accordingly. Implementation of this initiative would also promote join with East-West transport communications, i.e. with China-Central Asia-Caucasus-Europe transcontinental corridor and Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman-Qatar transport corridor.

Our country is a part of the regional TRACECA program - Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor, which will help to reduce routes of delivery cargoes twice as much as traditional routes from Eastern and South-East Asia sea ports to the big European ports.

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway is a vital international transit route between the countries of Asian region - construction of which is planned to be started in 2013.

Turkmenistan attaches great importance to the agricultural processing and food industry, where the main support is given for the construction of new, modern standard flour milling and livestock farms, greenhouse plants and factories. Our country is strengthening its position in the market as exporter of such a strategic agricultural product like wheat.

At the conclusion, I would like to note that objectives of regional strategies of our countries are creation of favorable geo-economic environments for large scale international cooperation and solving of actual development issues. Turkmenistan will successively continue collaboration with neighboring countries in bilateral format and within international organizations as well as with Economic Cooperation Organization. Thank you for attention.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ilham Akramov, Ambassador of the Republic of
Uzbekistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran
at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Distinguished Mr. Chairman!
Honorable Secretary General!
Dear heads and members of delegations!
Ladies and gentlemen!**

First of all, I express my gratitude to the Government of Islamic Republic Iran and the Secretariat of the Economic cooperation organization for the hospitality and high level of organization of this event which is intended to provide more active economic interaction within the ECO.

Let me on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan greet the heads and members of delegations of our meeting and wish successful and fruitful work to the forum.

Mr. Chairman,

The world has had undergone a number of changes recently. Acute phase of the crisis is overcome, however it's early to think of fast recover of global economy. Problems of the existing economic model have structural and protracted nature.

In this context, ECO can and must play a role of multi-faceted cooperation coordinator, become a platform for regulating various processes with a view to achieve maximum social and economic effect for all member states.

Integration and joining of efforts within the ECO will promote the establishment of open and fair growth system in region, strengthening of economic relations between our countries and people, increase of living standards of the population.

As a whole, cooperation within the ECO framework should promote gradual and sustainable social and economic progress, solution of employment issues and enhancement of living standards in all member states of the organization.

Uzbekistan considers cooperation development in trade and economic and investment fields, and also optimization of transport and communication potential of region an important direction of ECO activities.

It is necessary to take multilateral economic cooperation on a new level, undertake necessary measures to develop cooperation in the abovementioned areas and refuse politicization of ECO activities

It is necessary to develop and approve programs – so-called “road maps” on project implementation on such main directions as trade and investment, transport, science and new technologies, agribusiness, IT.

Dear meeting participants,

One of the most important areas of cooperation within the ECO is energy development. Uzbekistan which possesses considerable gas resources attaches much importance to the issues of transportation, determination of alternative routes of future regional pipelines. Achievement of fuel and energy independence by Uzbekistan for the recent period shows a long way passed towards growth and development.

Moreover, mass utilization of economically effective energy resources is quite essential for regional countries and can become a stimulating factor for speedy growth of developing countries.

By its geographical location and climate conditions Uzbekistan has exclusively favorable opportunities.

Distinguished Chairman,

Along the development of the organization it is also possible to realize new fields of cooperation. As for Uzbekistan one of priority directions within the ECO is cooperation issues in the field of investments by means of which it would be possible to promote economic and social development of region. We need access to foreign markets and, in particular, technology transfer which is decisive factor in stimulating economic development.

The Republic of Uzbekistan spares no efforts in international trade development in the country. Decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov on *“Supplementary measures on stimulation of attraction of FDI”* and on *“Establishment of free industrial and economic zone and special industrial zones”* in Navoi, Tashkent, Dzhizak and Syr-Darya districts can serve as examples.

Excellencies,

Last year, we continued our policy aimed at high sustainable rates of growth, macroeconomic balance, modernization and diversification of economy.

In 2013 the overall GDP increased by 8 percents, the volume of industrial production increased by 8.8 percents, agricultural production – 6.8, retail turnover – 14.8. Inflation rate was lower than forecasted – 6.8 percents.

Mr. Chairman,

Taking this opportunity, I would like to draw the attention of participants to the regionally significant issues of utilizations of water resources and construction of hydropower complexes on trans-boundary rivers.

Issues of water and energy agenda, including the construction of hydropower complexes on trans-boundary rivers should be considered in accordance with the generally recognized norms of international law guaranteeing rationale and fair distribution of water resources and taking into account interests of all states.

In this regard, Uzbekistan adheres to a position about the necessity of rationale and effective utilization of water resources of the Central Asian region on the basis of generally accepted international norms.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to note that ECO's experience, its prestige as an influential international organization will certainly promote successful development of cooperation in these directions.

I am confident that results of present meeting will be become weighty contributions into the development of multilateral economic cooperation meeting long-term interests of our countries and people and aimed at achieving sustainable development and stability.

Thank you for attention!
