

**Statement by Mr. Odul Muhtaroglu, Director of Economic Planning
Department, State Planning Organization of the Turkish Republic of
Northern Cyprus at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me and my delegation to participate in 24th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). I extend to you all the heartfelt greetings of the Turkish Cypriot People.

At the outset, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran and to His Excellency Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, the Secretary-General of the ECO and the able staff of ECO Secretariat, for their tireless efforts in organising this important meeting.

**Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates,**

The efforts of our Government to boost the economy has been redoubled especially in the face of the current prevailing atmosphere of global economic crisis.

A liberal economic system is being implemented in our country. Under this system, the promotion of the private sector, the rational use of natural resources, the encouragement of foreign investment that will generate added value and employment, receive priority as a matter of government policy. Over the years, we have succeeded to establish trade relations with more than 70 countries all over the world.

Mr. Chairman,

The Turkish Cypriot State is a fast developing country with higher education and tourism as two main economic sectors. Our country is emerging as a centre of higher education and a prominent holiday destination in eastern Mediterranean. We have nine internationally recognised universities accommodating nearly 63 thousand students from 110 countries which also include ECO countries all over the world. We would welcome a decision by the member states, to include our universities in the available options for the higher education of their youth. It is our primary objective to increase even further the number of students from ECO countries studying at our universities in the period ahead.

Our country with its unspoiled natural beauties, rich cultural heritage and many other attractions is the ideal holiday destination for our brothers and sisters from the member countries. There are 128 holiday establishments with an overall bed capacity of nearly 20 thousand. According to our statistics close to 720,000 tourists visited our country last year.

We are also encouraging foreign investment to our country which is one of the primary pillars of our development policy. I would like to take this opportunity to invite investors from the member countries to the Turkish Cypriot State to learn more about the investment opportunities in our country and the incentives offered by our Government.

Investment opportunities exist especially in the tourism sector. Hotels and conference tourism, special interest tourism like yacht tourism and marina construction are just a few of the investment opportunities that await foreign businessmen in our country. In addition to abovementioned fields, newly developing areas such as health tourism and agri-industry are considered as attractive fields of investment for the private sector and for foreign investors.

Consequently, those wishing to invest in the Turkish Cypriot State can be sure of a positive Government attitude. In this connection, our Government is keen to welcome investors from ECO countries. The relevant Ministries and our State Planning Organization and the Cyprus Turkish investment promotion agency would be at the disposal of potential investors and businessmen who would like to learn more about the extensive opportunities and incentives that exist in our country.

**Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Participants,**

As you may all aware, the first ECO University Sports Games organized in our country together with the Republic of Turkey, between the dates 15-20 April 2013. I take this opportunity to thank all the participants. It should be recalled that our country organized two important ECO events, in 1998 and 2004 respectively on "air and water pollution control" and "waste water management and treatment technology" which both enjoyed a great deal of success and the member states enormously benefited from these events and we will be honoured to see you all, at the Tourism Workshop in Turkish Cypriot State.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I conclude, I would like to thank once again to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for their efforts in making this important meeting a great success.

I thank you all for your most kind attention.

**Statement by Mr. Farid Damirli, Project Director of the Cooperation Council
of Turkic Speaking State at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Mr. Chairman,**

I would like to thank you for giving me the floor to address the 24th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) as the representative of Turkic Council, observer to ECO.

Since it is the second time for our organization to participate at the RPC Meeting I would like to elaborate a little about developments within our organization which took place since last year.

As it is known the main emphasis of cooperation between our member states is directed towards economic cooperation. Besides regular meetings of experts and heads of customs, transport and economy ministries which have been held to utilize and activate economic potential of its members to the full cooperation in the field of culture and education, as well as collaboration among Diasporas and universities demonstrate strong commitment of our Member States to closer and vibrant cooperation.

Turkic Council doesn't only promote cooperation among its members but also strongly encourages dialogue and good neighbourly relations with other countries in the region. At the same time establishing and developing relations with other regional and international organizations is among priorities of our organization. Thus, necessary steps have been taken for a closer cooperation with the OIC, OSCE and other specialized international organizations. Moreover, Turkic Council applied for observer status at the UN.

Although Turkic Council and ECO differ in size and complexity we share common goals and objectives and there are still many areas where the two organizations may complement each other. For this reason exchange of new ideas and cooperation in various spheres between the two organizations can provide new opportunities for our member states.

In order to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region, joint endeavours are essential. Therefore, in order to consolidate and deepen cooperation between our organizations "Memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization" is being reviewed by Secretariats of two organizations. We believe that signing of this document would further expand and intensify the partnership and cooperation between the two organizations in a more comprehensive manner.

In addition to the MoU, Secretariats will jointly prepare Work Programme encompassing the future practical cooperative activities that would be mutually beneficial.

Finally, participating in the events such as ECO Regional Planning Council as observer will surely help us to learn from the enriched experience of the ECO which has been accumulated throughout years.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my thanks to the ECO for their kind invitation for excellent organization of this event and wish all the success to the Meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.
