

Statement by H.E. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Arif, President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellency Secretary General of ECO,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is truly a distinct honour for me to address this distinguished audience for the second time and provide a brief report on the activities of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI).

ECO region is extremely rich in terms of cultural values and heritage, as reflected within the principles visualized in the Treaty of Izmir as the basic document of the Economic Cooperation Organization. The ancient historical and cultural ties existing among the peoples of the region clearly mark the role of culture to provide fundamental ground to establish peace and stability in the region and promote further growth and prosperity for the people of our region. That is what makes ECI more responsible for the realization of its objectives.

ECO Cultural Institute, as one of the oldest ECO Specialized Agencies, has contributed a lot to this end through arranging an extensive array of programs and activities; yet it has a long way ahead. The policies devised in this regard include promoting multilateral cultural cooperation between the main cultural institutions of Member countries as well as increasing the public awareness of people of our region towards the lofty objectives of the Organization.

To realize the goals as envisaged in the Charter, ECO Cultural Institute held about 20 programs with the cooperation of Member States during the last year including the first ECO Poetry Night and Quranic Arts Exhibition, commemoration ceremony of the Region's luminaries such as Allama Iqbal and Mowlana, introducing the cultural lifestyle of the peoples of the region through photo and handicrafts exhibitions, the publication of ECO Heritage Quarterly Cultural Journal, the initiative of releasing a unified stamp for raising the public awareness within region, Kashan Cultural Week, which is now going on, ECI is ready to hold such a program for other ancient city of ECO region, and, last but not least, the inauguration of ECO Park in Tehran. Moreover, ECI is going to hold Tajikistan Cultural Week within the next upcoming two weeks. It has also embarked on some midterm plans, which shall bear fruit in the coming year.

I trust you agree with me that the continuation of the activities and improving the efficiency and visibility of the Institute through the concerted efforts of my

colleagues working at the Institute is entirely subject to the cooperation and commitment of Member States as well as their relevant authorities.

As reflected well within all key documents of the annual meetings of the organization, acceding to ECI Charter as a full member is the first step for the realization of the goals and objectives of the Institute as set by ECO leadership.

Next, the existence of every regional and international organization depends on the all-out/commitment, and particularly financial support rendered by its Members, and ECI is no exception. The full, on-time realization of the commitments of the Member States is a prerequisite for devising stable, long term cultural planning.

While facing budgetary challenges, ECI tried to increase its efficiency through taking compensatory measures such as downsizing a great number of its staff members and decreasing the current expenditures without seriously affecting the quality of its plans and programs. However, the continuation of the interruption in receiving the annual contribution shall endanger ECI's program and activities.

ECI is also in need of spiritual and logistic support of its members to extend its activities not only within its headquarters but also in the Member States. In this regard, introducing focal points within the Member States could be an effective assistance for conducting extensive, stable, institutionalized efforts including areas such as interaction among cultural and artistic figures, youth, women and athletes.

I would like to conclude my remarks expressing my sincere gratitude towards the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its collaboration in the arrangement of ECI's programs in the past year as well as its recent assistance for the allocation of USD 200,000 as voluntary, extra-budgetary contribution.

Thank you.

Statement by Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President of ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF) at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)

**Excellency the Chairman of 24th 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 expresses gratitude to all the member states and ECO Secretariat for their continuous support to the Foundation. We are especially grateful to Government of Pakistan for patronizing ECOSF through the Ministries of Science and Technology and Foreign Affairs.

The Foundation has been making efforts to pursue the planned activities; however, non-availability of funds has been the main impediment. Nevertheless, with the release of first mandatory budget contribution last year by the Government of Pakistan, we initiated some activities. The budget contribution by Pakistan for their year 2013-14 is in process and I hope it to be released sooner. ECOSF is highly thankful to Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Science and Technology for the actions. The mandatory contribution from Islamic Republic of Iran was expected during the last year, however, it is yet to come through! The mandatory contribution from remaining two ratifying member states viz., Tajikistan and Turkmenistan is also awaited.

I take this opportunity to urge other member states to ratify the ECO Science Foundation Charter and so that the Foundation functions at full strength and the members can benefit from the program.

Excellencies, you are aware that the Foundation has a "Science & Technology Fund" for funding of 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. The pledges of voluntary contribution have been made by the Governments of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan but the payments have not come through as yet! Thus no projects proposals can be invited.

I have developed contacts with international science and technology institutions and Donors for support and those include UNESCO, ISTIC Malaysia, European Union and the *La main a la pate* Foundation of France; but it could only be

possible if we have funds available in the S&T Fund of the ECOSF. 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.

Scientific Activities

Excellencies, despite financial and logistic difficulties, the Foundation undertook some important scientific activities during 2013. Details have been provided in the written progress report, however, I would like to highlight some milestones briefly.

1. A 3-days International Congress of Zoology was jointly organized with many other organizations including UNESCO, Pakistan Science Foundation and Pakistan Zoological Society from 2-4 April 2013 at Islamabad. Over 1500 participants including those from UNESCO, IUCN, WWF participated.
2. I as President of ECO Science Foundation inaugurated an international conference on "Wireless Sensor Networks for Developing Countries" at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro- Pakistan. The ECO Science Foundation was introduced and participants encouraged to interact with their counterparts in other ECO member states for initiating collaborative S&T research and education programmes.
3. The President ECOSF as an invited speaker, participated in the first of the series of consultation conferences entitled "Policy Dialogue on Transforming Higher Education in South Asia", organized by the British Council and partners at Colombo, Sri Lanka, June 18-19, 2013. I made a presentation on "*Collaboration or Competition- the Reality on the Ground*" and contributed as a panelist in the session on above topic. All expenditures were borne by the British Council. The second session of the series was held in British Council London in Sept (23-24), 2013. The President as invitee panelist participated in the event.
4. I as an invited speaker participated in a seminar organized by the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (ISTIC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia at the UNESCO Headquarters Paris on Sept 30, 2013. The seminar was entitled, "ISTIC- Return Home to UNESCO " to review the progress of ISTIC during previous five years and consider plans for the next five years. The seminar was chaired by the DG UNESCO Ms. Irina Bokova and attended by permanent delegations to UNESCO of some 66 countries.

I made a presentation entitled, "***ECOSF-ISTIC-UNESCO Linkages for the People of ECO Region***" wherein, it was proposed that ECOSF can be declared as the Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) Hub for ECO

- Region. The proposal was agreed by the ISTIC and they in return proposed to sign MoU with ECOSF for collaboration and invited the President ECOSF to join the ISTIC Board of Governors as an Honorable Member and contribute on behalf of ECOSF. The gesture was appreciated and agreed upon by the President ECOSF.
5. The two-day meeting of South Asia and Central Asia MAB Network was organized by Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), UNESCO and other national organizations. The participants from Network member states; Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka participated in the meeting. UNESCO also well represented in the meeting. The ECOSF President as Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation had planned this meeting and made all the arrangements.
 6. ECOSF in collaboration with ECO Secretariat, ECO-IEST Tehran, Ministries of Science & Technology and Climate Change, Government of Pakistan organized the **"Experts Meeting on Climate Change and Biodiversity"** from 29-30 November 2013 in Islamabad, Pakistan in line with the decision of the 23rd RPC Meeting. All local arrangements and expenditures were made by ECOSF.
 7. With our efforts, the ECO Science Foundation has been accredited as an Observer/Stakeholder of the **"Intergovernmental Science and Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems (IPBES)"** and was invited to participate in the Platform's 2nd Plenary Session held in Antalya Turkey from 9-14 December 2013. The President ECOSF participated in the Plenary, he also attended and made interventions in the Stakeholders Meeting on 8 Dec 2013. Main task for the Stakeholders was to discuss and improve the "Stakeholders Engagement Strategy" and review the Work Program of IPBES for next five years 2014-18. [<http://www.ipbes.net/stakeholders.html>]. The ECOSF has invited nominations of experts from all member states for the task forces of the IPBES.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Advocacy is very important for any new organization, hence concerted efforts are continuously being made to advocate the cause of ECOSF at various forums. In this respect, courtesy calls were made on senior host country's Government officials, Policy makers, Ambassadors/Diplomats of ECO member states, UN and other International Agencies, Donors and Diplomats of Developed/aid giving countries. Similarly, media coverage of ECOSF activities is also being pursued. The ECO Science Foundation website established in 2012 (www.eco4science.org) has been transformed from static to dynamic version and is being updated regularly.

Excellencies, I am pleased to share that I was conferred upon the French Civil Award; *Ordere des Palmes Academiques* (the Order of Academic Palms) and appointed as *Officier* (officer) in recognition of my contributions in the field of Science education and cooperation among France and Pakistan. The French Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Philippe Thiebaud decorated me at an impressive ceremony held on July 9, 2013 at the Embassy of France in Islamabad-Pakistan. Pakistan's Minister and Secretary for Science & Technology, Vice Chancellors, Senior scientists, family members and other dignitaries witnessed the proud moment at the ceremony.

In recognition of my contributions in the fields of Science, Technology and Education, I was also awarded a Gold Medal by the University of Sindh, Jamshoro-Pakistan at it Convocation held on 21 December 2013.

At the end, I express my sincere thanks to ECO Secretariat for the commendable efforts in convening this 24th RPC meeting and the logistic arrangement.

Thank you Excellencies very much!

**Statement by Dr. Hossein Ghazavi, President of ECO Trade and
Development Bank (ECO-TDB) at the
24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – 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 24th ECO-RPC meeting and I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the organizers for the excellent arrangements provided for this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

The world economy is certainly in a better place now than it was five years ago. Although tail risks are lower, but sustainable global growth remains uneven and its underlying dynamics are shifting. Recent indicators suggest that activities in advanced economies are gaining momentum. At the same time, emerging market economies are slowing, following several years in which they were the main engine of global growth. The most important current global economic agenda is the extraordinary monetary policy measures taken by major advanced economies which are expected to be normalized gradually as the economic growth and stability restored. However, no one wants this process to happen in a disorderly manner. Because, these emerging policy actions would have negative spillover 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.

When we look at the economic performance of the ECO region, we may state that the region showed considerable strength in the post global crisis years of 2010 and 2011 and benefitted from the strong recovery of the global economy. However, in 2012, together with the rest of the world ECO region's economic performance was sluggish with slightly below 1% real GDP growth. In 2013 the average economic growth of the region is expected to show some improvements compared to previous year, however the growth would be still far from satisfactory levels. The 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,

In general, the next several years are more encouraging, but we cannot forget those long-term challenges and they involve among other things programs that are concerned with promotion of regional cooperation. In today's increasingly complex and interdependent world, a stable economy is vital for governments, for industry, for producers and consumers, for each and every one of us. This means that everybody has a responsibility to support a balanced and sustainable regional economic growth. It is something we should all strive for and it is time to harness the regional cooperation and further build on the respective strengths. In this respect, enhancing regional trade, investment in infrastructure, human capital, productivity, R&D and innovation would ensure sustainable growth in the ECO region. The region should serve as an efficient harbor to new investors, firms with global brands, and productive enterprises.

Excellencies,

On our side, we have been positioned to be one of the main contributors to the development of member states and regional cooperation. I would like to underline that during past several years we have achieved considerable milestones, even though the Bank is the youngest regional MDB in the world. We have established the capacity to implement well-targeted, practical, substantive projects in support of regional cooperation and more responsive to the urgent development needs of member countries. To this end, I am very happy to inform that the total amount of loans that we have extended to various operations in the member states amounted to USD 786 million by the end of 2013. 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 contribution to national priorities and promoting complementarities among member states, in particular, tends to preclude a preferential factor in allocating our resources. We have been posting a positive net income without having any non-performing loan in our well diversified portfolio. Here, it may be also pertinent to highlight that we have been building constructive cooperation arrangements with other development institutions active in the ECO region and as the reliable partner and brand name of the region, Your Institution, the ECO Bank has been earning ever increasing recognition from the global development community.

Mr. Chairman,

We are motivated to be bold, ambitious, and flexible to respond to the complex and dynamic needs of our member states. We continue to offer a range of medium-to-long term products and services for enhancing trade, development of SMEs, meeting the financing and technical assistance needs of corporate and projects in the member countries. In the coming years our efforts would be substantially devoted to increase the relevance and effectiveness of the Bank as well its membership base. Our Business Plan for 2013-2017 defines the strategic road map of the Bank for the coming years. During this period the key challenge

for the Bank would include improving its resources, operations and building up further niche and desirable position in the regional development. Our strategy calls to step-up our development activities, to address adequately ever evolving regional and global challenges, and continue to generate genuine value added for the member countries. The more active role of Bank in project development and implementation would guarantee that projects implemented are properly reflects the needs and demands of member countries. Building on our knowledge and expertise we would further capitalize on our specific roles and contribute sustainable development of our member states.

Mr. Chairman,

As I move towards my closing remarks, let me state that we have clear mandate and vision to become the financial pillar of economic cooperation among the ECO member states. In this respect, membership of all ECO countries to this Bank is undoubtedly a valuable source of potency for us to further expand our operations with full regional ownership. Recently, Azerbaijan became the fourth member of the Bank and we will soon assume potential operations and contribute to the sustainable economic development of Azerbaijan. On the other hand, Afghanistan as the signatory country is expected to expedite the process and finalize the remaining membership procedures. The membership application of Kyrgyzstan has been welcomed by the Board of Governors of the Bank and we are looking forward for the Kyrgyz authorities to soon sign the articles of agreement of the Bank and join the Bank soon. In light of these welcoming developments, I would like to reiterate my invitation to the rest of the ECO member states to join the Bank. At this point I would like to emphasize that as a reliable brand name of the region in development finance we stand ready to continue our assistance to all ECO member states for the achievement of their development objectives. Therefore, with strong support of regional countries, we look forward to play more positive and effective role in the years beyond.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Dr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi, Secretary General of ECO
Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO CCI)
at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr Chairman
Distinguished delegates of ECO**

At the outset I would like to thank the respectful officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran for making the arrangements for hosting the 24th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) in the beautiful and historic city of Tehran as well as the honorable ECO Secretariat for conducting the best measures for holding this event.

ECO CCI as the economic wing of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the new round of administration since January, 2011 has embarked on diverse approaches to help implement the ECO CCI 10 Year Plan of Action for which certain major steps have been pursued during one year period from May 2013 to February 2014 in the scope of Tourism, Women Entrepreneurs activities, Transportation, Industry and Investment, Trade Facilitation and Arbitration.

Therefore since May 2013 , eight meetings were held within the framework of the ECO CCI comprising of the Executive Committee along with the specialized committees as well as the 2nd ECO Health Tourism Coordination meetings.

Due to the fact that the full report has already been distributed by the ECO Secretariat ,very briefly I would like to highlight some of the important aspects of the ECO CCI activities and recommendations.

During the last year, ECO CCI in collaboration with the member chambers and ECO Secretariat pursued development of tourism initiatives especially in health tourism in the ECO region .

First and second ECO Coordination Committee Meetings on Health Tourism were held on Dec 18, 2012 and Nov 26-27, 2013 in Mashhad bringing about many rewarding conclusions and emphasizing on three main issues including visa relaxation, medical insurance coverage and investment (joint ventures on medical facilities, devising the ECO Health Insurance and Hospital accreditation documents)

Hence the First Conference on Health Tourism in ECO region which was approved by the 23rd Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting will be held in 2014 in Iran.

The ECO CCI has been making the necessary arrangements for holding the First Forum of Hotel Owners and Tour Operators of ECO Member States in order to

boost the convergences of the private sector and joint efforts to bolster these areas in the region and this issue will be pursued during the 2014.

As the house is fully aware the women constitute half of the society therefore they are very influential in economic growth and prosperity.

In this regard the ECO CCI has been striving to promote the women activities within the ECO CCI Women Entrepreneurs Council (WEC) by means of holding seminars, workshops specialized meetings, capacity building initiatives and exhibitions etc which is elaborated on within the full report of activities of the ECO CCI.

Active participation at the 2nd Meeting of the Islamabad-tehran-Istanbul road Corridor (ITI) on Feb 4-5,2013 in Tehran - I . R Iran , approaching all member states to get their opinions on bottlenecks and hindrances of border crossing among the member states whose outcome has been already circulated by the ECO Secretariat as well as participation and contribution to the 2nd and 3rd Meetings of the ITI Road Corridor held respectively on Feb 4-5,2013 in Tehran and September 23-24, 2013 in Ankara are among our activities in the report period.

The ECO CCI is requesting the issue of the regular running of the ECO ITI Cargo Train to be followed up and Member States be informed of the results of the proceedings made in this respect in order for their concerted action in this area as harmonization of the working hours of customs offices of Member States in collaboration with the ECO secretariat may be considered by the RPC.

In the area of Industry and Investment it is evident that there are far less than satisfactory projects of joint industrial investments in the region. In this regards there should be initiatives to define projects for production of finished products in order to avoid exporting raw materials and absorb the value added as well as bringing about more jobs, expertise and intra ECO trade augmentation.

Hence ECO CCI has assumed the task to encourage the ECO TDB to financially support and to give priority to the joint industrial investments in the ECO region in order to further develop the intra ECO investments.

Also in the area of trade the ECO TDB has been encouraged to expand its scope of activity to trade (L/C Opening) to fill the banking gap in the region as well as augmentation of the ECO TDB's capital to better serve the business communities of the ECO region.

The goventmnets support for the trade facilitation initiatives in the ECO region is of supreme significance , the administrattions have to provide the private sector with the right track to run the train of trade and investment , this track is constituted by the legal and economic infrastructures.

The ECO Business Forum is considered as a very efficient tool for business networking, Hence the 4th ECO Business Forum (EBF) and Buyers- Sellers Meeting (BSM) in Kabul- Afghanistan has been undergoing several postponements and rescheduling and not yet been held as it is hoped to convene later this year to the best.

The Visa Sticker Scheme ,ECOTA implementation, holding the ECO Trade Fair and the contribution of the ECO TDB by measures such as L/C opening are also among the measures which has been followed by ECO CCI and should be encouraged and accelerated in order to further the intra ECO trade.

Five ECOTA signatory countries may be encouraged for putting the agreement into operation for the promotion of the intra ECO Trade . The ECO CCI fully supports the implementation of the ECOTA.

To enhance arbitration in ECO region, the recent meeting of the Arbitration Committee of ECO CCI had many rewarding decisions as a result of which ECO CCI member chambers were consulted and communicated regarding the nature, ways and means of support for establishment of the ECO CCI Arbitration Center and the results were reflected to the 23rd RPC Meeting.

The ECO Secretariat approached the member states who have not still joined the 1958 New York Convention on Arbitration to sign and ratify the convention.

In the area of information dissemination, ECO CCI Secretariat has embarked on the research-publication approach through extensive field studies and research initiatives by its experts .The Directory of top 100 companies of ECO member states in textile/construction materials/auto parts and pharmaceuticals was published in 2013 as in 2014 we are planning to expand our feasibility studies for further research and publication activities .

ECO CCI also has recorded some other activities in the last year such as signing an MoU with the Islamic Development Bank in 2013 , Memo of Understanding with the Intelligent Persian Corp (IPC) on Developing ECO benchmarking Network as well as active participation at the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum on March 4-6,2013 in Tehran .

Given the above mentioned notions here are some recommendations from the ECO CCI in order for expansion of the intra ECO trade and investment activities as well as implementation of the ECO agreements :

- Active participation of the ECO Member States at the 1st ECO Health Tourism Confobition.
- Harmonization of the working hours of customs offices of Member States shall be given due attention by the RPC;

- The RPC is requested to follow the issue of the regular running of the ECO ITI Cargo Train .
- The ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO TDB) encourage for extension of trade finance and deliver trade banking facilities such as L/C Opening;
- Following up Implementation of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA);
- Determination of the status of the EBF/BSM meetings which has gone under several postponements during several years.
- Implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement and taking into consideration visa relaxation by the member states
- RPC continue its support for establishment of the ECO CCI Arbitration Center
- The ECO Secretariat may assist pursuance of holding the Arbitration Training Workshop by UNCITRAL in Tehran.

At the end I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the honorable heads and members of delegations for their participation and valuable contributions to discussions and hope for success of this meeting in realization of decisions and joint cooperation in the region.

Thank you

**Statement by Dr. Atousa Goodarzi, Dean, ECO College of Insurance
(ECO-CI) at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Mr. Chairman
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 24th Regional Planning Council (RPC).

The ECO College of Insurance (formerly RCD Insurance School) was reopened in 1991, as one of the four specialized agencies 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.

The College located in Tehran, under scientific and educational supervision of Allameh Tabataba'ie University, one of the leading universities in humanities in Iran.

The College, at the moment, is catering to the insurance training needs of the ECO Member States. The subjects of study include insurance, economics, management, law, insurance accounting, and finance leading to a Bachelor of Science degree in insurance management, on the other hand, subjects such as risk theory, financial economics, financial mathematics and actuarial mathematics leading to a Master of Science degree in Actuarial Sciences.

The College receives its funding from the Allameh Tabataba'ie University and is responsible to this University for the delivery of its teaching and research programs from one hand as well as the ECO Secretariat from the other hand.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Current status of ongoing activities can be summarized as follows:

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 and second volumes of scientific-research journal of "Insurance Researches" during next few months.
5. The international meeting of "Actuarial Sciences and Pension Funds" which held last month by ECO College of Insurance.
6. Participation of the College faculty members in the 6th conference of "Development of Financing Systems 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 can participate 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 can be 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.

In the end, I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Distinguished Delegates of the Member States my highest considerations.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Mr. Omer Ozel, Coordinator of ECO Food Security
Regional Coordination Centre, at the 24th Meeting of
Regional Planning Council
(23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Good morning, Mr. Chairman, His Excellency Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates of ECO Member States and ECO Institutions,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My name is Ömer ÖZEL. I am the Regional Program Coordinator for the ECO Regional Program for Food Security.

First of all, I would like to thank ECO Secretariat and Islamic Republic of Iran for organizing this event and inviting our center to the 24th Regional Planning Council.

ECO-RCC was established in Ankara in November 2012 in accordance with the decisions taken at 20th Regional Planning Council and 19th Council of Ministers in 2010. Our office is located within the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey (MFAL). The Regional Program Coordinator and three experts were appointed by MFAL.

Our center is also being funded by Turkey through the Project titled “Establishment of ECO-RCC” under FAO-Turkey Partnership Program. This project was launched last June and our center became fully operational.

Now, I would like to inform you about our activities since the 23rd RPC.

- 1) A training on Writing Principles and Presentation Skills was organized for the RCC staff in June 2013.
- 2) A website for the RCC (www.eco-rccfs.org) was setup and launched in July 2013 for disseminating knowledge and information on RPFS and RCC.
- 3) We organized and held the Inception Workshop on RPFS in Ankara on 23-24 September 2013. Delegations from seven Member States and international organisations participated in the Workshop.
- 4) Back-to-back with the Workshop, we also held the First Program Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting on 25 September 2013. Senior officers from seven Member States participated in the Meeting. The PSC member and National Focal Point (NFP) for each participating Member State were determined during the meeting.

During the workshop and PSC meeting, priorities of Member States regarding food security were discussed and the leading RPFS components were determined. The final reports of the Workshop and PSC Meeting were sent to the Secretariat for distribution to Member States.

- 5) In line with the decision taken by the Committee, we prepared a draft Working Principles document for ECO-RCC and sent it to the Secretariat for distribution to Member States for their views and comments.
- 6) We designed and organized a training program for institutional capacity development in the ECO region with the support of TIKA and FAO. The three-week training on Food Security and Project Cycle Management was realized in Ankara in December 2013.

Trainees selected from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as the RCC staff participated in the training. As follow-up, the second phase of the training with the same participants will be held in June this year.

At the end of the course, the participants will have well-prepared, mature projects at hand to submit to Grant Programs such as OIC COMCEC PCM Program.

- 7) We met with the representatives of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) several times to discuss and review IDB's financing instruments and assistance towards RPFS. The Bank representatives clearly stated that IDB could provide loans only to governments and any request for financing an RPFS project come directly from the Ministry of Finance of the interested Member State. A concept note on financing the RPFS projects was prepared with the Bank, but that needs to be enhanced by up-to-date data and specific needs of Member States for a sound Concept Document.
- 8) We also participated in several workshops and training programs (organized by ECOSA, COMCEC, FAO, etc.) on agriculture and food security.

Our planned Events/Activities for 2014-15 are as follows:

- Study tours to several ECO Member States in March-April 2014
- 2nd PSC Meeting in May 2014
- 2nd phase of the Food Security and PCM Training in June 2014
- 2nd ECO-RCC Workshop in March 2015

Before concluding my words, I kindly request from Member States support us on the following points:

- Determination of PSC Members and National Focal Points for RPFS, three Member States have not forwarded their nominations yet,
- Transmission of views and comments on the draft Working Principles of RCC,
- Development of high quality food security projects in line with RPFS Components,
- Support RCC by cooperating and participating actively in its activities (workshops, PSC meetings, assisting for the arrangement of study tours, sharing data and knowledge, updating the RPFS document, etc.)

Thank you very much.

Statement by Dr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel, President of ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology, at the 24th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (23-26 February, 2014 – ECO Secretariat)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Esteemed Secretariat and Delegations of Member States;

It is a genuine pleasure for me, as the President of ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology to report the 24th Regional Planning Council on the background, status and prospect of the ECO-IEST.

As you are well informed, on 6 October 2004 during the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Istanbul, after the proposal for establishment of ECO College of Environment & Formation of a Task Force which met three times in Tehran, Islamabad and Ankara in 2004 and 2005 and finally in 30 June 2006, reported to the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Almaty, and the Meeting endorsed creation of Institute of Environmental Science and Technology for ECO region (instead of the College).

The Meeting also appreciated the proposed Strategic Plan of the Institute and 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.

On February 2007, the 17th RPC meeting took note of the creation of the ECO-IEST and emphasized that the modalities for the establishment of ECO regional centers which are already on the agenda of the CPR should be followed for the establishment and functioning of this Institute.

After hosting arrangements, on 9th February 2011 the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology was inaugurated in Academic city of Karaj in Iran hosted by the University of Environment.

Rationales for establishment of this Institute are:

- 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.

through

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

Establishment of ECO-IEST was appreciated by the 21st meeting of RPC in Tehran in 19-17 May 2011

some of the most highlighted activities of ECO-IEST:

- 9 March 2012, Tehran: ECO Meeting on Transboundary Movement of Biological Specimens and Species,
- 10-12 March 2012, Tehran: Regional meeting in preparation of the 2nd session of a plenary meeting on the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES),
- March 2012 (ongoing): Establishment of the Network on Trans-boundary Protected Areas,
- 5-6 May 2012, Tehran: International Conference on Biodiversity in Zagros Region,
- 10 May 2012, Tehran: Regional Workshop on Biodiversity,
- 20-21 May 2012, Tehran: The 1st Conference on Wetlands Management and Engineering,
- 9 March 2012, Tehran: ECO Meeting on Transboundary Movement of Biological Specimens and Species,
- 10-12 March 2012, Tehran: Regional meeting in preparation of the 2nd session of a plenary meeting on the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES),
- March 2012 (ongoing): Establishment of the Network on Trans-boundary Protected Areas,
- 5-6 May 2012, Tehran: International Conference on Biodiversity in Zagros Region,
- 10 May 2012, Tehran: Regional Workshop on Biodiversity,
- 20-21 May 2012, Tehran: The 1st Conference on Wetlands Management and Engineering,
- 2013 Islamabad, Pakistan

Later on 6-8 May 2013, RPC23) recommended to change the status of the ECO-IEST as an ECO affiliated institute.

Consequently, In line with this recommendation, the 21st Council of Ministers' Meeting which was held in Tehran on 26th November, 2013 authorized changing the status of the Institute into an affiliated body of ECO.

Thus, I would like to request the Esteemed Council to consider the issue of changing the status of ECO-UEST into an ECO Regional Center, (Cat. B). I am sure that considering the capacity which has been built in this Institute and experience gained during our performance as a project base institute ECO-UEST would be able to serve as the environmental arm of the Economic Corporation Organisation. I am here to answer any question our ambiguity which might arise and would appreciate your positive position in this regard.
