

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Arif, President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

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

It is a matter of great honour that my first official function as President of ECO Cultural Institute is to speak at this important meeting.

In view of 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 suggest the role of culture to provide fundamental ground for peace and stability in promoting more rapid economic growth and increasing success of the nations of the region.

Fortunately, it is the notion of culture, art and literature as well as the rich resources, common heritage and capabilities of the countries of the region on which, in the age of globalization, the members can most rely to strengthen their identity and sense of belonging.

Utilization of this enormous social and historical asset requires extensive and comprehensive cooperation of countries and relevant cultural institutions at the regional level. In fact, till ECI regional focal points have been established, we will look into the possibilities to work with regional cultural organizations.

The fact that ECO Cultural Institute has longer history of activities than any other ECO affiliated body stems from the same common and unifying background.

The leadership of ECO is well aware of the fact that it is vital for the very survival of the ECI that all the ten members of ECO countries play their role, without which the Institute may not be able to achieve the goals envisaged in the charter. It requires the collaboration of all members to utilize common cultural heritage of ECO Member States to make the existing commonalities recognizable internationally. Therefore, through this distinguished Forum, I seize the opportunity to invite the ECO countries accession to become full members of ECI in near future.

During the past 17 years, ECI has endeavoured to foster and promote closer cooperation among the people of the Region, to strengthen their cultural vitality and to raise their awareness of their rich common cultural heritage through organizing diverse cultural programs, events and activities.

It is more important than ever to find ways to reinforce and sustain the major steps taken by ECI Members and other ECO Member States; since the ECI's Annual Report has already been circulated among the Member States, I do not intend to repeat the content here.

However, at this point in time, I would like to acknowledge the worthwhile efforts made by H.E. Dr. Hojatollah Ayoubi, the Ex-President of ECO Cultural Institute who held the position until last month.

During the past few years, valuable programs, activities, cultural and artistic projects have been implemented which have had significant impact on the enhancement of cultural relations among the peoples of the region particularly the scholars, artists and intellectuals.

In this regard, the success of some of the cultural initiatives undertaken such as the Annual meeting of Heads of ECO National Libraries, Conference of the ECO Ministers of Sport and Tourism are subject to their continuity on regular basis so that the cultural and social institutions of the Member States benefits their efforts appropriately.

The participation of the Member States is the main supporting element for ECI to hold such programs on regular basis which is in accordance with the ECI Charter that the modality of the Institute bases on the strategy to function as an initiating, coordinating, financing and monitoring agency.

We intend to create separate desks for each country, headed by the country's culture specialist to plan, organize and devise events from an idea to its implementation.

ECI has worked on the establishment of a Bureau of Translation, on more professional lines, in order to promote literatures and cultures of our countries.

In future programming, we will give priority to the programs which attract our youth. Through youth participation, we will ensure fresh ideas, strength, vitality and energy for the organization.

These interactive works not only generate cultural activities with a context, they would also bring a genuine sense of ownership for the Institute.

At the end, I appreciate the extra financial contributions of I.R. of Iran for the promotion of ECI programs and activities in the past years. I hope that ECI will benefit from those contributions and supports in future.

**Statement by Mr. Saulat Ali Khan, Vice-President of the ECO Trade  
and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) at the  
23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council  
(6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

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

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to attend the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regional Planning Council meeting of ECO. I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**(Economic Developments in the region)**

It has been more than four years since the onset of the global crisis and the sustainable global economic recovery still facing many interrelated risks. The unusually low interest rates, substantial liquidity injections, elevated unemployment rates, subdued growth rates, high levels of indebtedness in some developed countries are serious realities that we have to observe vigilantly. The concerns about the Eurozone and developed countries generally have to be mitigated through prudent macroeconomic policies, structural reforms and enhanced cooperation by ECO countries.

In such circumstances the economic recovery in the ECO region continued to show considerable strength. Although the GDP growth rate of the region which rebounded strongly at 6.7% in 2010, decelerated to 2.0% in 2012 as a reflection of the global economic slowdown. However, the individual country based and regional economic performance is on a firm footing for the upcoming years. The region's nominal GDP reached USD 1.9 trillion by the end of 2012, which means over the past decade it has quadrupled. Overall trade volume of ECO Member States was at US\$ 900 billion in 2012 expanding to nearly 48 percent of the combined regional GDP. The ECO countries have a visible potential to enhance intra-regional and inter-regional trade. However, the intra-regional trade ratio which is about 7.6 percent lacks behind the performance of other regional organizations. The share of intra-trade in OIC countries is 18% in ASEAN is 25% and in EU is almost 70%. It is pertinent to point out that trade among ECO countries can increase by a factor of eight as a result of a potential free trade agreement and implementation of necessary measures. We have been introducing strategic products and services to support member countries to harness the trade potentials.

## **Excellencies,**

### **(World is adapting to the 'New Normal')**

The global crisis has been changing the global economic and business environment a lot. We will see lower but more sustainable growth paths, risks will be priced more appropriately and regulation and supervision will be strengthened. However, resource efficiency, investment in productivity, innovation, competitiveness, and more efficient planning will be among the main components of green and inclusive growth of the future. Today, adopting common mechanisms in order to cope with this "new normal" is taking center stage in debates all over the world. Thus, it is time to harness the regional cooperation and further build on the respective strengths of our economies.

To support this perspective, Your Institution, ECO Bank has been pursuing to realize a new initiative under the name of "ECO Regional Partnership Forum (ERPF)". We believe it will emerge as an effective platform to forge strategic partnerships and alliances between public, private and other stakeholders. I am confident that we will soon finalize the relevant terms of references and organize this periodic Forum for mobilizing resources to bridge the investment gap in the region.

## **Excellencies,**

### **(Performance of the Bank)**

The ECO Bank as the multilateral development bank of the region is dedicated to support member countries to realize sustainable development and enjoy more cooperation and integration. We have been pursuing an ambitious agenda but also realistic enough in order to be credible and effective. The network established with about 30 partner local financial institution in the region help us to pursue and cater to financing needs of the exporters/importers and support the development of the SMEs. We are dedicatedly working to support corporates and development of projects which contribute to national priorities and promote and complement member states. The Bank has been expanding its operations including scope of products and services. We have started to conclude agreements in order to support microfinance, leasing and Islamic Banking businesses in the member states. In addition, the Bank has introduced new trade finance products such as Guarantee Facility and Discounting of Export Receivables. Within this perspective, since late 2008, which the Bank started its operations, the total amount of loans disbursed to various operations in the member states amounted to about US\$ 700 million by the end February 2013. It is not a small achievement for a young regional institution to have a stable positive net income without having any non-performing loan in its well diversified portfolio. We have been concluding co-financing agreements with relevant Multilateral Development Banks. We also recognize the importance of

strengthening Bank's capacity to deliver on technical cooperation and capacity building and in the coming years we will be better equipped to deliver on this issues as well. In this respect, we have sponsored the ECO/IRU Silk Road Truck Caravan project and we are in contact with ECO Secretariat to provide support to a WTO Workshop to be organized in the coming months. And I am confident that through joining of other ECO member states, capital increase and raising medium to long term funds, the financing capabilities and services of the Bank would be intensified in the coming years. Based on its competitive advantage and market niche in the region, the Bank's strategy over the next years is to be at the forefront of providing development capital, through customer focused and innovative financing instruments backed by competitively priced funds. We have a noble goal to make ECO Bank a well-recognized and reliable brand name of the region.

**Excellencies,**

**(Final remarks)**

As I move towards my closing remarks, let me state that one of the most important agenda of the Bank is to increase the number of its members. In this regard, I am very pleased to inform that the Republic of Azerbaijan has become the fourth member of the Bank. On the other hand the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is at the stage of finalizing membership procedures and would join the Bank soon. I would like to reiterate my invitation to the other ECO member states to join the Bank and benefit from its resources. The public and private entities in our member states are benefiting from our facilities which are provided on highly competitive terms. We put all our attempts to leverage and cater to development finance needs, improve trade among member states and support their exports to the world. Your Institution, ECO Bank is prepared to work closely with all ECO Member States to ensure that we are able to deliver our major commitments and objectives. I am confident that ECO member states would also provide every support to the Bank in order to help it to become a premier development institution of the region.

Thank you very much for your attention.

**Statement by Dr. Syed Lal Shah, Representative of the ECO Science  
Foundation (ECO-SF) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council  
(6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Excellency the Chairman of 23<sup>rd</sup> RPC/  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran,  
Excellency the Secretary General of ECO,  
Excellencies and delegates from ECO Member States and Specialized  
Agencies,**

**Assalam-o-Alaikum!**

It is indeed an exclusive honour and pleasure, for me as representative of the President of ECO Science Foundation to address this august forum – the RPC for the first time.

On behalf of the President of ECO Science Foundation, Professor Manzoor Hussain Soomro, I would like to convey his sincere apologies for his inability to travel, however, he sends his best wishes for the success of the meeting.

Excellencies, the ECOSF expresses its gratitude to all the Member States and ECO Secretariat for their continuous support to the Foundation. We are especially grateful to the Government of Pakistan for patronizing the ECOSF through the Ministry of Science and Technology and Pakistan Science Foundation.

The Foundation has been making efforts to pursue the planned activities; however, non-availability of funds has been the main impediment. However, I am pleased to report that the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan has sanctioned the mandatory contribution of US\$ 0.19 million for the year and should be transferred to ECOSF account. ECOSF is highly thankful to Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Science and Technology for the action. The mandatory contribution from I.R. of Iran is expected next as informed by the Embassy of Iran in Islamabad. However, mandatory contribution from remaining two ratifying Member States is yet to come.

Other Member States are also urged to ratify the ECOSF Charter so that the Foundation functions at full strength and the members can benefit from the program.

Some Member States have nominated their Focal Points for speedy coordination and eminent scientists to serve on the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees of the Foundation, however, response of some members is still awaited. Thus on behalf of the ECO Science Foundation, I would like to request this august forum to emphasize upon Member States for the following actions to be

taken by them in order to smoothly run the business of the Foundation for the betterment of the ECO region:

- i. Nominations of focal points and members of Executive Committee and Board of Trustees from remaining Member States;
- ii. Payment of Mandatory budget contributions by remaining ratifying member states;
- iii. Payment of Voluntary contributions to ECOSF S&T Fund by all ECO Member States particularly Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan who have already pledged contributions;
- iv. Ratification of Charter by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan;

Excellencies, although due to non-availability of funds with ECO Science Foundation, the planned activities of last year could not be pursued in true letter and spirit, the following humble efforts have been made:

- As required by the Board of Trustees, the modalities for Utilization of S&T Fund was prepared and since approved by the COM in its 20<sup>th</sup> meeting held in Baku, Azerbaijan in October, 2012.
- Preparation for the 1<sup>st</sup> ECOSF Regional Conference was done to review status of S&T in ECO region and to set out priority areas of research to be funded under S&T Fund of ECOSF, but it could not materialize due to non-availability of funds.
- Website of ECOSF ([www.eco4science.org](http://www.eco4science.org)) was established and is active.
- The draft of the ToR for the post of Executive Director ECO Science Foundation was prepared & submitted to ECO Secretariat Tehran for approval of ECO CPR.
- A 5-days international training workshop on “Modern Research Techniques in Ecology” was organized in Islamabad on 16-20 April, 2012 jointly by ECOSF and numerous national & international organizations.
- 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, Pakistan.

At the end, I express my sincere thanks to ECO Secretariat for the commendable efforts in convening this 23<sup>rd</sup> RPC meeting.

Thank you.

**Statement by Mr. Serdar Yilmaz, Representative of the ECO Educational Institute (ECO-EI) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Representatives of delegations,**

I wish to thank you all for giving us the opportunity to announce you today.

President of ECO Educational Institute Prof. Dr. Selahattin TURAN is unfortunately having a health procedure but he will be able to participate to the Meeting on the last day.

It has been 1 year and 1 month since ECO Educational Institute has officially been established after the “1st Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Educational Institute” in 2-3 April 2012 and has been carrying the duty since then. I would like to summarize the actualized and planned activities during the past one year.

As a young institution of ECO, the Educational Institute is striving hard to serve the benefits of Member States. But of course just like in other areas the Educational Institute needs the support of Member States that provide directions to the plans and activities to make concrete progress.

One of the important planned activities of Educational Institute is the “2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Educational Institute” which was planned to be conducted on 28-29 May 2013 with the participation of ECO Member States, ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions. The invitation letters co-signed by the Turkish Minister of National Education and President of ECO EI were sent to the esteemed ECO Secretariat and to the delegations of the Member Countries. The Kyrgyz Republic and Islamic State of Afghanistan have confirmed their participation to aforementioned Meeting. Due to the lack of quorum the Meeting had to be rescheduled to another date.

Followed by The “2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Educational Institute” “ECO Member States 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Education” was planned to be conducted on 30 May 2013 also with the participation of ECO Member States, ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions. The invitation letters were sent to the esteemed ECO Secretariat and to the delegations of the Member Countries. Again The Kyrgyz Republic and Islamic State of Afghanistan have confirmed their participation to aforementioned Conference. Due to the lack of enough participation by the experts from Member States, the Conference had to be also rescheduled to another date.

In this sense ECO Educational Institute needs the support of Member States in taking critical actions.



The “7th International Robot Contest” held in Istanbul-Turkey, 02-03-04 MAY 2013, was successfully organized by the Ministry of National Education of Republic of Turkey and ECO Educational Institute. The Robot Contest aims to increase and develop the quality of technical and vocational education, to create a platform to show the studies about robotic technologies in brotherly countries and to share the experiences between university and high school students in this strategic field.

The Contest was organized 6 times previously on national basis in Turkey. This year the ECO Educational Institute’s request to include the students from brotherly countries was kindly accepted by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. The contest organized previously for six times on a national basis became an international event with the participation of students and teachers from ECO Member States.

ECO Educational Institute and MoNE were pleased to offer the hospitality to meet the costs of accommodation, meals and transportations in Istanbul for the delegations from ECO member states. Students and teachers from Republic of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> International Robot Contest. The ECO Educational Institute requests the esteemed ECO Secretariat and Member States to kindly start awareness raising activities to announce the next year’s International Robot Contest to the related parties to be held on May 2014.

Now, if you allow me, I’d like to state infrastructural issues briefly.

The ECOEI has moved to its location granted by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. The furniture required for offices and rooms have also been installed and made ready for the staff of ECOEI. So the ECO EI is ready and waiting for its staff to start working.

The ECOEI requested the esteemed ECO Secretariat to call all Member States to kindly initiate follow-up actions on the recommendations of the Charter of the Educational Institute and the 1st Meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of the ECO Educational Institute by conveying the names of their experts to the Academic Council to the ECOEI, and the names of their national focal points. Only Islamic Republic of Pakistan conveyed the contact details of expert nominated to the Academic Council.

**Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,**

ECOEI needs the support of Member States to convey their experts of Academic Council and the names of their national focal points to the ECOEI to start planning the detailed work program, and selection and appointment procedures for the posts in categories I, which are Executive Director, Assistant Director and Educational Expert.

The current activities of ECOEI are being coordinated through The Interim Directorate, which is the group of staff temporarily commissioned by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE), temporarily in charge to set up the infrastructure until the category I, II and III staff of ECOEI starts their work. The Interim Directorate is doing its best to set up the infrastructure and prepare a fully functional Institute as early as possible.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,**

I will finish my words by mentioning some planned activities by The ECO Educational Institute;

- Organizing ECO Member States 1<sup>st</sup> and if possible 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Education
- Organizing Workshops on Methodologies on Religious Education and Special Education in ECO Countries.
- Construction of Online Language Self-Learning Website of ECO States

With the selection of member of Academic Council we believe the ECO Educational Institute will further plan better activities for the benefits of the people of the region and come up with more concrete results.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

**Statement by Dr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi, Secretary General of ECO  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO CCI)  
at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council  
(6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

**In the Name of Allah**

**Ladies, Gentlemen,  
Dignitaries,**

At the outset I would like to thank the respectful officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran for making the arrangements for hosting the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Regional Planning Council 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 Chamber of Commerce and Industry has embarked on diverse approaches to help implement the ECO CCI 10 Year Plan of Action in the period of May 2012-April 2013 for which I would like to highlight very briefly some of the important aspects of these activities:

**In tourism** during the year 2012 ECO CCI in collaboration with the member chambers and ECO Secretariat pursued development of tourism initiatives especially in health tourism in the ECO region.

Hence, we would like to express thanks to the 22<sup>nd</sup> RPC Meeting, it embraced the proposals of the Islamic countries Health Tourism Association, to cooperate with the ECO Secretariat as well as ECO-CCI for the expansion of Health Tourism activities within ECO region.

- In this regard First ECO Coordination Committee Meeting on Health Tourism was held on December 18, 2012 in Mashhad where the ECO Secretariat was called on to prepare a plan of action for future activities of health tourism in ECO member states.
- Furthermore, as a result of the decisions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ECO CCI Tourism Committee, the member chambers have been consulted to provide the ECO CCI with reports on the capacities, potentials as well as ways and means of investment in tourism of their respective countries which have been published on the ECO CCI website.

Considering the above facts the ECO CCI would like to make following suggestions which are aimed at promotion of the intra ECO tourism:

- Establishment of branches of the Health Tourism Association in all ECO Member States for promotion of the health tourism.

- In order to use the potential and exchange the information, the ECO forum of Tour Operators and Hotel Owners will be held in 2013 for which active participation and contribution of the target audiences are highly welcomed.
- To support for organizing the first conference on ECO Health Tourism in 2013 with the cooperation of the ECO Secretariat.

### **Women Entrepreneurs Council:**

In the wake of the last meeting of the ECO CCI Women Entrepreneurs Council (WEC), held on Nov 6, 2012 in Ankara, Turkey useful decisions were made which are explained in our full report.

Taking into account the above mentioned implementations and as a strive to complement the previous implementations ,the ECO CCI would like to request the Member chambers to actively participate at the upcoming events of the Women Entrepreneurs of ECO CCI.

**In transportation** sector on the basis of the last RPC decisions for providing training courses to Chambers of Commerce of Afghanistan and Pakistan on TIR system and asked the ECO CCI to expedite conveying the dates, venue and details of hospitality for the said course.

ECO CCI in response to above mandate ,would like to bring to the kind notice of the council that the TOBB has provided this training course and it is planned to hold the next workshop of the TIR Convention for the Chamber of Commerce of the Afghanistan and Pakistan in Iran in 2013 by the ICCIMA.

In this regard as the honorable delegates are aware the Islamabad-Tehran\_Istanbul cargo train was inaugurated in August 2009 bringing hope to the ECO region for having a regular run in this route with preferred rates and time saving schedule, though the train stopped operating after a while.

Respectively the Almaty-Bandar Abbas cargo train was launched in October 2011 in order to link the landlocked Central Asian Republics to the international waters of the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea which could greatly influence the trend of transportation and exports in the region which was not fully operationalized.

Therefore in order for the above two major projects which are key components of the ECO railroad transport initiative, the ECO CCI is ready to offer full terms of collaboration in operationalization and promotion of the said train routes.

In line with the objectives of the ECO CCI Transportation Committee, several implementations were carried out in the last year of which below can be mentioned:

- A comprehensive report on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), of the ECO Member Chambers were presented and published in ECO CCI website;
- Requesting the ECO Member States to look into facilitating the visa issuance to the Transit Operators of Member States;

**In industry and investment** since the last RPC meeting, the Industry and Investment Committee held its meeting, which has made rewarding decisions which are fully elaborated in our report.

Thus, we would like to make the following proposals in this section as:

- ECO CCI has assumed the task to encourage the ECO Trade and Development Bank to financially support the joint industrial investments in the ECO region , the ECO TDB is requested to provide privileges to such investments in its credit and finance lines..
- The ECO CCI requests the authorities of member states for fast track approach for implementation of the APPI.

**On trade facilitation** ECO CCI would like to thank the 22<sup>nd</sup> RPC for taking into consideration its initiatives in the area of trade facilitation such as welcoming the proposal of ECO-CCI on organization of Buyers- Sellers Meetings and Business Forums.

In line with the above decision , below are the major initiatives conducted by the ECO CCI in the area of trade expansion:

- It is planned to hold the 4th ECO Business Forum (EBF) in 2013 in Kabul- Afghanistan.
- Holding capacity building programmes for LDCs member states in order to enhance trade capacity of ECO region .
- Considering the very critical role of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO TDB), while appreciating the full cooperation of the bank, ECO CCI has assumed the task to encourage the bank to take the following measures through extensive negotiations and consultations for which the RPC is requested to assist for the realization of the below points:
  - i. Expansion of the activities of the Bank to trade financing (i.e. L/C opening operations).
  - ii. Expansion of the portfolio of the bank by granting the permission for private banks of Member States by the authorities of the ECO TDB to have a share in the ECO TDB's capital.
  - iii. Increase of the number of ECO TDB member countries.

Thus it is to mention that all such initiatives will lack their optimal efficiency unless major ECO regional agreement such as the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) be implemented on a fast track approach given the decision of the last COM meeting in October 2012 in Baku to start implement ECOTA by early 2013.

**Arbitration:**

In order to deal with the arbitration issue, the ECO CCI arbitration Committee was formed in Jan 2008 and the Arbitration Rules and the internal regulations of the ECO CCI Arbitration Center was approved by the ECO CCI General Assembly.

In this respect it is to appreciate the kind initiative made by the last meeting of the RPC held in 2012 in Tehran where the member states were encouraged to join the New York Convention 1958 for those members who have not done so.

While we appreciate the RPC which supported the establishment of the ECO CCI arbitration Center.

The council is requested to reiterate:

- Member States who have not yet joined the 1958 New York Convention on Arbitration , join and ratify this agreement in order to speed up the arbitration processes among ECO Member States;

On other initiatives the ECO CCI Secretariat has embarked on the research-publication approach to disseminate proper information regarding the economic capacities of Member States through extensive field studies and research initiatives like the Book on the intra- ECO Trade Potentials and the Book on the intra-ECO Trade Potentials on Foodstuffs.

Furthermore the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a memorandum of Understanding with the Islamic Development Bank on Jan 26,2013 comprised of: Workshop and seminars on the establishment of single window mechanism in ECO Member States, Organization of capacity building activities and experience sharing on the job training programs for the chambers of commerce of ECO Member States and collaboration in holding the annual ECO exhibitions, business forums, buyers-sellers meeting and other similar trade promotion activities as well as the development of the Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector in ECO Member States which is following up for the realization of the MoU.

Another initiative of the ECO CCI, to publish the Trade Directory of 100 Top Companies of Each member country, in the areas of construction materials, pharmaceuticals, textile, auto parts and foodstuffs through ECO CCI consultation

with ECO member states, it is being compiled and will be published in near future.

At this point, due to time considerations I would bring my statement to an end by expressing my gratitude for the excellent arrangements and the results obtained of the meeting.

On behalf of the ECO CCI , I wish success for the 23<sup>rd</sup> RPC in realization of its aims and objectives and I also hope that the shared efforts and consultation of the participants will open up a window of further economic and intra –ECO trade and investment in the future of ECO region.

Thank You

**Statement by Dr. Atousa Goodarzi, Dean, ECO College of Insurance  
(ECO-CI) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council  
(6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Honorable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to express my profound gratitude and sincere appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for hosting the event and making excellent arrangements for it. It's my great honor, as the Dean of the ECO College of Insurance to present College's achievements and prospective challenges to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The RCD International School of Insurance was founded in 1970 in response to a pressing need for the training of insurance personnel in the countries of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

The RCD International School was a unique experiment in regional cooperation and its development as ECO College of Insurance has been welcomed by communities associated with insurance and economics in the region.

The School and the College have the approvals of RCD Ministerial Council and ECO COM, as well as the Ministry of Science, Research and Higher Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

From the beginning, the College has endeavoured to maintain a high academic standard. It is our earnest desire to train the best possible skilled manpower for insurance companies and government agencies.

**His Excellencies,**

During the last year, College purchased books in insurance, actuarial science, financial economics, financial mathematics, economics and other related subjects. ECO College of Insurance students can benefit from one of the enriched specialized libraries in insurance throughout the country and region.

Today, the College is in possession of more than 7000 English and more than 3060 Farsi books, at the same time students may use integrated digital library which is an advanced system to find electronic resources, databases, E-Journals, E-Books & References in Allameh Tabatabaie University.



By increasing the number of higher education graduates, the number of theses which provide findings and policy implications on current problems in insurance topics has been enriched. It is worth to mention that up to now more than 115 students in Master degree have been graduated from College and their thesis are available in the College library.

**Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegations of the Member States,**

Computer facilities (provided in the College), helped students especially in graduate courses to find and use scientific sources through electronic data-banks.

During last year, utilization of online administrative and educational service in Allameh Tabatabaie University got started. Faculty members, College personnel and students can follow their administrative and educational affairs online through a paperless system.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

During the last year the College participated in several important research events, such as the second international "E-Insurance" Conference and the annual seminar on Insurance & Development (held by Central Insurance of I.R. of Iran).

College talks and seminars continued to reflect our faculty potential. These talks and seminars by the faculty members are a main attraction for research activities at the College. Finally, it must be mention that a meeting was held on the occasion of research week on "limitations of research in insurance" last December.

**Mr. Chairman,**

State-based subsidized low-rate student loans provided for more than 180 students of the College in the last academic year. A few private loans were also facilitated to students at their request during the same period.

University dormitory accommodation has been arranged for all the students including Iranian and non-Iranian.

Discount electronic Cards are issued on the occasion of the Tehran International Book Fair for more than 250 students.

A student consultancy service as well as an equipped medical center has been provided to College students.

Some student scientific visits were scheduled and supported by the University and the College. Students were encouraged and supported during the “Research Week”. A ceremony was organized for fresh students with management of deputy of cultural and student affair of Allameh Tabatabaie University.

I would conclude my remarks by presenting the future plans and prospective challenges:

- The first Meeting of Board of Trustee of ECO College of Insurance held on 6 June 2012, in this regard the College intends to follow up this actions:
  - i. Implementation of the mechanism for nomination and selection of three non-resident members of BoT.
  - ii. Following nomination process and introducing of Member States qualified nominees with cooperation of the Secretariat
  - iii. Approval of the mechanism of selection of non-resident members by CPR
- Finalization of establishment of PhD in Insurance through getting official permissions from Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Science, Research & Higher Education.
- Providing financial supports for postgraduate students’ thesis/dissertations through the Member States donations and other national and international sources.

Up to now, Insurance Research Center, Central Insurance of Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran Social Security Fund and Export Guarantee Fund, granted donations to postgraduate thesis/dissertations of the College’s students.

Before concluding my statements, I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks to ECO Secretariat for their coordination and cooperation.

Thank you.

**Statement by Dr. E. Fattahi, Director of ECO Regional Center  
for Risk Management for Natural Disasters at the  
23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council  
(6-8 May, 2013 – ECO Secretariat)**

**Introduction**

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

In order to draw the attention of authorities, policy-makers, and the public to the issue of natural disasters, the United Nations and the World Meteorological Organization have designated the 1990's as "the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" and asked for all countries' cooperation. This international invitation can be considered as the first focused and comprehensive step taken by international organization towards human training in all research, planning and implementation dimensions of mitigating the effects of natural disasters. The present reactions which are totally based on help after disasters have been changing into prevention before disasters. This change needs a special management, training, and cooperation. So, in order to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, the approaches have been changing to public awareness and informing the people before the disasters occur. This change has been one of the main goals of natural disaster mitigation program in the last two decades.

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**History of ECO-RCRM**

With reference to ECO Secretariat's note no. AIH/0141/2004/0862, dated 11 May, 2004 and AIH/0141/2004/1521 dated August 8, 2004, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan expressed their support to the proposal of the Meteorological Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran on establishing a

“Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters” at National Center of Climatology in Mashhad, I.R. of Iran. Since climate change has resulted in severe droughts in the world during the last 3 years (2000-2003), especially in some ECO Member States, the necessity of establishing a Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters was approved by the 1<sup>st</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in July 26-28, Tehran, Iran. It was agreed to establish such a center in National Climatology Center (Mashhad) based on the proposal submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran Meteorological Organization to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting (December 6-7, Antalya, Turkey).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held in January, 2006, in Tehran, the Council agreed on ECO feasibility funds of US\$ 50,000/- to establishment of a Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters from ECO Feasibility Funds. The Council appreciated the efforts made by the concerned authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran for establishing a Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM) in Mashhad noting that the Center would be inaugurated during the first Meeting of the ECO Heads of Meteorological Organization in September, 2007.

### **View, Objectives and Functions**

Regarding to the draft statute of the ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters which was finalized by ECO Secretariat working group, the view of the Centre is the promoting cooperation among Member States for effective natural disasters risk management.

The objectives of the Center shall be with a view to promoting cooperation among Member States for effective natural disasters risk management especially the risks of hydro-meteorological and climatic disasters:

- a. Establishing an efficient information management system
- b. Short and Long Term Forecasting/Predictions
- c. Disaster Risk Assessment/Analysis
- d. Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning System
- e. Capacity Building (Education and Training, etc.)

In order to achieve the objectives, as defined in Article III, the Centre shall, inter alia, have the following functions and responsibilities:

- i. To promote regional disasters surveillance and provision of early warning system through:
  - Establishing regional standards and protocols for data quality control and assurance;
  - Facilitating exchange of data, information and products;
  - Providing seasonal and long-term climate forecasting, modelling and early warning system

- ii. To strengthen national capacities through holding seminars, workshops and training courses.
- iii. To provide member states with technical assistance in research, applying new technologies, especially using satellite and radar for meteorological purposes and applying community-based approaches
- iv. To exchange information, knowledge and best practices as well experts, instructors and trainers
- v. To develop cooperation with relevant international bodies/institutions for technical and financial assistance
- vi. To facilitate policy dialogue as well as national and regional strategy development for and disaster management risk reduction.

### **Activities Taken**

ECO-RCRM has made some activities during the period of January to October 2012, regarding to its responsibilities.

The ECO-RCRM workshop entitled “Climate Modelling and Natural Disasters in ECO region” was held on 5-6 June in Tehran and 7 June 2012 in Mashhad in cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran Meteorological Organization (IRIMO) with participation of ECO Member Countries. The workshop was attended by the delegates from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey. The ECO Secretariat also participated in the workshop.

The main objective of the workshop was to exchange and experiences in the field of climate change and natural disaster as well as to develop the enhancement of the mutual cooperation among ECO Member Countries. Topics of the workshop were as below:

- i. Climate Change Modelling
- ii. Climate Change and impact assessment
- iii. Introducing IRIMO’s Flood Forecasting System (IFFS), a dynamical weather forecasting model in joint with hydrology and hydraulic models
- iv. Seasonal forecast and drought early warning system over West Asia and ECO region countries

A joint project of Multi-model statistically weighted seasonal forecast for 4 months in advance are prepared each months for West Asian and ECO (WAE) region from 2009 in cooperation with Mashhad Climate Centre (MCC) and ECO-RCRM. In this regard, an English seasonal forecast newsletter is issued every months and launch on the ECO-RCRM website.

ECO-RCRM has launched the new project of Drought Outlook and Early-Warning System (DOES) for drought prediction over ECO region in 4 months in

advance from early 2012. Raw data needed to DOES prediction tool is being obtained from Tokyo Climate Centre (TCC) after corresponding and agreement between and MCC and TCC. Gridded data are statistically calibrated over some ECO region cities which their monthly precipitation and temperature are available in ECO-RCRM climatic data centre. In this regard, ECO-RCRM requests all ECO countries to submit monthly precipitation and temperature from 1971 up to now for calibration the DOES software over the region.

Updating website of the center (<http://www.eco-rcrm.ir>). Website of ECO-RCRM has been launched on 2010 prior to the second ECO Heads of Meteorological Organization meeting in Turkey. The contents of the website cover all of ECO activities related to the natural disasters especially climatic and hydrology disasters. All of documents of ECO-RCRM and newsletter are available in the website.

### **Activities to be taken**

Regarding to the discussions in the workshop of “Climate Modelling and Natural Disasters in ECO Region”, the drought prediction over ECO region is being issued under DOES project. ECO-RCRM is planning to extend the prediction over all Member States. For calibration of the project, monthly precipitation and temperature data over all weather stations of the Member States are needed.

ECO-RCRM is organizing two workshops of “Drought Early Warning and Risk Management over ECO” and “Introduction to dynamical Flood Forecasting System” in 2013 from US\$ 50,000 of the ECO-FGPF for establishment of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters and IRIMO’s international cooperation program.

As the comprehensive IRIMO’s Flood Forecasting System (IFFS) has been introduced to the ECO member delegates to the Second ECO-RCRM workshop of “Climate Modelling and Natural Disasters in ECO region” by the Director of ECO-RCRM, ECO-RCRM is planning to launch the project operationally over selected basins which are under high risk of flood in cooperation with local and international agencies under umbrella of ECO Secretariat.

ECO-RCRM is planned to visit delegations of Member countries to meet ECO-RCRM to work on ECO RCRM projects.

Regarding to the final report of ECO-RCRM workshop “Climate modelling and natural disaster in ECO region” which was held on July 2012 in Tehran/Mashhad and ECO-RCRM annual report, the Center is planning to hold two workshops on natural disasters and one project on drought early warning over ECO-region.

## **Expectations**

ECO-RCRM requests the Member States to accelerate completing the 3 questionnaires regarding to the understanding and assessment of disaster risk management. The key objectives of questionnaires are to 1) gain a better understanding of the disaster risk profile and disaster risk reduction system in the country; 2) assess the NDMO's capacity to use weather and climate information in disaster risk reduction; and 3) identify the gaps and needs with respect to applying weather and climate information in disaster risk reduction.

Regarding the role of meteorological data in preparing updated drought monitoring, calibration of drought prediction system and natural climate-related technical reports and in the context of the Agreement between ECO Heads of Meteorological Organization, in the first stage ECO-RCRM needs to access to the monthly precipitation, maximum temperature, minimum temperature and humidity data of all meteorological stations of the ECO Countries. Period of data must be from 1971 up to now.

To accelerate process of finalizing ECO-RCRM statute.

The ECO-RCRM requested ECO Secretariat ECO-RCRM draft statute of ECO-RCRM to all Member States in order to receive comments, if any, up to August 2013.

The ECO-RCRM suggests to host the EGM meeting in Mashhad/Tehran in late 2013 for finalizing ECO-RCRM statute. In this regard, ECO Secretariat supports the meeting from Feasibility fund.

**Statement by Mr. Omer Ozel, Coordinator of ECO Food Security  
Regional Coordination Centre, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the  
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**Excellencies Mr. Chairman and ECO Secretary General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

RCC is a specialized agency of ECO on food security in the ECO region that was established in October 2012 and announced at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Antalya on 15 November 2012.

Our goal is to facilitate and assist achieving food security in the region through implementation of the RPFS (Regional Program for Food Security).

Now I will briefly talk about RCC, its institutional structure and what we have done so far.

RCC has been established; and the RPC (Regional Program Coordinator) and 3 technical experts have been appointed by the Minister, an office space and equipment have been provided by Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL). I would like to thank the Republic of Turkey for her significant contributions towards the establishment of RCC.

We are operating according to “the Working Principles and Procedures of ECO RCC”, which was approved and circulated during the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Antalya. In this institutional structure, there is a Program Steering Committee, chaired by the Undersecretary of the Coordinating Country, one representative from ECO Secretariat and one representative from each ECO Member State, as well as the full time RCC staff (a Regional Program Coordinator and technical and support staff as needed).

We are working in close cooperation with Ministry of Development, FAO-SEC, TIKA as well as ECO Secretariat and the relevant units of MFAL towards implementation of RPFS.

RCC will also be supported financially through the “RCC Establishment Project” under FAO-Turkey Partnership Program (FTPP) from the fund (\$500,000) to be provided by the Republic of Turkey. Approval and signature of this project has been completed yet due to internal approval procedures of FAO. However, it is expected to be approved and signed soon by FAO. As soon as signed by ECO Secretariat and the Republic of Turkey, it will become operational and we will be able to start our activities using the RCC's own budget.



We have carried out several visits for possible cooperation and funding for RPFS:

- EU Delegation in Ankara
- Undersecretary of Treasury in Ankara
- TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Presidency)
- IDB in Jeddah and Ankara

We have participated in several events (Meetings/Conferences):

- ECOSA 4<sup>th</sup> International Seed Trade Conference in Istanbul
- COMCEC Workshop on Development of Wheat Production in COMCEC Countries in Izmir
- Coordination Meeting on ECO Seed Project under FTTP in Ankara

We have also planned future Events/Organisations:

- PSC Meeting in Ankara in 24-25 June 2013
- Country missions (3 to 5 day mission on RPFS projects, priorities, etc.)
- RCC Inception Workshop in Ankara, October-November -2013

We have several requests from Member States as follows:

- Determination of PSC Members and active participation in the meeting
- Nomination of National Focal Points for RPFS Workgroup (We had received no reply to our written requests from Member States yet.)
- Development and submission of high quality FS projects in line with National FS Program/Strategy/Priorities and RPFS Components, whichever applies
- Support RCC by cooperating and participating its activities (missions, workshops, PSC meetings, designation of national focal points, etc.)

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