

OKUNUNCAYA KADAR AMBARGOLUDUR  
OKUNAN METİN GEÇERLİDİR

**INAUGURATION SPEECH OF THE STATE MINISTER FOR THE REPUBLIC  
OF TURKEY DR. CEVDET YILMAZ ON THE OCCASION OF 20<sup>TH</sup> MEETING  
OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF THE  
ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION  
(Antalya, 16th February 2010)**

Distinguished Secretary General of ECO,  
Honorable Delegates,  
Esteemed Guests,

It gives me great pleasure to host and address you on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Welcome to our country!

At the outset, I wish to express my condolences and the mercy of Allah to those who lost their lives in the avalanche disaster that hit Afghanistan last week as well as to the brotherly Afghan people. On this occasion where we have come together for the first time with the ECO Secretary General Mr. Muhammed Yahya Marufi, I wish to take the opportunity to congratulate him for being elected to this post. I also wish to extend my thanks and appreciation in your presence to Mr. Khurshid Anwar for his important input during the previous period.

Esteemed Delegates,  
Valuable Guests,

In addition to its population of 414 million, rich natural resources and high agricultural potential, the location of the ECO Region has also a vital importance as being neighbor to global centers of power such as the EU, Russia, China and the Middle East. A glance at the basic indicators of our region would reveal that we have an important potential waiting to be fulfilled. In order to gain maximum benefits from this potential, our main target should be to carry our cooperation under the roof of the ECO to further lengths.

In 2008 the ECO countries had an average growth rate of 6.9% and a cumulative national income of 1,4 trillion dollars, accounting for the 2,5% of global income. While the trade volume of ECO countries in 2007 was 532, 5 billion dollars, in 2008 this amount was increased by 9,4 % to total 582,8 billion dollars. The intra-ECO trade in 2008 was 41,4 billion dollars and constituted 7.1% of the total trade volume.

Esteemed Participants,

As a result of the whole work we have carried out until now, several projects from trade to transport, from agriculture to energy have been brought on our agenda. However, we have major deficiencies in realizing these projects. We are obliged to determine well what needs to be done in order to improve these deficiencies and have a better cooperation. I want to share some of my thoughts on this issue with you.

Esteemed Delegates,

As you know, increasing trade between member countries is one of the primary aims of the ECO. Projects which have already been installed for this purpose should be finalized without delay.

It is to our mutual benefit that the ECOTA which was prepared as a result of negotiations for the purpose of liberalizing trade in the ECO Region is incepted and all member countries take part in this project. For this reason the countries which have ratified the ECOTA forward their concession lists to the Secretariat as soon as possible and this important agreement is put into effect without further delays. I also invite those countries which have not yet signed the ECOTA to sign this important agreement.

Distinguished guests,

One of the major problems of trade among developing countries is financing. It is gratifying to see that ECO Trade and Development Bank has launched its financing activities and credit programs for SME's. I would like to invite all member countries to participate to this Bank and benefit from the service offered.

There are numerous project and program offers for the purpose of increasing trade on the agenda of ECO, far too many for me to mentioned here. However, we can all see that for some of them there has been no improvement for years. In the next term, rather than incepting new projects in many fields we should focus on projects and programs which have a mutual benefit for member countries and as such are claimed and decisively implemented.

Esteemed Delegates,

Transport and communications are among the most important areas of our cooperation. As you know the ECO region is located on extremely important transport corridors and if our cooperation in this area is able to develop trade will be facilitated and develop between our countries as well as in the whole region. The Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) which established the foundation of our cooperation in the field of transport has been in force since 2006. The works carried out by the Coordination Council and its auxiliary bodies which were established within the framework of the

agreement have continued to carry out their work successfully. I hope these works will provide concrete results within a short time.

In order to prioritize the works intended for the future term in the field of transport, the preparation of a new 10 Year Program of Action is very important. I believe we can prepare a comprehensive feasible Program of Action, bearing in mind the lessons learned from the implementation of the previous program.

We are on the eve of positive developments regarding road transport facilitation on which a major part of goods are transported among our countries. Our cooperation in this field will be supplemented by the experiences of the esteemed representatives of IRU and the Green Card Council of Bureaux; I wish to take the opportunity to thank them for the interest they have shown our meeting.

Important developments have also taken place in the field of railways. In last August a container train has been launched on the Islamabad-Istanbul route. I believe that completing the missing links along the railway corridor and increasing the capacities of the existing ones will significantly increase the strategic importance of the ECO region. I invite all our member countries to complete their relevant projects as soon as possible.

Esteemed Participants,

Energy is an invaluable item in fulfilling the needs of human beings and reaching development targets. The ECO Region is in a unique position regarding energy sources and energy trade. We must carry out cooperation and bring this opportunity to a more beneficial status for our countries and nations.

Although energy is one of the priority areas of the ECO it is impossible to say that the level of desired cooperation has been reached. Renewable Energy resources, energy Productivity and Saving and Energy Trade should be our subjects of importance. I think that enacting the “ECO Member countries Electricity Systems Interconnection Project” which is an important phase in energy trade should be re-evaluated.

Esteemed Delegates,

As you all know the first target of the Millenium Development Goals is to better the human condition by halving the extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. The recent financial and food crises have increased the threat of hunger even more and carried the issue of food security on the top of the global agenda. The ECO Regional Food Safety Program is one of the major projects which has been developed in this aspect and is showing promise. Our country which is decisive in supporting all efforts regarding food safety on a global and regional scale is putting active effort into activating this program. If the member countries find it acceptable, our Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs proposed to undertake the coordination of the program. I believe that exerting efforts towards such an important goal is not only important to the people of the region but also

a requirement of our responsibility to the future generations. I request the member countries to support the project in this aspect.

An important sub component of the Regional Food Safety Program which is considered an integrated agricultural program consists of the Regional Seed Supply Enhancement. Within this component ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) which was inaugurated in the year 2009 shall undertake important responsibilities in the integration of the ECO region seed sector and efforts to encourage intra and extra-regional seed trade. In addition the first ECOSA International Seed Trade Conference which took place in 2009 and had the unique characteristic of being the most well attended trade conference in the history of ECO took place in Antalya and brought together private and public sector representatives in the seed area. I take the opportunity to extend an invitation to member country and private sector representatives to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Seed Trade Conference which shall be held in October in Istanbul.

While these developments in the agricultural areas in the ECO Region which holds a serious potential regarding climate conditions favorable to agriculture, plant, animal production and seed market rejoices us all it revives our hope for increased cooperation.

Another major issue in enhancing our economic and commercial cooperation is a joint standardization and perception of quality. Within this framework I wish to draw your attention to the Regional Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology Institute RISCAM which has reached the state of being established within the ECO. With the establishment of the institution important steps will have been taken to develop joint trade implementations within the region. In order to develop cooperation in this area and minimize the level of the effects of nontariff obstacles hindering our trade, I invite all member countries to sign and ratify the Statute of RISCAM.

Honorable Participants,

We must develop the activities of Directorate of Human Resources and Sustainable Development in order to empower our cooperation. The sustainability of the developments which are based on economical cooperation is directly correlated to the development provided for humanity. In this aspect, reaching the targets of ECO 2015 Vision and Millenium Development Goals successfully has major importance for our citizens. The development of health conditions, increasing employment opportunities, alleviating poverty, ensuring fair distribution of income and capacity development by cooperating more closely with international organizations is important for this reason.

I think it is important that ECO Member Countries who have prepared their Millenium Development Target reports present theirs reports for the benefit of all member countries as soon as possible. As you know our region is located on major drug trafficking route. For this reason I believe the initiatives of cooperation incepted by the ECO Drug Control Coordination Unit, D.O.C.C.U. for combating narcotics is important for our own nations as well as the nations of the world. Turkey will continue to share its experiences through TADOC our Academy for Combating against Drugs and Organized Crime

Esteemed Delegates,

As you know yesterday within the works for ECO Project Research, Economy Research and Statistics, a workshop titled “Short, Medium and Long Terms Effects of Global Financial Crisis on the Economies of ECO Member States” and “Meeting on Economy Research and Statistics Focal Points” were held. Various presentations were presented at the workshop while the Focal Points of countries came together to exchange viewpoints regarding application of the cooperation mechanism in the field of statistics and economy research. In the Planning Council works which are starting today, the issue of reconstruction of brotherly country of Afghanistan will be on the agenda.

It is clear that in order to be able to determine the most correct way possible which areas require the most cooperation is to have a good cooperation in the field of statistics. Within this scope it is gratifying to see the cooperation in the field of statistics implemented by ECO Cooperation Framework and National Statistics Offices Action Plan and ECO Economy Research Program in the economy research field.

Esteemed Guests,

There are also positive developments regarding ECO specialized institutions. The Culture Institute is growing rapidly, both in terms of space, and the quality and the quantity of its staff. Preparations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Institute are on the way. The necessary legal framework for the establishment of the ECO Institute of Education has been ensured and the preparations for the work center of the Institute, cadres, budgeting and work plans are carried out in coordination with the Ministry of National Education. The Institute is planning to hold its first Board of Trustees meeting next October. I hope these institutes shall start to work at full capacity in a short time and give enhanced meeting to our cooperation.

I believe it is necessary for ECO to reach a higher level of cooperation with other international organizations and agencies in our region.

Honorable Delegates,

Esteemed Guests,

While concluding my remarks, I would like to stress that Turkey will continue to provide increasing support to projects within the framework of ECO. The success of ECO will be the success of us all. In this aspect, I hope that the 20<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council Meeting will be a pivotal point. I wish you success in your works and a nice time in Antalya.