

**The 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)**

*(Tehran, 12-14 January 2009)*

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

*In the Name of God  
The Compassionate, the Merciful*

*Excellency, Secretary General  
Distinguished Deputy Ministers  
Esteemed Ambassadors of ECO Member States*

***Ladies and Gentlemen:***

It's a great honor that my country is hosting the distinguished Officials and Representatives from ECO Member States on the occasion of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council of ECO. I would like to extend a warm welcome to you and wish you a memorable and pleasant stay in the Islamic Republic of Iran. I hope the outcomes of your deliberations, negotiations and consultations, within this forum, can serve as the starting point for yielding useful results for our region in line with realization of ECO causes and objectives.

***Excellencies***

This year, the 19<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council is being organized while the Muslim and defenseless citizens of Gaza are under the grudge fire of the Zionist Regime whose leaders are shamelessly busy committing a genocide in Palestine. It's definitely impossible to commit such dreadful atrocities without the auspices and silence of the world dominant powers and their protégés and if Islamic Countries stand united and allied against this genocide, the occupant Zionist Regime will never be able to commit such brutality.

On the other hand, the current global economic critical situation, which is the consequence of incorrect programs and inappropriate performance of the industrial countries especially U.S and European ones, has faced developing countries and emerging economies with many challenges on the way to achieve economic development. Unreal prices for oil and raw materials, instability in production and supply and consequently economic recession in these countries, have led to reduction of demand and production prices which will be preceded by an unemployment crisis. The current crisis could definitely have more adverse effects on economy, environment and social situations of the world and if we fail to find solutions and strategies to counter its effects, we will also suffer from its consequences. We believe that ECO Regional Planning Council could provide strategies to combat this crisis through identifying its effects on the Member States.

Undoubtedly, counteracting such situation will be done more fruitfully and effectively through collective participation rather than individual involvement especially when we believe those western countries hit by the crisis do victimize countries with weaker economies in order to get rid of it and in fact the developing countries will be the real victims. Therefore, union and collaboration of countries will grant them the necessary potential and power to counteract such measures. ECO Member States could efficiently combat the adverse consequences of the global economic crisis through integrating capacities and facilities.

### ***Distinguished Guests***

Since past years ECO has taken concrete steps towards realization of its objectives and causes through establishing required bases for developing cooperation in various fields, signing numerous agreements in different sectors and establishing specialized regional institutes. Consolidating cooperation in three sectors of trade, transport and energy as well as developing cooperation with other international organizations are still among the priorities of ECO organization however setting objectives and providing strategies for realizing objectives may need to be reviewed and evaluated.

Developing intraregional trade aiming at improving welfare of people and developing transregional trade in order to achieve a remarkable share of the global trade for ECO Member States are still the challenges facing this Organization. Adopting appropriate strategies are of great importance in this regard. Developing trade requires establishing necessary legal grounds and providing supportive and securing mechanisms as well as providing banking, insurance and customs facilities to improve free inflow of capital, goods and services among Member States. Full cooperation among all Member States in ratifying and implementing ECOTA (Economic Cooperation Organization Trade Agreement), expediting the process of launching and recruiting staff for ECO Trade and Development Bank and providing facilities for issuing visa for businessmen of Member States are among the initiatives which should be given high priority.

The main issue regarding trade development is the partnership of the regional private sector in economic activities which should be included in ECO's agenda. This has always been emphasized by various meetings although what we have so far achieved are far from our expectations. Involvement of the private sector requires essential grounds to be established by governments, as well as establishing particular forums for consultation and constant contact among private sectors of Member States. ECO Chamber of Commerce has fortunately been established since past years as a club for traders and economic activists from ECO Member States and has had useful involvements. It is believed that if ECO Chamber of Commerce gains more impetus, it could play more useful role in intraregional trade.

### ***Distinguished Delegates***

One of the fundamental prerequisites for economic development and trade facilitation is establishing appropriate and effective infrastructures particularly for transport and communication areas which are of high importance due to the fact that 7 out of 10 ECO Member States are landlocked. Therefore studying and developing apposite plans as well as implementing adopted projects are necessary in this field. On the other hand, the issue of transit as a supplement to trade requires special attention,

and full implementation of ECO Transit Trade Framework Agreement as the facilitator in providing cargo transit and other services are especially significant in ECO Region.

In transport and communication sector, in addition to developing modern infrastructures for transport within the region, there are other important issues which have been included and emphasized in the ECO Vision such as developing and improving air and marine linkages among major ports and airports, developing multimodal transport network, improving postal services of the Member States which require more attention.

In agriculture sector, given the global price reduction for agricultural products which is partly resulted from employing modern and technologies like nanotechnology and biotechnology, ECO Member States won't succeed to have active role unless through evolving traditional methods and utilizing the experiences and facilities of other organizations and countries which possess the said technologies. Islamic Republic of Iran in recent years, having managed to take important steps in this direction, is ready to provide other countries of the region with these experiences. In this regard, cooperation with international organizations such as FAO and ICARDA (International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas) and other relevant ones in the field of seed modification and adopting effective techniques to efficiently utilize water resources are among the priorities of ECO.

Generating employment for increasing population is one of the main concerns for any country. Eco Member States are no exception. Therefore, approaching industry, as the most important sector contributing to generating employment, is inevitable. In this sector we ought to seek strategies and solutions which require little capital such as developing small and medium-seized businesses. In addition, if we fail to be concerned with current standards, in such competitive environment, we will definitely not be able to provide the required facilities for setting up such businesses; therefore standardization will provide the necessary facilities for intra and transregional trade, prolonging the existence of such businesses.

#### ***Distinguished Participants,***

Given the special geographical location, cultural integrity, historical commonalities and abundant natural resources, ECO Region has the potentials to develop into an important economic pole in order to play its full role in world trade and economy. Actualizing talents and capacities requires consultation, adopting a regional viewpoint, and coordination of national projects in line with regional cooperation. In conclusion, I hope the 19<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council could yield new initiatives and pragmatic, realistic plans for realization of prime objectives of this organization through your sincere consultations and negotiations so that the collective benefits could be provided; welfare of the people could be promoted and ECO could reach its apposite position in global economy and trade.

Once again I heartily welcome you and wish you success.

God bless you,