

The 17th RPC Meeting

Report

Tehran, February 19-22, 2007

1. The Seventeenth Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran, February 19-22, 2007. Preparatory/Review meetings were held on the sidelines.

2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan attended the inaugural session. The delegation of ECO Secretariat, led by Secretary General Khurshid Anwar, participated in the meeting. Also present in the meeting were representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and ECO's Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutes, including the ECO Cultural Institute and the ECO College of Insurance. The list of participants is placed at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

3. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Manuchehr Mottaki, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his inaugural address, the Honourable Minister emphasized the importance of regional economic cooperation and renewed Iran's commitment to ECO, its aims and objectives. The Minister mentioned the achievements that ECO had already made and its potential to make further gains in diverse fields. He stressed, in particular, the need to speed up progress in the fields of trade, transport, energy and industry. He called on member states to extend fullest cooperation to that end. A copy of the Foreign Minister's statement is attached at **Annex-II**.

4. The ECO Secretary General dwelt on the main activities of the organization during 2006, the progress made in some areas and the challenges still lying ahead in others. He mentioned important meetings held, decisions reached and follow-up taken. The organizational structure of ECOTDB had taken shape and the Bank would start regular operations from May 2007. TTFA became effective from May 2006 and TTCC held a useful meeting in September. Its subsidiary committees would meet shortly to carry forward transport cooperation. In the energy sector, feasibility study on interconnection of power systems was underway. He also touched on cooperation in the fields of industry and agriculture, the calendar of ECO events for 2007 as well as the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Secretary General urged the member states to expedite signing and ratifying ECO agreements. A copy of his statement is attached at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

5. H.E. Mr. Moustafa Sarmadi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the meeting. He chaired the first session of the Plenary. In his opening statement, Mr. Sarmadi welcomed the

participants and expressed his thanks to them for electing him as the Chairman of the RPC. He emphasized the importance of the meeting and the need for appropriate decisions to help promote economic cooperation among the member states.

6. The second and concluding session of the Plenary was chaired by H.E. Mr. Alireza Sheikh Attar, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his statement, he thanked the delegates for their active participation and valuable contribution during meetings of various Review Committees. He also thanked the ECO Secretary General and his staff for their efforts to organize the RPC meeting, arrange various meetings of the technical committees and prepare relevant documents. A copy of the Deputy Foreign Minister's statement is attached as ***Annex-IV***.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Council adopted the following agenda:-

1. Inauguration of the Meeting.
 - Inaugural statement of the high dignitary from Iran
 - Statement of the ECO Secretary General
2. Election of the Chairman.
3. Adoption of the Agenda.
4. Statements by the Heads of Delegation.
5. Consideration of the report of the Secretary General on ECO activities for 2006.
6. Reviewing progress of implementation of ECO's approved programmes of action and projects and consideration of the new programmes and projects for the year 2007 in the following areas:
 - Trade and Investment;
 - Transport & Communications;
 - Energy, Minerals and Environment;
 - Agriculture, Industry and Tourism;
 - Human Resources & Sustainable Development;
 - Project Research and Economic Research & Statistics;
 - Inter-Regional ECO Activities:
 - i. ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies
 - ii. International relations
7. Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2007-2008.
8. Preparation of Annual Economic Report of the ECO region.
9. Any other business.
10. Date and Venue of the next Meeting.
11. Adoption of the Report.
12. Vote of Thanks

Agenda Item No. 4

Statements by the Heads of Delegation

8. The heads of delegation made opening statements, outlining their countries' policies and views on the programmes and activities of the Organization. Copies of the statements are placed at ***Annex-V***.

Agenda Item No. 5

Consideration of the report of the Secretary General on ECO activities for 2006

9. The Secretary General's annual report to the Council on the activities of the Organization during 2006 had been circulated to member states vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. SG/17th RPC/2007/216 dated February 8, 2007.

10. The Council appreciated the comprehensive report and took note of the useful observations and suggestions reflected in the Working Papers prepared by different Directorates. These were discussed in detail in the sectoral review meetings.

Agenda Item No. 6

Reviewing progress on implementation of ECO's approved programmes of action and projects and consideration of the new programmes and projects for the year 2007 in the following areas:

- Trade and Investment;
- Transport & Communications;
- Energy, Minerals and Environment;
- Agriculture, Industry and Tourism;
- Human Resources & Sustainable Development;
- Project Research and Economic Research & Statistics;
- Inter-Regional ECO Activities:
 - i. ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies
 - ii. International relations

11. The sectoral preparatory/review meetings were presided over by representatives of different member states as shown below:

(a) Trade and Investment	-	H.E. Mr. S. Anjum Bashir Joint Secretary Ministry of Commerce The Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
(b) Transport and Communications	-	H.E. Eng. Bareyalea Hasam, Deputy Minister for Communication The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
(c) Energy, Minerals & Environment	-	H.E. Prof. Mahabbat Mammadov, Head of Supervision of Execution State & International Programme Department Ministry of Industry and Energy The Republic of Azerbaijan
(d) Agriculture, Industry & Tourism	-	H.E. Mr. Mohsen Shaterzadeh Deputy Minister of Industry and Mines The Islamic Republic of Iran.
(e) Human Resources & Sustainable Development	-	H.E. Dr. Cem Toker Deputy Undersecretary Ministry of Labor and Social Security The Republic of Turkey.
(f) Project and Economic Research & Statistics	-	H.E. Mr. Mojtaba Khalesi Director General of International Affairs Planning & Management Organization The Islamic Republic of Iran.
(g) Inter Regional ECO activities: (i) ECO Regional Institutions and	-	H.E. Mr. Sheharyar Khan, Joint Technological Advisor,

12. The Council dwelt at length on the programmes and proposals contained in the working papers prepared by the ECO Secretariat. These included status reports on the ECO Calendar of Events for 2006-2007, highlighting the progress made on the implementation of activities approved by the 16th COM meeting. The Council formulated recommendations with regard to ECO activities in 2007 and 2008.

13. The Council noted, with appreciation, the work of the Secretariat for implementation of the decisions of RPCs and other high level ECO organs as well as the ongoing Programmes/Projects and Calendar of Events for the year 2006. A brief resume, covering the main areas of activity, is given below:

(a) Trade and Investment

14. The Council called for finalization of the Draft Plan of Action for implementation of ECOTA within three months and stressed that the member states communicate their views on the subject Plan as early as possible. The Council welcomed the assurances of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey to ratify ECOTA by the end of May 2007. The Council requested other members to sign/ratify the Agreement at the earliest.

15. The Council urged the member states signatory to the Protocol for annexes of ECOTA on: (i) ECO Rules of Origin; (ii) Anti-Dumping Measures; (iii) State Aid; and (iv) Intellectual Property Rights (except Pakistan) to expedite the ratification process and stressed, in particular, that the Republic of Tajikistan, as the Contracting Party to ECOTA, to sign and ratify it by end of May 2007.

16. The Council recommended that while pursuing the ratification process of ECOTA, the interested member states may also continue negotiations on the draft protocol on fast track approach to ECOTA.

17. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Tajikistan to host a Workshop on Potential Benefits of ECOTA utilizing the ECO-SSF. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the meeting that in case the Republic of Tajikistan did not host the Workshop, they would be ready to host it in August 2007 back-to-back with the ECO Seminar on WTO.

18. In view of the elucidations of the 3rd HLEG meeting on compilation of annexes of ECOTA, the Council called on the member states to provide their sensitive list (except Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan).

19. The Council urged the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to announce within three months dates for the Fourth ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade preceded by the 5th Meeting of HLEG on Trade, Investment and Other Related Matters to be held in Kabul in 2007. Failing this, the matter would be referred to ECO Council of Permanent Representatives to decide about the host.

20. The Council urged the ECO Secretariat to expedite preparing a multi-dimensional regional trade and investment strategy, aimed at having a clear action plan and coherence in the trade and investment activities of the ECO region, as envisaged by the Istanbul Communiqué adopted during the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Trade, 7 July 2005. It also urged the member states to provide inputs for preparation of such a strategy. In

this regard, the Council welcomed the following proposal of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

"Intra-regional trade remains below potential, and does not compare favourably with other regions such as ASEAN and EU. Sub-regional trade, (for example, the Pakistan–Afghanistan trade), on the other hand, reflects some very positive trends. To boost trade at the regional level, there is a need to commission a study on trading patterns in the region (laws, practices, preferences, barriers to freer trade, etc). The study on ECO trading regimes would, inter-alia, identify sectors and commodities (other than energy, where benefits of trade are self-evident) for which markets exist in the Member States and where meaningful trade can take place based on complementarity and principles of comparative advantage. There is also a need to pinpoint trading practices and regimes that impede freer flow of goods at the regional level. The study may be conducted by a professional institution/consultant and can be financed out of the ECO Feasibility Study Fund".

21. The Council appreciated the progress made towards the establishment of the ECO Trade and Development Bank following the entry into force of the Articles of Agreement and requested the three signatory member states, namely Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, to continue with their support so that the Bank may become fully operational as soon as possible. The Council also encouraged the other member states to join the Bank.

22. The Council called on the three member states, namely Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to finalize the draft Articles of the Agreement for the establishment of ECO Reinsurance Company in the coming Meeting of the Trilateral Interim Committee to be held in Pakistan in May 2007. The Council also called on the respective countries to send their delegations to the meeting with full authority to finalize the agreement.

23. The Council appreciated the approval and signature of the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment in the ECO region (APPI) during the third ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade, 7 July 2005. Meanwhile, in view of the justification provided by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding amendment of the second paragraph of item (7) – Article (9) of the said Agreement, the Council requested the member states to intimate their views on the proposed substitution to the Secretariat at the earliest. The Council directed the Secretariat to bring the proposal to the HLEG to do the needful.

24. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the First Meeting of the Heads of Central Banks on 29-30 March 2007 and requested member states to actively participate in the meeting. It urged the Central Banks of the Member States to share information and experiences with each other.

25. The Council welcomed the confirmation of the exact dates by the Republic of Turkey to host the Second Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy on 5-7 April 2007 in Antalya, Turkey. The Council recommended that every effort should be made to fully utilize the forum to strengthen cooperation in the field of finance and economy. The Council requested the member states to actively participate in the meeting.

26. The Council welcomed the establishment of the High Level Experts Group (HLEG) comprising the officials (focal points) of the Ministries of Finance/Economy and regulatory agencies of the member states and appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the first meeting of HLEG on Finance/Economy on the sidelines of the Ministerial Meeting.

27. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to hold the ECO Trade Fair tentatively in November/December 2007 provided that it did not coincide with the schedule of general elections in Pakistan. The Council observed that the ECO Trade Fair should be held on regular and rotational basis each year preferably with some major ECO activity.

28. The Council recognized that the involvement of the private sector in trade and economic promotion activities would boost economic cooperation among the member states. It further emphasized that organization of Business Forum be institutionalized as a mechanism for the improvement of relations among the private sectors of the member states. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 2nd Business Forum in the framework of the 2nd Phase of ECO-ITC Joint Project on expanding intra-regional trade.

29. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 8th General Assembly meeting of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) in October 2007, to finalize the statute, implementation of the action plan of the ECO-CCI and decide about the location of its permanent Secretariat. The Council recommended that the 11th Executive Committee meeting of ECO-CCI be held on the sidelines of the 8th General Assembly meeting of ECO-CCI.

30. The Council took note of the Draft Action Plan and supplementary time-frame prepared by the Iranian Chamber of Commerce for the next ten years activities of the ECO-CCI and hoped for its early finalization and approval by the 8th ECO-CCI General Assembly.

31. The Council welcomed the initiative of the ECO Secretariat for drafting Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation between ECO-CCI and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI). The MOU could finally be approved by the 8th General Assembly of ECO-CCI.

32. The Council thanked the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 5th meeting of the ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) and the 1st meeting of Sub Committee of Experts held on July 3-5, 2006 in Istanbul and noted with appreciation the signing of the Agreement on establishment and operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank by the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Tajikistan. The Council urged the signatory member states to ratify the agreement and other members to sign and ratify it. The Republic of Turkey was requested to initiate an action plan for early implementation of the agreement.

33. The Council appreciated the prioritization of the recommendations of the UNDP Consultant Report on Simplification and Harmonization of customs rules and procedures of the ECO member states by the Sub Committee of Experts, and appreciated the announcement of the Republic of Turkey to hold the 2nd meeting of the Sub Committee to finalize the Draft ECO Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters in the second half of 2007. Exact dates would be conveyed in due course.

34. The Council urged the member states, except Azerbaijan, to provide details of training courses to be offered to customs officials of ECO member states and also called on all member states who have expertise in that field to arrange such training/orientation courses on regular basis to facilitate exchange of information and expertise.

35. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran as the coordinating country for preparation of an action plan and the protocol on simplification of visa procedures for the businessmen of ECO region and urged member states to send their inputs/views to the Secretariat at the earliest enabling the coordinating country to start implementation of

the project. The Council thanked the Member States who have already nominated their National Focal Points for setting up a network of the Focal Points for early implementation of the Agreement on Simplification of Visa for the Businessmen of ECO region and urged the remaining Member States to nominate their NFPs at the earliest.

36. The Council recommended to the member states to host the 2nd EGM to revise the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Businessmen of the ECO Member States. In case no member state expressed readiness to host it, the meeting should be held at the ECO Secretariat.

37. The Council noted the vital importance of the exchange of trade related information among the ECO member states and urged them to encourage e-commerce and extend technical cooperation in building up their web-portals and accessibility to the ECO market through e-commerce and e-business. The Council advised the Secretariat to expedite activation of Trade-Net.

38. The Council urged the member states to expedite submission of their data/information on trade values and trade figures on the major commodities actually traded in the region as well as their trade regimes, rules and regulations as also other relevant information for the improvement of ECO Trade-Net website. It also urged the member states to intimate contact details of their updated national focal point(s) for this purpose. The Council suggested to ECO Secretariat to appoint a company to re-activate/operationalize the ECO Trade-Net keeping in view the principles of transparency.

39. While welcoming the allocation of US\$ 50,000/- from the ECO Feasibility Study Fund (FSF), the Council urged the ECO Secretariat to commence the 2nd Phase of the ECO/ITC project as soon as possible with technical and financial support from ITC. The Council appreciated that the Republic of Turkey had already allocated US\$150,000/- for organizing buyers/sellers meeting in 2007 in Turkey and preparation of feasibility studies in surveying trade potentials in the region in food and construction sectors.

40. The Council noted with satisfaction ECO's growing relations with ITC and other regional/international development organizations, institutions, and agencies to benefit from their experience and expertise and to secure technical and financial support for ECO's projects and programmes. The Council advised the Secretariat to initiate viable and sound projects with these institutions, particularly with WCO to arrange joint workshops on customs challenges of ECO countries and seek technical and financial support. The Council also noted with satisfaction the implementation of the project by Turkey in 2007.

41. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to come up with concrete and detailed proposals on cooperation in various cooperative sectors to be circulated to member states for their views.

(b) Transport & Communications

42. Based on the decisions of the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport & Communications (Tehran, April 2006) about the time span of the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport & Communications, which ends in 2007, the meeting supported the proposal to establish a High Level Expert Group to prepare the 2nd phase of the programme. The Meeting emphasized that the extended/revised programme should give high priority to implementation of the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA). The Secretariat would request the Member States through diplomatic channels to host the HLEG meeting, preferably in the first half of 2007. In case there was no host, the Secretariat would hold the meeting at its headquarters on non hospitality basis.

43. The Meeting requested the Member States to convey to the Secretariat their national reports about progress on the implementation of the Program of Action, and implementation of the TTFA, not later than April 30, 2007. Based on the country reports, the Secretariat shall prepare a consolidated report to be submitted to the HLEG meeting. The Member States who have already sent the reports were requested to update them. The Meeting appreciated the briefings on the important national projects and activities by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in implementation of the above programme.

44. The Meeting welcomed the completion of the Gwader Port of Pakistan, as well as Bafgh-Mashad, Kerman-Bam Railway Projects, Tehran-Qazvin-Zanjan-Tabriz Freeway, the progress on Bam-Zahedan Railway, Tabriz-Bazargan Freeway of Iran, Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) rail branches and Bilesuvar (Azerbaijan)-border of Iran road project.. Turkey informed the Meeting that work on the implementation projects, feasibility study and environmental impact assessment of the Kars-Aktash railway project had been completed in 2006. The construction works of this project would start within 2007.

45. The Meeting also requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with national reports on new strategies and priority projects on Transport & Communications, to be considered in the 2nd phase of the Programme of Action. The reports should reach the Secretariat one month before the HLEG.

46. The meeting expressed satisfaction at the entry into force of the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) from 19th May, 2006. Turkey informed the Meeting that the TTFA was at the final stage of ratification in the Turkish Parliament. The Meeting requested the Republic of Uzbekistan to sign/ratify and Turkmenistan to ratify the Agreement. The Meeting also reiterated the importance of TTCC as the implementing body of the TTFA and urged all the Member States to ensure the participation of their permanent representatives in its 2nd Meeting. The date and venue would be agreed by Member States through the Secretariat.

47. The Meeting appreciated the offers of Turkey, Pakistan and Iran to host the 1st Meeting of the Railway, Legal, and Insurance Committees of the TTCC on 14-15 March, 2007, 28-29 March, and 29-30 May, respectively. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to utilize SSF Fund to cover the cost of air tickets for those meetings. The Meeting also requested the other Member States to consider hosting the 1st Meeting of the Road Committee in the first half of 2007. The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat refer issues relating to custom activities envisaged in the TTFA (including provision of a mechanism for guaranteeing associations) to the Council of the Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) as well. The CHCA may keep the implementation of the TTFA on the agenda of all its meetings and come up with recommendations to the TTCC in this regard.

48. The Meeting underscored the need for effective measures to ensure speedy implementation of the TTFA, which required more resources, both technical and financial. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to explore all avenues of putting the TTFA on a faster track.

49. The Meeting welcomed the Secretariat's proposal to establish a Fund for implementation of the TTFA, mobilizing resources from, *inter alia*, the ECO Feasibility Fund, international organizations/donors, voluntary contributions of the Member States, the private sector, the ECO Trade and Development Bank, etc. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to prepare modalities and ToR of the above Fund and submit those to the 2nd Meeting of the TTCC for consideration.

50. The meeting noted with appreciation the publication of the final version of the ECO Railway Network Map by the concerned Iranian authorities in May 2006. The concerned Iranian authorities were requested to kindly provide the Member States with digital format of the map and its printouts in different sizes if possible.

51. As regards the ECO Road Network Map, Iran stated that the revised maps had been received from some Member States and the final draft would be sent to them shortly for review. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to circulate the revised map on receipt from Iran, and the Member States to convey to the Secretariat their comments within three months. After including the comments received within the deadline, Iran would issue the final version of the map. On the ECO Road Directory, the meeting requested the Member States who had not yet returned the questionnaire prepared by Turkey, to send it duly completed, to the Secretariat within three months. Those Member States who had already sent the questionnaire were requested to update it and send both, the electronic and printed versions, to the Secretariat within the same deadline.

52. The Meeting welcomed the idea of organizing the second meeting of the Heads of Civil Aviations/National Airlines to consider, *inter alia*, the draft agreement prepared by Kazakhstan, Turkey and Pakistan. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to correspond with Member States to consider hosting it. Turkey informed the Meeting that they were continuing studies to prepare Turkish draft Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Air Transport and would send it to the Secretariat by mid-April 2007.

53. The Meeting took note of the successful holding the 3rd Meeting of the Heads of Reference Marine Organizations of ECO Member States in January 16-18, 2007, in Karachi and welcomed the offer of Iran to host the 4th Meeting in 2008, and the 1st Meeting of the Committee on Harmonization of Marine Tariffs on 24-26 April 2007. The meeting also appreciated the efforts of the concerned Turkish authorities to set up the ECO Marine Website in the 1st half of 2007.

54. The meeting welcomed the recommendations of the private sector group which met on the sidelines of the 3rd Meeting of the Heads of Reference Marine Organizations in Karachi, and requested the Secretariat to follow up the establishment of ECO Federation of the Transport Associations of Member States and the ECO Transport Club in Tehran in 2007. The experience of establishing ECO Transport Club in Tehran may be used later to set up similar clubs in other Member States. The Meeting also, requested the Secretariat to work out an agreed mechanism for the private sectors participation in all relevant ECO activities.

55. The meeting also appreciated the offer of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to organize training courses in the field of marine transport and requested them to send their educational programs to the Secretariat at the earliest. With regard to the establishment of an ECO contact group in IMO Headquarters, Iran and Turkey were requested to follow-up this proposal through their permanent representatives to IMO and inform the Secretariat as early as possible. The Meeting welcomed the offer of Azerbaijan to provide training facilities on maritime transport to the Member States.

56. Taking note of the decisions of the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communication (April 2006-Tehran), the 8th Meeting of the Heads of Railway Administration of the ECO Member States (2004) and the 1st Meeting of the Working Group for Implementation of Trans-Asian Railway Mainline Project (June 2005) for the smooth running of the ECO Container and Passenger Trains, the Meeting reiterated the significance of the project and requested the Member States for speedy follow up action on the decisions of those meetings.

57. The Meeting appreciated the launching of the joint mission of the Secretariat and Islamic Republic of Iran to Uzbekistan, and the positive approach of the Uzbek authorities to solving the problems impeding regular movement of the Container and Passenger Trains. The meeting urged Iran and the Secretariat to launch a joint mission to Turkmenistan before the Second Working Group Meeting scheduled for May 2007 in Kazakhstan and requested the Turkmen authorities to facilitate receiving the joint Mission to discuss ways for smooth functioning of the trains.

58. Iran and Turkey briefed the Meeting on effort to increase the speed of the Almaty-Istanbul train within their respective territories. Iran also offered to cooperate with Member States in developing a timetable, improving custom facilities, rules and regulations, tariffs, reducing extra stops, electronic data exchange in land and sea ports, installation of the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS), software connection of the border stations, increasing freight forwarders and promoting the participation of the private sector, and operationalization of the passenger route.

59. The meeting took note of the briefing by the Turkish delegation regarding the latest development on the establishment of computer connection between Kapikoy (Turkey) and Razi (Iran) borders Stations.

60. Taking into consideration the decisions of the 1st Working Group Meeting to fine-tune Draft Action Plan for revitalizing and operating the China Middle-East- Europe Corridor (May 2004, Tehran) and highlighting the significance of the timely finalization and implementation of the Action Plan on China-Middle East-Europe Corridor, requested the Member States (except Pakistan and Turkey) to send their views on the action plan to the Secretariat before the 9th Meeting of the Heads of Railways Authorities (Kazakhstan, May 2007). The Meeting asked the Secretariat to contact the Chinese authorities and convey the decisions of the Heads of Railways Authorities and the abovementioned Working Group to them.

61. The meeting appreciated the offer of Kazakhstan to host the 9th Meeting of the Heads of Railways authorities of Member States and the 2nd Meeting of the Working Group for Implementation of Trans-Asian Railway Mainline Project in May 2007. Exact dates and venue would be indicated by Kazakhstan. The Member States were requested to confirm their participation.

62. The meeting considered the status of the implementation of MoUs signed between ECO and other international/regional organizations i.e. UNESCAP, UNCTAD, UNDP, IDB, UIC, IRU, OSJD and noted with appreciation the successful completion of the First Phase of the joint ECO/IDB/UNCTAD project on Multimodal Transport. The Meeting requested the Member States, namely Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, which had already introduced their National Consultants for the Second Phase of the Project, to submit their country reports at the earliest and those Member States (Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) who had not yet nominated their National Consultants to do so at the earliest. This would enable the Secretariat to initiate the second phase of the project by organizing a second workshop in April 2007 in Tehran.

63. The meeting appreciated the active participation of the ECO Secretariat in the UN-ESCAP Regional Workshop on Inter-modal Transport in December 2006 in Tehran and took note of the project proposal of the Research Institute for Transport and Communications (NIITK) of Kazakhstan on transport routes from SPECA Countries to ECO ports, which may be supported by Kazakhstan, Iran, IDB, ECO and other interested countries and international/regional organizations.

64. Cognizant of the role of Logistic Centres/Dry Ports in facilitating transit transport, the Meeting requested the Member States who had successful experiences in establishing such facilities to share their experience with other Member States. The meeting also supported the idea of studying the possibilities of establishment/development of Logistic Centres /Dry Ports in the Member States.

65. The meeting recommended that the Secretariat further intensify efforts to develop/enhance its relations with other relevant regional/international organizations that it had signed MoUs with.

66. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the considerable decrease in interruptions in TAEFOS communications and the consequent improvement in the quality of signals in the region, alongside the efforts of Iran to extend the fibre cable to the border of Nakhjavan, as recommended by the 6th ECO Meeting of the Ministers of Transport and Communications. The Meeting requested Pakistan to follow up the extension of the fibre cable network to neighbouring ECO Member States. The Meeting was pleased to be informed by Afghanistan that the fibre cable connection from Kabul to Peshawar would be completed within two years. The Turkish delegation informed the meeting that the planning of a new connection to Azerbaijan was under way. It would constitute a new connection to TAEFOS.

67. The meeting welcomed with appreciation the offer of Iran to host the 14th Meeting of the Directors General of Telecommunications Companies and the 5th Meeting of TAEFOS on 20-23 May 2007 in Tehran. With regard to the possibility of video conferences among the Telecommunication Officials of Member States, the Meeting appreciated Iran's offer to take the initiative to study the practicability of this proposal in terms of technical capacities of the Member States.

68. The Meeting requested the Member States who had not yet provided the Secretariat with the completed Performa on transit tariffs (the template prepared by Kazakhstan), to do so by the end of March 2007.

69. The Meeting while appreciating Iran for establishing the ECO postal website requested all Member States to upload their information on postal activities and updated list of postal products and technologies in the said website. The meeting also appreciated Pakistan for designating its postal training centre as permanent training centre for ECO postal trainees. Pakistan offered training courses in Information Technology, Commercial Accounting, Costing and Postal Rate Fixing, Leadership, Managerial Competencies and Effective Delegating Skills, and Human Resources Development. Details of the training courses are available on the website, www.psc.edu.pk.

70. The Meeting took note of the invitation extended to the Member States to join the Euro-Asia Postal Union, established in 2001 by the postal administrations of Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey.

71. Welcoming the offer of Azerbaijan to host the 4th Meeting of the ECO Postal Authorities in October 2007 in Baku, the meeting requested those Member States who had not yet completed the two questionnaires on "Postal Financial Services and Cost Accounting" and "Corporatization, Commercialization, Liberalization and Privatization" to do so and send them to Secretariat at the earliest.

(c) Energy, Minerals & Environment

Energy

72. The Council, on being briefed about the progress of feasibility study on interconnection of power systems of ECO member states, noted that the Consultant had so far received and processed the requisite data for Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey. The Council emphasized that the delay was seriously hampering this important regional study and urged the remaining member states to provide the data to the Consultant by end of May 2007. It recommended that, after that date, the Consultant may prepare an Inception Report by utilizing whatever data was received from member states.

73. In order to speed up collection of necessary data, the Consultant, M/s NESPAK and its partner from the Kyrgyz Technical University, were advised to visit Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan without further delay. In this respect, the Council requested the concerned authorities of those states to extend utmost cooperation to the Consultant's team, and confirm early dates for their visits. Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were also urged to nominate their focal points for the study, and inform the Secretariat on priority basis.

74. The Council welcomed the decision of the 119th meeting of CPR, held on 26 December 2006, about the designation of Pakistan as the coordinating country for the interconnection of power systems and expressed its confidence that the concerned authorities of Pakistan (Ministry of Water and Power) in close cooperation with the Consultant, the ECO Secretariat and the member states would facilitate finalization of the feasibility study, as scheduled, by early 2008. As a practical measure, the Council called for holding the 7th SETG Meeting on Power to also review progress on the feasibility study.

75. With reference to paras 82-84 of the 16th RPC meeting Report, the Council took note of the recent collaboration of the Secretariat with the World Bank (WB) on pursuing the regional energy trade issues, including further analytical study for the ECO region. The Council appreciated the cooperation extended by the WB in the implementation of the first step of the analytical study, which would be finalized during the next few months, under ESMAP financing. The WB's readiness to discuss the outcome of the above study and other related issues in a joint ECO-WB Workshop during the year 2007, was also welcomed.

76. Taking note that five member states, namely Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey had already nominated their officials as members of ECO/WB Advisory Working Group (AWG) to discuss and advise on further analytical studies relating to Energy Trade issues, the Council requested the remaining member states to expedite their nominations and convey these to the Secretariat before 1 April 2007.

77. With regard to drafting a Plan of Action for Energy/Petroleum Cooperation in the ECO region for another 5-year period, the Council agreed that the existing Plan of Action, which was adopted by the 1st ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum, be treated as a rolling Plan, and extended it up to the year 2010. Meanwhile, the Council noted the comments from the concerned authorities of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Turkey, and requested the Secretariat to continue its consultation with the member states so as to prepare the case for decision by the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum.

78. The Council noted that, since 2002, Turkey's National Energy Conservation Center (NECC) had hosted five International Practical Training Courses on Energy Efficiency and Conservations for Energy specialists with the participation of 22 engineers from the ECO Member States. (The last Course was conducted in June 2006). While appreciating this valuable contribution, the Council welcomed Turkey's willingness to continue that cooperation, and conduct another Training Course during the year 2007 in

Ankara. The Council requested other member states to submit proposals to expand cooperation in this sector.

79. The Council informed that the Republic of Turkey had declared its candidacy to host the 20th World Petroleum Congress (WPC) in 2011 in Istanbul. The delegation of Turkey expressed its expectation to receive the support of the ECO member states, namely Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Uzbekistan which are members of WPC. Besides, the delegation of Turkey would like to invite the remaining ECO member states to accede to WPC which has currently 61 members.

80. With reference to para 85 of the 16th RPC meeting Report, the Council was informed that so far only Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey had conveyed information about their Oil and Gas sectors on the prescribed format, for placement on the ECO Web-site, as recommended by the 4th HLETG meeting. It requested other member states to do the same by 1st May 2007. After that date, the Secretariat may place the relevant data on the ECO Web-site. Public international sources might be used to collect the remaining information.

81. The Council welcomed the readiness of the concerned Iranian authorities to host the 1st meeting of the ECO Working Group on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and recommended to include, in the Agenda of the meeting, among other issues, consideration of the project proposal for a study on the "Development of ECO countries manufacturing capabilities of the equipment used for New and Renewable Energies". The Council also welcomed Pakistan's willingness to hold a seminar on this subject in the last quarter of 2007.

Minerals

82. The Council endorsed the Report of the 3rd ECO Mineral Experts Group Meeting held on December 20-21, 2006 in Islamabad, in which progress on previous decisions was reviewed and new proposals for cooperation in the field of Minerals were discussed.

83. The Council appreciated the work done by the Project Manager (Turkey) for issuing the first version of ECO Mineral Data Booklet (MDB), which was published in accordance with the recommendation of the 16th RPC meeting containing mineral data of four member states, Turkey, Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, and requested that a revised edition of the booklet be published with the inclusion of data from other member states, including Iran, as per agreed format, whenever the number of countries that conveyed their data reaches at least to seven.

84. The Council took note of the designation of the Geological Survey of Iran as the Project Manager for the implementation of projects on establishing a web-based system of unified and valid "Geosciences Database (GD)" and compilation of Mineral Distribution Map of ECO region. The Council noted that Feasibility Study on establishing on-line Dynamic and Multipurpose Mineral Data Bank had also been included in the said GD. It requested the Project Manager to develop necessary digital formats for collecting the requisite data from the member states, and convey it to the Secretariat. In order to obtain partial financing from the ECO Feasibility Fund, the Project Manager was requested to prepare, in coordination with the ECO Secretariat, appropriate project proposals to utilize the said Fund subject to the approval of CPR.

85. The Council noted, with appreciation, the readiness of Iran to host a meeting of the Heads of Geological Survey of member states in May 2007 for consideration of the format of the aforesaid Mineral Distribution Map and to conduct a Training Course for experts who would be involved in the preparation of Geosciences Database. In this connection, the Council requested the concerned authorities of the member states to take active part in the proposed events and extend their utmost cooperation in compiling

necessary data, as per agreed format, to the Project Manager (Iran) by the end of September 2007.

Environment

86. The Council welcomed the outcome of the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment held on 30 June 2006 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and emphasized implementation of the Plan of Action for cooperation among ECO member states. The Council took note of the decision of the Ministerial Meeting for the extension of the term of the above Plan of Action up to the year 2010 and requested the member states to continue implementing it with the new activities proposed by them.

87. The Council took note of the creation of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology for ECO region, with the provisional discharge of its functions for the next four years, on a project basis, by the existing College of Environment in Tehran. It also took note of the decision of the 120th CPR meeting to establish a Panel, comprising the Head of the Department of Environment of Iran or his/her representative, the Chairman of the CPR, the Permanent Representative of Iran and the ECO Secretary General, to formulate Modality for selection of the President of the Institute, to review the nomination(s) for that post and to submit these to the CPR. The Council emphasized that the modalities for the establishment of ECO regional centres which are already on the agenda of the CPR should be followed for the establishment and functioning of this Institute.

88. In order to study the potential existing in the region to develop Ecotourism and work out a regional program for cooperation in this field, the Council recommended the establishment of a Task Force comprising interested ECO member states. It welcomed the proposal of Iran to host the first meeting of that Task Force and the readiness of Turkey to organize a "Seminar on Ecotourism" in May 2007.

89. While welcoming the offer of Pakistan to host the First ECO Experts Group Meeting in Islamabad on 24-25 April 2007 to deliberate and finalize a Work Plan on Biodiversity, the Council urged the concerned authorities in the member states to actively participate in the meeting. In particular, they were requested to consider the draft Work Plan on Biodiversity, which was developed by the Secretariat in cooperation with the host authorities in Pakistan and circulated to member states together with the draft Agenda of the said meeting vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. EME/ENV/ Biodiversity/ 2006/1944 dated 21 November 2006, and provide the Secretariat with their views before or during the proposed meeting.

90. With regard to the ECO Quarterly Bulletin on Environment, the first 4 issues of which were published by the Secretariat during the years 2004-2006, the Council appreciated that as per request of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Environment, the Secretariat made an estimate of the cost of the publication of the next four issues of the Bulletin and included it in the ECO annual budget for 2007, which was approved by the 120th CPR meeting. Accordingly, the Council requested all member states to submit relevant material/articles for the Bulletin on regular basis.

91. The Council was also informed that the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, taking into account the experience of the previous years, agreed that the National Progress Report (NPR) of the member states on the implementation of the Plan of Action for cooperation among them would be submitted, in the beginning of each year, on the agreed format. Therefore, the member states were again requested to submit their NPR's on time, in the first half of 2007, enabling the Secretariat to prepare an integrated report for circulation to member states and to submit subsequently to the next Ministerial Meeting on Environment.

92. The Council took note of the Report of the 4th meeting of ECO Working Group on Environment (WGE), which was held on 21-22 May 2006 in Tehran, at the ECO Secretariat, as well as the outcome of the Training Courses on familiarization with the ISO 14000 and Environmental Management System (EMS) hosted by Iran on 23-24 May 2006, back to back with the above WGE meeting.

93. Bearing in mind that the first four meetings of the above-mentioned ECO Working Group on Environment were held during the years 2004-2006 in Ankara, Islamabad and Tehran (twice), the Council suggested that the next (5th) meeting of WGE be hosted by one of the remaining member states. They may offer to host it during the first half of 2007, and in any case not later than the close of that year, in order to consider developments in different fields of Environment, proposals of member states and other related issues before the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment scheduled for the second quarter of 2008 in Pakistan.

94. The Council took note of the Iranian project proposals for cooperation in the field of Environment, which had been forwarded to member states vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No.EME/ENV/HES/057 dated 10 January 2007, and requested the member states to let the Secretariat have their views at the earliest so that these could be reviewed before the 5th meeting of WGE by the end of June 2007.

(d) Agriculture, Industry and Tourism

Agriculture

95. The Council expressed appreciation for the Republic of Turkey for its readiness to host the Donor's Conference in the fourth quarter of 2007 or early 2008 to raise funds for the regional projects prepared by FAO under ECO-RPFS, and thanked FAO for offering to provide necessary support for the successful conduct of the Conference. The Council called on the Member States to actively participate in the Conference and extend necessary support to it. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to actively pursue, in coordination with the host country and other member states, IDB's financial assistance for the conference. The Council called on member states to enhance their capacity to fully utilize the financial assistance of international donor organizations for Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS).

96. The Council expressed its thanks to FAO Headquarters and its Near East Office for preparing ten national projects for the Member States, and to IDB for its generous pledge of US\$2.5 million for them. The Council called on Member States to approach the IDB to secure finances for their national projects so they would be eligible to benefit from IDB's assistance for the second package next year. The Council appreciated the member states, FAO and IDB for identifying the new national projects in 2007 and called on the member states that have not yet done so, FAO and IDB, to intensify efforts to identify projects .

97. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the ongoing FAO-ECO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on strengthening seed supply in the Region and appreciated the financial assistance of FAO, and the technical assistance of ICARDA and UPOV. FAO and ECO made financial contributions of US\$365000 and US\$35000-40000, respectively. The Council noted with appreciation the successful holding of the 1st Workshop on Seed Regulations Harmonization in Islamabad on January 17-19, 2007.

98. The Council noted that the 1st ECO Regional Seed Conference and Trade Exhibition scheduled for May 2008 would be encouraging for the private/public seed companies/associations as well as the manufacturers/suppliers of seed equipment & agricultural machinery and input suppliers to promote inter and intra-regional seed trade.

99. The Council noted that some of the member states had not yet submitted the information on the prescribed questionnaires on seed industry, variety release and quarantine/ phyto-sanitary measures and national seed policies and laws/regulations. The Council requested the national focal points to send the requisite documents to the Secretariat within two months to facilitate studies/analysis.

100. The Council urged the Member States to ensure a prompt and effective communication with ECO Secretariat, FAO, and ICARDA through their national focal points for the TCP on Strengthening the Seed Supply for an efficient and fruitful implementation of the TCP. The Council requested Turkmenistan to expedite designating its national focal point.

101. The Council noted with appreciation that ECO-FAO-IDB Workshop on Water Demand Management was successfully held in Islamabad in November 2006 and thanked IDB for its generous financial assistance, FAO for its technical assistance, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the workshop. The Council noted that the workshop came up with concrete recommendations, including the establishment of "ECO Regional Water Management Centre," in agriculture sector and decided to submit them to the 3rd Ministerial meeting on Agriculture for endorsement.

102. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the coordinator country in the field of drought management, for hosting the 1st Meeting of Heads of ECO Meteorological Organizations on 25 August/10 September 2007 to finalize the draft ECO Regional Program for Establishment of Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO – RCRMOND).

103. The Council considered the draft document on the establishment of the Association of ECO Permanent Commission for Prevention and Control of Animal Diseases and Animal Origin Food Borne Diseases (ECO-PCPCAD). The Council requested the member states to convey their comments on the draft at the earliest and decided to submit the issue to the SOM scheduled for March 5-6, 2007 in Tehran for consideration.

104. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the coordinator country on livestock and veterinary, for conducting a study for "Assessment of Animal Production in the ECO Region" and requested Iran to convey to the ECO Secretariat a proposal for circulation among member states and also requested the member states to send their comments on it expeditiously. The Council stated that thereafter the CPR may consider the issue in the light of the views of the member states and allocate an appropriate amount for it from the ECO Feasibility Fund.

105. The Council welcomed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the Second Meeting of National Focal Points of ECO Agricultural Biotechnology Network in 2007. The Council requested the National Focal Points of Turkey and Pakistan to prepare draft Plan of Action for development/harmonization of bio-safety regulations and send regional information related to Intellectual Property Rights in biotechnology, respectively, which would help the establishment of ECO-ABN.

106. The Council took note of the offer of Islamic Republic of Iran on establishment of the ECO Agricultural Policy and Economic Research Centre and requested it to

prepare a project proposal for circulation among the member states for their views/comments.

107. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey for hosting Workshops on "Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development" and "Competitiveness, Trade and WTO" and thanked IDB for its generous financial contributions to them.

108. The Council supported, in principle, the utilization of the ECO Feasibility Fund for three projects in the fields of drought management: establishment of Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters, prevention of post-harvest crop losses and water demand management for agriculture, being priority areas for ECO agricultural cooperation. In this regard, the Council requested the CPR to consider positively the allocation of US\$50,000/- for each project from Feasibility Fund to start regional programmes / projects in these areas.

109. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Second SOM and the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture scheduled for 5-7 March 2007 in Tehran. The Council requested the member states to participate in these important meetings at the highest possible level.

110. The Council appreciated the offers of the member states for hosting several events as indicated in the Calendar of Events and requested their active participation in them.

Industry

111. The Council noted with appreciation the adoption of the Lahore Declaration and the decisions taken by the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry held in Lahore on November 30, 2006.

112. The Council noted with satisfaction that the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Industry approved the ECO Regional Strategy on Industrial Cooperation, the Plans of Action on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Industrial Property Rights and the Establishment of Technology Transfer Center and called on Member States and their concerned institutions to come up with concrete project proposals for their implementation.

113. The Council also appreciated the decision of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting, resolving the issue of location of the RISCAM headquarters and the locations of the Secretariats of its Technical Management Boards.

114. The Council noted with satisfaction that the Task Force established by the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Industry had finalized the Statute of RISCAM with one pending issue relating to the interpretation of Article 5.4.1.10 of the Statute. The Council decided to submit the Statute to the 17th COM for approval and the aforementioned pending issue for final resolution.

115. The Council requested the CPR to work with the ECO Secretariat on a road map on the implementation of the Statute in line with the basic elements drawn up by the Task Force to be adopted by the COM. The Council also recommended to the ECO Secretariat to act as the provisional Central Secretariat of RISCAM for the provisional implementation of its Statute after it had been approved by the COM.

116. The Council recommended that the ECO Feasibility Fund be utilized for conducting studies and preparing necessary documents of RISCAM such as Rules of

Procedure, Staff and Financial Regulations. A Steering Committee comprising the ECO Secretariat and Member States that signed the RISCAM Statute would coordinate these activities.

117. The Council while appreciating the efforts of the member states to set up RISCAM, requested them to further cooperate in efficient implementation of the ECO Strategy on Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology through a mechanism mentioned in the strategy document.

118. The Meeting appreciated the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the Second Meeting of the ECO Heads of Privatization Administration and 1st Meeting of HLEG on Privatization and Private Sector Development scheduled for 10-12 April 2007 in Islamabad and called for the active participation of the member states. The Council requested the CPR to consider defraying the cost of air tickets of delegates from member states from the SSF.

119. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the first Steering Committee meeting in the first half of September 2007. The Steering Committee was established for the implementation of the Plan of Action on SMEs.

120. The Council requested the Member States (except the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey) to nominate Focal Points on Technology Transfer and Management, preferably with close ties with manufacturing sector. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the first meeting of the Permanent Committee in September 2007. The Committee was established under the Plan of Action for its implementation.

121. The Council also appreciated the decision of the 3rd Ministerial Meeting to contribute more actively to the reconstruction of Afghanistan through ECO programmes as well as through bilateral projects in the field of industry, especially Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, minerals, oil and gas involving the private sector. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to come up with proposals to benefit fully from the assistance extended by the member states.

122. The Council welcomed the establishment of an online working group by the 3rd Ministerial Meeting comprising the interested member states and utilizing the facilities of the ECO Secretariat to follow preparation of ECO Model for industrial sub sector strategy and present the outcome to the next HLEG meeting for consideration.

123. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 1st Coordination Committee Meeting on Industrial Property Rights in 2007 and to prepare the questionnaire and requested it to specify the exact dates of the meeting in consultation with the ECO Secretariat and to complete preparing the questionnaire.

124. The Council requested the Secretariat to continue its efforts to enhance cooperation with the international industrial organizations including UNIDO for holding workshops on technology management.

125. The Council took note of the offer of Islamic Republic of Iran regarding establishment of Nano-Technological Networks and requested it to prepare a project proposal for circulation among member states for their views and comments.

126. The Council took note of the proposal of the Republic of Tajikistan regarding initiating industrial production fairs among ECO Member States and requested it to prepare a project proposal for circulation among them for their views/comments.

127. The Council requested the Republic of Kazakhstan to kindly expedite announcing the exact dates for hosting the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting and 3rd HLEG on Industry in 2007.

128. The Council appreciated the offers of the member states for hosting the events as indicated in the Calendar of Events and requested their active participation in them.

Tourism

129. The Council expressed its thanks to the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 1st High Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Tourism on 11-13 December 2006 in Tehran. It appreciated the progress made by the HLEG for the preparation of the Draft Plan of Action on Tourism. The Council called on the HLEG to work on the issue of facilitation/promotion of tourism sector in the ECO region through, inter alia, facilitation of visa procedures.

130. The Council welcomed the decision of the 1st HLEG meeting on Tourism for establishing ECO Tourism Promotion Fund to finance development of the tourism sector in ECO region and requested the member states to take necessary steps to that end as envisaged in the Report of the 1st HLEG Meeting. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for allocating US\$50,000/- after proper administrative procedure to initiate the Fund on Tourism.

131. The Council also welcomed the decision by the HLEG that ECI would prepare ECO Tourism Guidebook in collaboration with the ECO Secretariat and requested the ECI to prepare the Questionnaire in one month's time and further requested the ECI, member states and the ECO Secretariat to take the steps envisaged in the report of the 1st HLEG Meeting. The Council appreciated the generous pledge by the Islamic Republic of Iran to cover 80% of the cost of preparing the Guide Book.

132. The Council welcomed the decision by the 1st HLEG to observe the 28 of November (the ECO Day) as the ECO Tourism Festival/Fair Day as well and appreciated the offer by the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 1st ECO Tourism Festival Day/ Tourism Fair in 2007.

133. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Azerbaijan to host the 2nd HLEG meeting in 2007 and requested it to convey the exact dates and details of hospitality for delegates. It also welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 1st Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in November 2007 and the offer of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 3rd HLEG meeting in 2008.

(e) Human Resources & Sustainable Development

134. The Council deliberated various issues relating to human resource development, social development, drug control activities, health and poverty alleviation. The main points are as follows:

Human Resource and Sustainable Development

135. The Council emphasized the need to prepare short and medium-term programs/goals of the Directorate in order to streamline its activities. It advised that the Secretariat may seek assistance from the member states and international organizations.

136. The Council endorsed the Report and recommendations of the First Meeting of High Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Human Development, Poverty Alleviation and prospect of MDG implementation held on 19-20 December 2006 in Ankara, Turkey.

137. The Council welcomed the proposal of Pakistan to host the 2nd HLEG on Human Resource Development and prospect of MDGs implementation on 3-4 September 2007 in Islamabad and requested Member States to actively participate in this important event. It would identify the possible areas of cooperation to achieve MDGs by preparing the Plan of Action.

138. The Council noted with appreciation that some Member States had introduced their national focal points on human development and MDGs and called on other Member States to expedite introducing national focal points latest by 1st May 2007.

139. The Council welcomed the proposal of Tehran Municipality to organize the "Regional Conference of Mayors of ECO Capitals and Metropolises: Good Urban Governance" in August/September 2007. The Mayors of Capitals and second largest/major cities of each Member States have been invited to participate in this meeting. Considering the importance of the meeting, the Council urged all Member States to confirm participation in it at the highest possible level.

140. The Council welcomed the holding of "the Workshop on the ECO School Earthquake Safety Review" on 1-2 June 2006 in Istanbul, Turkey, and while appreciating Pakistan's offer to host the 2nd Workshop on the subject in the fourth quarter of 2007, requested the Pakistani delegation to send relevant detailed information to the Secretariat.

141. Considering the frequency of natural disasters in the ECO region and taking into account the recommendation of the 1st ECO Interior Ministers meeting held in Tehran on 1st November 2006, the Council appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat and requested to consider areas of disaster management and mitigation in the Directorate's scope of activities. It noted, in particular, the Secretariat's efforts to sign MoUs with the United Nations Office for Coordination Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The Council requested the Secretariat to pursue the matter.

142. The Council welcomed the announcement of the Pakistani delegation to host the ECO Workshop on Disaster Management in 2007 and requested that detailed relevant information may be communicated soon.

143. The Council took note of the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran (as the ECO country coordinator for Drought Management) to host a Regional Information, Communication and Space Technology-Enabled Disaster Management Centre affiliated to UNESCAP and, while emphasizing the importance of the Centre, requested the member states to support it.

144. The Council took note of the Report/Summary Record prepared by the international consultant (Mr. Darren Swanson) and requested the Secretariat to follow it up with the concerned international organizations in order to secure technical and financial assistance.

145. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to exchange experiences in human resource development and took note of the offer of the Turkish delegation to transform the Centre of Labour and Social Security Training and Research of the Republic of Turkey as ECO Centre for training experts from ECO member states, in cooperation with relevant international organizations such as ILO, in conformity with the modalities for the establishment of ECO Regional Centres to be finalized by CPR.

Health

146. The Council endorsed the Report and recommendations of the 1st Meeting of the High Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Health focused on Avian Influenza (Tehran, 12-13 March 2006). The Council appreciated the follow-up of the recommendations of this meeting and the list of national Focal Points provided by Member States (except Kazakhstan) and recommended to organize the 2nd HLEG on Health in order to finalize draft Plan of Action. The Council took note of the information received from the Turkish delegation regarding an FAO Workshop on surveillance issue (Ankara, 27th February to 7th March 2007) as also a regional symposium on that subject, and that the ECO Secretariat would be involved in this event.

147. The Council reviewed the issue of holding the Workshop on the Prevention of HIV/AIDS and appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host this workshop in September/October 2007.

148. The Council appreciated the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a meeting on "establishing a network of pharmaceuticals inspection" on 10-12 June 2007 and urged member states to participate in it at Deputy Ministers' level. The Council requested the host authorities to send concept paper, agenda and other details of the meeting to the Secretariat for circulation to member states.

149. The Council took note of the proposal of the Mother and Child Health and Family Planning Directorate of Turkey to provide technical support to training programs such as Training of Trainers, National Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP), Safe Motherhood and Emergency Obstetric Care.

Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU):

150. The Council once again requested the member states to send their country reports and statistics on drug control in hard copy and through the computerized network of DCCU.

151. The Council reiterated its request to member states to initiate harmonization of their legal drug structures in agreement with the UN conventions.

152. The Council expressed appreciation for the valuable cooperation extended by the Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC) to the DCCU and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to organize two training courses for ECO member states, provided translation cost could be covered by other institutions.

153. The Council invited the member states to volunteer for holding regular meetings (National Focal Points, 2nd Senior Officials, etc.) and requested them to provide full support to the Secretariat in the implementation of ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control, formulation of future strategies for the eradication of narcotic drugs from the region and review the activities of DCCU.

154. The Council appreciated UNODC, Tehran for the revised/modified Project Idea Document and requested the Secretariat to continue cooperation with UNODC and other relevant International Organizations, especially the Paris Pact initiative to receive necessary technical and financial assistance.

155. The Council appreciated Paris Pact initiative for possible funding of revised Project Idea and requested the Secretariat to approach member states, particularly Iran, Turkey and Pakistan for partially funding the above-mentioned Project and also recommended that the Council of Permanent Representative (CPR) may approve US\$ 50,000/- from the ECO Feasibility Study Fund (FSF) for financing the said Project.

156. The Council requested the Member States (except Iran, Turkey and Tajikistan) to expedite sending their views on the Revised Draft Project Idea Document, jointly modified by UNODC and ECO Secretariat, and circulated among member states vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No.DCCU/Proj.Idea/2006/2008 dated October 5, 2006, latest by end of March, 2007.

157. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the Workshop on Prevention of HIV/AIDS related to drugs on May 21-23, 2007.

158. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on 7-8 May 2007 (one of the main decisions of the 1st SOM). It would consider: (i) reviewing ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control, (ii) enhancing capacity of DCCU, (iii) the possibility of preparation of a Legal Document for Regional Cooperation on Drug Control. The Council proposed that the EGM may also consider the possibility of transforming Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) into a "Regional

Centre for Drug Control and Organized Crimes (RCDCOC). The outcome of the EGM will be presented to the 2nd SOM. The Council requested the Member States (except Iran and Turkey) to consider hosting the 2nd SOM.

First Meeting of ECO Interior Ministers:

159. The Council noted with appreciation the holding of the 1st Meeting of ECO Interior Ministers in Tehran on 1st November 2006, and requested Member States to expedite follow-up action on the Report to implement the decisions of the meeting. It was circulated among Member States vide Secretariat' note verbale No. DCCU/IMM/Follow-up/2006/2066 dated 13 December 2006. The Council recommended that, since Para-26 of the Report under Agenda Item 10 regarding establishment of mechanism for cooperation among the neighbouring provinces of the member states is of an economic nature, it may be forwarded to the relevant Directorate of the Secretariat for necessary action.

160. In order to make necessary preparation for the 2nd Meeting of the ECO Interior Ministers, the Council requested that one of the member states volunteer to host the High Level Expert Group Meeting (HLEG) which would review implementation of the decisions of the 1st Meeting of the Interior Ministers. The Secretariat has already circulated the request to member states vide its note verbale No. DCCU/1st HLEG/2006/1937 dated November 21, 2006. The outcome of this meeting would be presented to the 2nd Ministerial Meeting.

161. The Council also requested the Member States to volunteer hosting the 2nd Meeting of the ECO Interior Ministers and inform the Secretariat accordingly.

162. The Council requested the Secretariat to pursue holding a workshop on illegal migration and human trafficking with the assistance of International Organization for Migration (IOM).

163. The Council requested the member states to send information about their experience in combating terrorism to the Secretariat for circulation among member states. It should also cover methods being used by terrorist groups.

164. With regard to implementation of the decisions of the 1st Meeting of ECO Interior Ministers, the Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the meeting of the border security forces/law enforcement agencies and also a workshop on border security issues by the end of 2007 and requested Iran to send detailed relevant information to the Secretariat for circulation among member states.

165. The Council took note of the educational programs of the Counter-Terrorism Department of the Republic of Turkey in such areas as International Terrorism and Terrorist Organizations as well as Cyber-Terrorism and appreciated the offer of Turkey to organize related training workshop in 2008. (The Secretariat circulated the list of educational program received from Turkey among member states vide its note verbale No. DCCU/Workshops/2006/2010 dated 4 December 2006).

(f) Project and Economic Research & Statistics

Project Research

166. The Council noted that ECO's Plan of Action (2003-2007) to contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan was expected to be completed by December 2007. It recommended that a new Plan of Action be devised in accordance with the priorities of Afghanistan's National Development Strategy. The Council requested the Secretariat to establish a working group for that purpose. It also requested that, based on previous experience, a draft Plan of Action be first prepared for consideration by the working group and then submitted for approval to the concerned ECO body.

167. The Council considered progress made on ECO's existing Plan of Action on the Reconstruction of Afghanistan and noted the selection of a company and preparation of a contract for implementation of the Project of Deh Mazang Public Park and maintenance of Kabul Zoo. The contract would be signed in near future. The Council noted the interest shown by Pakistan in establishing small pavilions in the Deh Mazang Public Park and requested the other member states to consider making such pavilions in the Park to showcase their respective cultures. The Republic of Turkey informed that it was considering the proposal. The Council called for early implementation of the project, which would symbolize cooperation among ECO countries in support of a fellow member state.

168. The Council noted with appreciation the funds transferred by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran to the ECO Special Fund for reconstruction of Afghanistan and called on other member states to make similar contributions. The Council also expressed satisfaction at the assistance being given to Afghanistan by Member States in the bilateral context.

169. The Council requested the Secretariat that, in coordination with the Afghan Government, fresh proposals be prepared for projects such as construction of health center in Kabul, Re-construction of Dosadfamily School Building in Rahman Mena, Kabul City, and building a maternity hospital in Faryab Province.

170. The Secretariat was requested to propose to the CPR another feasibility study on Construction of Canal Crossings in Farah Province which would be financed from the ECO Feasibility Fund.

171. The Council noted with appreciation the offer by the Islamic Republic of Iran to train the personnel of the Afghan Insurance Company with financing equally shared by the Central Insurance of Iran (Bimeh Markazi Iran) and the ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Council requested the member states to inform the Secretariat about their training facilities which could be offered to Afghanistan, particularly in trade and economic sectors. The Afghan authorities were also requested to convey to the Secretariat their training needs.

172. The Council welcomed the Secretariat's initiative aimed at capacity building of its staff and recommended that it continue its efforts to enlist the support of international agencies, particularly UNESCAP for that purpose. It will also avail the member states' facilities for technical assistance and consultancy, especially in applying modern approaches such as the Logical Framework Approach, for project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

173. The Council reiterated its request to ECO-CEC to consider organizing short-term courses in the fields of highways, transportation, dams, power generation, and transmission, particularly to experts from Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. The ECO-CEC should send a proposal to the Secretariat in that respect.

174. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to utilize ECO Feasibility Study Fund to finance projects in the fields of trade and agriculture. It requested the Member States to suggest feasibility studies in other important sectors as well. In this regard, the Council took note of the research proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran on "Macroeconomic Modeling for ECO Countries: An Input - Output Approach" which had already been circulated and requested the member states to expedite their comments for consideration and finalization by the relevant ECO bodies.

175. The Council requested the Secretariat to also explore the possibility of obtaining funds and technical support for various ECO projects from the donor agencies such as JICA of Japan, GTZ of Germany, KOICA of the Republic of Korea, TICA of Turkey, in addition to other international organizations.

176. The Council recommended to the Secretariat to consider establishing a coordination mechanism with the ECO Trade and Development Bank for the promotion and implementation of important projects aimed at the member states development.

177. The Council appreciated the preparation of updated editions of the Directory of Training and Research Institutions and the Roster of Leading Experts and Consultants among the Member States, based on inputs received from Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan. The Secretariat would also make these documents available on the ECO website and provide this information to relevant focal points through e-mail. The Council asked Member States to continue sending updated information to the Secretariat for revised editions.

Economic Research and Statistics

178. The Council appreciated the summary review of macro-economic developments including human development indices and future prospects in the ECO member states and in the ECO region in general, prepared by the Secretariat as part of the working paper. The Council asked for such reports to be prepared as part of its working paper for the future RPC meetings.

179. The Council emphasized regular preparation and publication of ECO's Annual Economic Reports. It urged the member states to consider the first draft of the Annual Economic Report 2005 prepared by the Secretariat and to provide, within one month, their updated inputs including country reports as well as statistical data according to the format circulated by the Secretariat. The Council asked the Secretariat to finalize and publish it within one month of the receipt of inputs from member states but not later than May 2007.

180. The Council recommended to the Directorate to continue facilitating various ECO summits/meetings, ECO News Bulletins and ECO Website by contributing reports/papers relating to the region's economic development. The Council requested the Secretariat to promote studies on important regional issues, including economic perspectives of the ECO region, trade and investment, alternative sources of energy, free and special economic zones in the region, utilizing the technical and financial assistance of international donor organizations as well as financing from the ECO Feasibility Fund with the approval of CPR.

181. The Council, recognizing the importance of timely implementation of ECO projects and programmes in the field of economic statistics and project research,

supported the proposal of the Secretariat for secondment of experts/researchers from member states for specific assignments at the Secretariat including preparation of Annual Economic Report, Project Research, ECO Framework of Cooperation in Statistics, and Joint Economic Research Programme, to help the Secretariat with the necessary workforce. The Council requested the Secretariat to identify modalities with the approval of the CPR for the nomination process.

182. The Council noted with appreciation the Secretariat's efforts in organizing the 5th meeting of NFPs on economic research and statistics held in June 2006 at the ECO Secretariat. It requested the member states, particularly those who have not yet hosted the meeting of NFPs (Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), to consider hosting the 6th NFPs meeting with financial support from the ECO Special Support Fund. Tajikistan informed that they would consider hosting the meeting and inform the Secretariat within two months. The Republic of Turkey expressed its readiness to host the next NFPs meeting in 2008.

183. The Council supported the recommendation of the 5th meeting of NFPs on economic research and statistics to convene a meeting of the Heads of National Statistical Offices of ECO member states to discuss cooperation in the area of statistics, and requested the member states to consider organizing the First Meeting in 2007.

184. The Council appreciated the adoption, by the 5th meeting of NFPs, of the ECO Framework of Cooperation in Statistics and Plan of Action as a basis to further intensify cooperation in the ECO region. The Council requested the member states (except Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) to expedite nomination of one statistician/expert for the Working Group to study and finalize the Framework of Cooperation and Plan of Action so that the final draft be approved by Heads of National Statistical Organizations in 2007.

185. The Council noted the Secretariat's efforts for publication of draft country-wise statistics bulletins, and requested the member states to regularly provide official national statistics along with adequate metadata for such bulletins. The Council further requested the Secretariat to publish each ECO Statistics Bulletin with the consent of the concerned member states.

186. The Council acknowledged the need to regularly assess progress made in achieving ECO goals/objectives based on commonly agreed statistical indicators. To this end, the Council appreciated the Secretariat's work in preparing the ECO Countries Key Indicators for 2004, presenting the most current available economic, financial, and social data and placing these on the ECO Website.

187. The Council requested the Secretariat to organize, in coordination with the Islamic Republic of Iran, a regional workshop on non-observed economy (NOE) in the ECO region. This may be done with the support of the member states and the relevant international organizations, including UNESCAP, SIAP, UNECE, UNDP and ILO.

188. The Council welcomed the recommendation of the 5th meeting of NFPs on economic research and statistics to start advancing the research proposals submitted by the member states within the framework of the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme for consideration of the CPR for allocating funds from the ECO Feasibility Study Fund. In addition, in order to facilitate these project proposals, the Secretariat may approach international donors, especially UNDP, IDB, World Bank and ADB, to secure financial and technical support.

189. The Council welcomed the recommendation made by the 5th meeting of NFPs to assign the theme "Prospects of intra-regional trade in the ECO region" to the 6th NFP meeting for discussion, and requested the Secretariat to invite an eminent expert/researcher to prepare background paper and make presentation during the

meeting on that topic. It further requested the member states to nominate experts for participation in the meeting and to suggest policy recommendations on the theme topic.

(g) Inter-Regional ECO Activities:

(i) ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions:

190. The Council reiterated its earlier recommendation that the non-signatory member states should sign the Charter of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Institute and requested the signatory member states to ratify these Charters at the earliest.

191. The Council appreciated that the cultural activities of the ECO Cultural Institute were growing, carrying out the programmes mandated under ECO's 3-year Plan of Action. It recommended that there was a need to revise ECI's staff strength and Financial Regulations.

192. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for announcing the dates of the 2nd ECI Preparatory Experts Meeting, preceded by the 3rd BOT meeting to be held in Pakistan in the last week of April or the first week of May 2007. The Council requested the Secretariat to fix the date and size of delegations in consultation with the ECI and convey that information to the concerned authorities in Pakistan for necessary arrangements, including local hospitality.

193. All concerned member states were requested to take necessary steps to ensure timely remittance of their share of contribution to the ECI budget.

194. The Council appreciated the announcement by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to contribute upto US dollars one million for the establishment of the ECO Science and Technology Fund and invited other member states to favourably consider making financial contributions to the Fund.

195. The Council urged the member states to finalize modalities for the establishment and operationalization of the Fund at the earliest and requested them to participate in the Experts Group Meeting to be held in Pakistan in July 2007.

196. The Council requested the concerned authorities of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to announce the exact date of Experts Group Meeting of ECO Science Foundation in July 2007 to finalize the issue relating to the Charter and other basic documents. The date of convening the BOT would be decided in this meeting.

197. The Council took note of information provided by the Republic of Turkey that the ratification of the Charter of ECO Educational Institute was on the agenda of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and it would be ratified soon. The Council requested the Republic of Turkey to expedite the ratification process and announce the date and venue for holding the First meeting of the Board of Trustees preceded by the Experts Group Meeting.

198. The Council appreciated the performance of the Working Group established to facilitate transformation of the ECO College of Insurance into ECO College of Insurance and Management Sciences, and requested the CPR to finalize the Statute of the ECO College of Insurance and Management Sciences for submission to the COM for approval.

199. The Council requested member states to send their best students to the ECO College of Insurance and to fully avail the 10 graduate/under-graduate scholarship

offered by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The College was requested to provide the criteria and timeframe for availing the scholarships.

200. The Council took note of the presentation made by Dr. Emami Meibodi, Dean of ECO College of Insurance regarding educational programmes, and facilities provided for the students from member states.

201. The Council took note of the offer of the Iranian delegation to hold a Workshop on Efficiency and Productivity Considerations of Insurance Companies within ECO. Necessary information would be sent through the Secretariat to the member states in due course.

202. The Council appreciated the involvement of the ECO-CEC in regional projects and called on member states to accord priority to ECO-CEC while awarding contracts to local and international companies for projects financed from ECO resources.

(ii) **International Relations**

203. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretariat to promote relations with international and regional organizations and UN bodies.

204. The Council noted with appreciation the adoption of Resolution on ECO-UN cooperation by the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly in November, 2006.

205. While emphasizing the need to finalize a comprehensive Plan of Action on international relations on the basis of the frameworks adopted by the 16th COM, the Council appreciated the Secretariat for prioritizing the international/regional organizations with which the ECO had institutionalized cooperative relations, and requested the member states to convey their views about the draft Plan of Action prepared by the ECO Secretariat.

Agenda Item No.7

Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2007-2008

206. The Council approved the ECO Calendar of Events for 2007-2008 as provided in ***Annex-VI***.

Agenda Item No.8

Preparation of Annual Economic Report of the ECO region

207. The Council emphasized the need for regular publication of ECO's Annual Economic Report. It urged the member states to consider the first draft of the Annual Economic Report 2005 prepared by the Secretariat and provide, within one month, their updates and inputs for publication. These should include country reports as well as statistical data according to the format circulated vide Secretariat's note verbale No.PERS/2005-AER/2006/219 dated 14 February 2006. The Secretariat should finalize and publish it within a month of the receipt of inputs from member states, but not later than May 2007.

Agenda Item No.9

Any other business.

208. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No.10

Date and Venue of the next Meeting.

209. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the 18th RPC meeting at Islamabad. Exact dates will be communicated through diplomatic channel.

Agenda Item No.11

Adoption of the Report.

210. The Report of the 17th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No.12

Vote of Thanks

211. On behalf of all the participating delegations, the Council expressed its appreciation and thanks to the ECO Secretariat as well as Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for making appropriate arrangements for this important meeting.

212. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council also thanked the Chairmen of various Review Committees for successfully conducting the business of their respective Review Committees. It also appreciated the efforts made by the Secretary General and his staff for preparing comprehensive Working Papers and other documents for the Council.