

## The 16<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting

Statements by H.E. Mr. Alireza Sheikh Attar, Deputy to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran

( Tehran, January 30 - February 02, 2006 )

*Annex-IV*

*Honorable Delegates,  
H. E. ECO Secretary General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen*

At the beginning I would like to welcome all the esteemed guests and participants and I would like to appreciate your decision to appoint me as the Chairman of the 16<sup>th</sup> RPC. I hope that this Meeting would lead to constructive deliberations with your cooperation, so to realize the goals of the Organization and strengthen the regional cooperation.

*Dear participants,*

Hopefully the regional cooperation in the frame work of ECO during the past few years had a logical and increasing pace and the Organization could set priorities deemed necessary by the Member States in various working fields and therefore present a prosperous out look for regional cooperation in these fields. The approval of the ECO 2015 Vision is a turning point in the history of the Organization. This document has set priorities for each field and presents a comprehensive out look of regional cooperation which shall be considered in the future working plans as well as the plans of the RPC and other decision making bodies of the Organization. RPC as the planning body of the Organization, considering the limited resources at hand, has prevented scattered work or unnecessary expansion of duties in accordance to the strategies of the Organization and basically stresses the priorities reached consensus upon by the Member States in the ECO Vision 2015 and other basic documents. On the other hand, continuous evaluation of the plans and activities of the Organization in each one of these priorities is the necessary item for success in regional cooperation which is the duty of RPC based on the Rules of Procedure of ECO.

With due regard to the above said matters, it seems that expediting the commencement of ECOTA and the voluntary protocol, establishment of ECO Trade and Development bank, ECO Reinsurance company, activation of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industries and institutionalizing the Trade Council gatherings as well as reinforcing Customs cooperation among the Member States, facilitating the issuance of visa for businessmen are among the priorities of the Organization in the field of Trade which should be stated in the next year's Calendar of Events.

TTFA and passenger/cargo train projects are getting operational and regional cooperation in the field of transportation and optic fiber network are getting expedited the thorough follow up of which shall be top on the agenda of the Organization. In the field of transportation although we see a bright future, but unfortunately The ECO Decade Plan of Action on Transportation and Communication 1998-2007 due to some minor lack of coordination among the Member Countries could not be realized based on the set schedule. Therefore, it is necessary that ECO Secretariat and Member States would present new initiatives/solutions to expedite these activities and realize transportation projects of the Organization.

In the field of Energy, it is proper that ECO Secretariat and the Member States would commit themselves to realize the power interconnection feasibility study as the first energy project of the Organization. The realization of ECO energy projects, particularly energy trade in the region are among the priorities of the Organization.

In the field of Industry and Agriculture we also had significant achievements. In short time some short term and long term strategies and regional plans have been set and some projects are at hand. The execution of these projects should be a part of the Organization's working plan. In the field of Health and Tourism which are of grave importance and regional cooperation capacity we have not made much and it

is necessary that the Member States and the Secretariat would seriously seek the ways and means of activating these two vital sectors of the Organization.

Also unfortunately the statistics sector of the Organization in the past few years has suffered a kind of stagnation while the compilation and distribution of statistics of the countries of the region is of grave importance to comprehend the economic developments of the member countries. The annual publication of ECO economic Report is one of the most important matters in this respect. It is three years that this report has not been published. Therefore, it is important that all the available capacities of the Organization would be pooled together to activate the departments of Statistics, Economic Research and Project Research, as well as finding the ways to gather and distribute information on the regular basis. To do so we have to take advantage of internal and international sources of the Organization or if deemed proper, provide the Secretariat with special facilities to achieve this goal.

Recently a regional cooperation in the field of sustainable development and human resources has been started at the Secretariat. Sustainable development is among the most important elements of the Millennium Development Goals set by the UN. We hope that ECO may also get along with the international plans and developments so to improve public awareness, capacity building and establishment of the main sustainable development index in the region.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

One of the matters that RPC should deal with based on the rules of procedure is to establish the relationship between the national focal points of the Member States in the national level. In this respect some Member States have prepared new means in the national level and coordinated with various domestic sources and follow the activities of the organization and other regional cooperation. Unfortunately still some Member States have not made such arrangements at the national level. This has made a gap in the regional cooperation and hindered it. Thus lots of events are postponed mainly due to lack of quorum.

There is no doubt that setting the required means of establishing relations between national focal points of the Member States and their direct effective work with the Secretariat is a great necessity to reinforce the organizational capacities of the Organization. Establishing local field offices in the Member States is also a successful experience through which the international organizations have expedited their working capacity. Exploiting this experience in ECO would add to the effectiveness and productivity of the Organization. Therefore, it seems necessary that the Secretariat would consider the matter and report it to the Member states for necessary decision making.

Also, in order to prevent the postponement of the events, as proposed by the recent COM, the Calendar of Events would be designed properly and finalize the exact date and venue of the events during or shortly after RPC and the events with no date shall be deleted in due course.

*Dear Colleagues,*

Fortunately as of the establishment of this organization, there has always been a great attention to international relations by the Member States and Secretariat and so far proper relations have been made with regional and international organizations through signing MoUs and Agreements, through which it may get possible to seek observer status with these organizations, as well as commencing joint projects such as joint ECO-UNDP Capacity Building Project at the ECO Secretariat, joint ECO-ITC Project on intra trade, joint ECO-IDB project on Power Trade and ECO-FAO project on Agricultural activities.

All this shows that the international relations of the Organization has good capacity to reinforce the activities of the Organization and so it is necessary that through a proper planning these capacities would be exploited. In this respect, based on the proposals made by the ECO EPG approved by the 15<sup>th</sup> COM, firstly, the Secretariat shall have a clear plan of action to implement the signed MoUs between ECO and international bodies, in cooperation with the Member States. Secondly, the matter of establishing ECO Contact Group in the international bodies which has been approved by COM and other

Ministerial meetings shall be stressed and followed actively. In this regard the Secretariat should prepare a clear plan, to be implemented after the approval of CPR. Thirdly, the matter of reciprocate allocation of observer status or dialogue with the international bodies in which ECO has observer status, shall be followed seriously. This matter would strengthen the cooperation of ECO and international organizations and would also prepare the ground to take advantage of their financial and technical capacities in ECO projects. Fourthly, in order to rectify ECO's interactions with the organizations with which has observer status, and also in order to take advantage of the rights gained through this status, there shall be plans to attend these organizations' meetings and reflect it in the Calendar of Events so the Secretariat would actively collaborate with them. Of course there should be a clear, aimed plan for Secretariat to attend these meetings and send the report of the attended meetings to the CPR for consideration.

*Dear Participants,*

At the end I would like to announce that Islamic Republic of Iran as a founding member of the organization commits itself to actively participates in the activities of the Organization. In this respect and in order to expand the regional cooperation, Islamic Republic of Iran approved the establishment of ECO Trade and Development Bank, although it had some disharmonies with Iranian Domestic Law, so to prepare the ground for realization of this entity. Also, Iran is finalizing the TTFA and intends to follow and implement ECOTA and the relevant optional protocol.

Hereby, once more I would like to emphasize that Islamic Republic of Iran supports the activities of ECO, and I would like to give this assurance that bilateral and multi lateral relations with ECO Member States are among the regional policy priorities of the new Iranian administration in office.

At the end I wish you the best of success and health, as well as a pleasant stay in the beautiful city of Tehran.

*Thank you for your kind attention*