

The 16th RPC Meeting

Statements by the Heads of Delegation

(Tehran, January 30 - February 02, 2006)

Annex-V

Statement of Mr. Bareyalea Hassam

Head of Delegation of **Afghanistan**

Statement of Mr. Muhammad Hafiz

Head of Delegation of **Pakistan**

Statement of Mr. Lutfi Elvan

Head of Delegation of **Turkey**

Statement of Mr. Feridun Kemal Feridun

Head of Delegation of **Turkish Rep. of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)**

Statement of Head of the Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

*Excellency Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would like to express my profound thanks and appreciations on behalf of the State and the people of Afghanistan, myself and my delegation to the Islamic Republic of Iran and H.E.Mr. Askhat Orazbay Secretary General of the ECO for organizing this meeting.

In the meantime, I also pay my heartfelt congratulations to you Mr. Chairman on holding the chairmanship of this meeting and I hop your more successes to you on carrying the work of this session,

His Excellency Mr. Chairman,

The State and the people of Afghanistan after elapsing the several years in crisis now are going towards the political, economic and social stability as well as the expansion and development. After the establishment of the Transitional and Electoral governments and later on by holding the successful Presidential and Parliamentary elections in the country the people of Afghanistan delivered their share and their free and active decision for the ensuring of the political stability, security and the sovereignty of the law in the country.

Mr Chairman,

During the last four years which was the period of the transitional and electoral governments we were the witness of the profound economic developments in the country. The important areas of these developments are as follows:

- Rehabilitation and repairing of the Security, Judicial and Economic systems in the country.
- Re-construction and re-building of the important projects in the sectors of the Air and Land Transportation.
- The Re-construction of Kabul Airport according to the International Norms .
- Rehabilitation and repairing of the 2000 Km Road which has the capacity to connect the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan via the territory of Afghanistan has been finalized.
- The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is decided to complete the Important Project (Circle Road) which has very important role for the connection of the countries of the region and other countries of ECO during the year of 2006 . Of course the financial resources of the said project has been prepared already by the ADB and other commitments donors for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

With the consideration of the capacity of the Air transportation in the country the flight Routes of Afghanistan have been established towards the Gulf countries, Germany, Russian, Iran , Pakistan,

Kazakhstan, Turkey and England and created more possibilities regarding to the expansion of Trade, Investment and Tourism activities in the country.

The statutes of Trade and the level of trade and consumption commodities and construction items have been developed and reached to 2,5 M Dollar annually. The necessary possibilities have been created by Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the reduction of the costume tariffs which reached into 4,5 percent reduction. This shows the lowest level of the cost of the tariffs in the region as well as the in the Asian continent.

The statutes of education have been developed compared to the past and annually the 5,6 million student goes towards the schools and universities for education that the important part of these students are the females strata. This fact shows the endeavor of the youth generation of Afghanistan for Peace , Security of Social development.

Also we have great achievements In the Communication and Transportation areas during the past four years which was the time of Transitional and Electoral governments in the country. The ensuring of the countrywide connection in the 34 provinces of Afghanistan with the supplying of the equipment serviceman with the Voice, Data and Video Conference. installing the Digital Switch and activating the 24 province of Afghanistan and utilizing of more than one million customers from the two mobile operators are the great achievements in the sector of communication.

One of the main and important projects which will be interested for the member of ECO Countries is Fibers Optic system . The technical studies of this project has been completed and it will be implemented in the near future. This project will be implemented in three steps and with the completing of this project the great center of the transit communication of the ECO countries will be created.

Mr. Chairman,

Since Afghanistan has been occurred in the top attention of the world community the important possibilities have been provided for the ensuring of investment in the area of Transport, Trade, Communication and Mines. We hope the ECO expand its economic activities in Afghanistan by using of the possibilities and capacities of the ECO member countries for the expansion of the economic activities.

Fortunately with the holding of the 16th RPC meeting the world is witness for the holding of a great Conference for peace , security and the expansion of the economic of Afghanistan in London which will brought great achievements for the people of Afghanistan as well as for the insurance of stability in the region. We hope more possibilities will be provided for the Member States to render their Trade activities for Investment in the different economic areas in Afghanistan.

- Re- construction of the Transportation Roads and circular roads.
- Sharing for the reconstruction of the great airports, cities and the Provinces of Afghanistan.
- Reduction of the custom tariffs against the export items of Afghanistan and construction of the custom and border establishments.
- Investment in the Energy ,Agriculture and Irrigation Sectors.

Proposals:

- The ensuring of effective mechanism for the implementation of the ECO projects in Afghanistan and other ECO member countries.
- The expansion and development of ECO Fund for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and progressing the practice and effective works in connection to the necessary and urgent projects of Afghanistan by using of the ECO Fund.
- In the scheme of the main Transportation of the ECO, Afghanistan should be considered as the main point to connect the ECO member states according to the decision

- made in Islamabad on 1993 and as well as in the Transport and Commercial Ministerial meeting in Almaty on 1992.
- The creation of the ECO air company using by the capacity of the air transportation of ECO regarding to the expansion and development of Trade and Tourism activities.
 - Creation of a simple system for issuing visa for the traders of the ECO member States.
 - Investment and sharing of the ECO countries for the implementation of the great project (Fiber Optic System) in Afghanistan . It should be mentioned that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been taken practice steps in this connection.

H.E. Mr. Chairman,

We hope the ECO as a Regional Organization take effective role towards the rehabilitation of Afghanistan and help us by the implementation of the main economic projects that Afghanistan can take useful steps towards the development and progress in the region. We hope the views and the special suggestions of the Afghan delegation will be brought to the attention of the participants of sub-committees also and put under the discussion during in this meeting

At the end once again we stress for the active and strong position of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in ECO.

Thanks.

Statement by leader of the Pakistan Delegation

Honourable Chairman
Honourable Secretary General
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam-o-Alaikum,

It is my profound privilege and honour to be here as leader of the Pakistan Delegation to the 16th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC). On my own behalf and on behalf of my delegation and Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the brotherly Government of Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the ECO Secretariat for their warm welcome, generous hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the RPC Meeting.

Mr. Chairman

Please accept my heart-felt congratulation on your election as Chairman of this meeting. I am sure that under your dynamic leadership and able guidance this meeting will achieve the desired objective of intensifying cooperation among member states.

Before I say something about Regional Cooperation under ECO I would like to avail this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the peoples and Governments of Member States on their generous and spontaneous assistance provided at a most difficult time faced by our people following the disastrous earthquake of the 8th of October 2005. I am pleased to inform that Pakistan with the courage of its people and the generous assistance provided by the international community has done its best to heal the suffering caused by this natural calamity of an unparalleled scale. Now after successfully meeting the challenge of relief activities we are shortly to enter the rehabilitation and reconstruction, which has provided an opportunity to improve the livelihoods of the people of earthquake affected areas in a safe and sustainable manner. Pakistan looks forward to continued cooperation and assistance by international community during this phase of rehabilitation and rebuilding.

Excellencies

Regional Cooperation and economic integration harness countries' capabilities and strengths and help to overcome the challenges of globalization and international competitiveness. Countries under regional cooperation and economic integration achieve higher economic growth and greater reduction in poverty than those outside this process. Regional Cooperation in the areas such as trade, industry, transport and communication, energy and information and communication technology helps to bridge the gap between the opportunities and potentials by strengthening countries' ability to realize the benefits of regional cooperation. Pakistan therefore attaches a very high priority towards regional cooperation and economic integration at all levels and for every sub-sector of the economy.

Intensifying regional cooperation and economic integration among ECO Members calls for concerted efforts and a visionary approach along with the will to change on part of all policy makers. It is to be appreciated that as Pakistan looks outward particularly towards ECO Member states, it will have to look inward equally, to make the country welcome to foreign investment and the economy ready for high and sustainable growth so as to be part of a dynamic regional economy. The two objective are complementary and not competitive.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before submitting my views on the broad issues on the agenda of the 16th Meeting of RPC, I would like to apprise this august forum about the overall economic situation and policy scenario in Pakistan. Fiscal year 2004-05 has been an eventful year for Pakistan's economy. It has seen the economy growing at the fastest pace in two decades; the fifth time in the country's history that it is exceeding 8 percent growth mark; and positioning itself as the second fastest growing economy in Asia after China. One of the stellar occurrences of this years' performance has been the broad-based nature of economic growth as each sub-sector has recorded significant improvement. Wide-ranging structural reforms, prudent macroeconomic policies, financial discipline, and a consistency and continuity in policies have started to yield positive results.

During 2004-05, many of its macroeconomic indicators show marked improvement over last year. The most important achievements of the year include: the fastest pace in real GDP growth of 8.4% powered by stellar growth in large-scale manufacturing (15.4%), a sharp pick up in agriculture (7.5%), a continuing robust performance in services (7.9%), and an extraordinary strengthening of consumer demand; a double-digit growth in per capita income in dollar terms, reaching \$ 736; investment upturn gaining a stronger footing, particularly private sector investment which remained buoyant owing to a confluence of various positive developments; an unprecedented increase in credit to private sector for second year in a row; sharp increases in the consumption of oil, gas, electricity and coal reflecting rising level of economic activity; higher than targeted collection of taxes; a high double-digit growth in exports and imports, workers' remittances maintaining their momentum; a continued accumulation of foreign exchange reserves and stability in the exchange rate; a sharp decline in the public and external debt burden; privatization programme maintaining its robust momentum; launching of first ever Islamic Bond (Sukuk) in international capital markets; and the performance of Eurobond remained in line with the markets.

As economic growth received and attained a high level, Pakistan moved to take a confident, systematic and systemic look at future developmental needs over the medium as well as longer term basis. Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) 2005-10 and Vision 2030 specify our goals and targets and outline strategies for their realization. Our Vision 2030 is to see the country as a developed, industrialized, just and prosperous through rapid and sustainable development in a resource constrained economy by deploying knowledge inputs.

Keeping Vision 2030 in view, and with a steady movement towards the Millennium Development Goals which have been aligned with the poverty reduction support programmes, the MTDF 2005-10 outlines an operational strategy to embed the hard-won momentum of growth in our economic processes

and institutions in such a way that a 7-8 per cent annual growth of GDP becomes a norm rather than an exception. The Growth strategy will rest on five pillars: water resource development, energy security, transport and communications infrastructure, human development and second generation reforms.

The MTFD provides a framework for translating the VISION 2030 into action during 2005-10, including a judicious policy mix for sustained long-term high growth. It aims to consolidate the macroeconomic stability and rationalize the public-private mix in the development process. By strengthening the enabling role of the government through policy direction and appropriate regulatory environment, it envisages to enhance the role of private sector in various activities including infrastructure and provision of services. Enhanced role of the private sector in the economy will allow the public sector to focus on basic services such as education, health, balanced regional development, and poverty reduction.

The government's long-term vision is to free the economy from the burden of government run businesses and focus on good governance and creation of an enabling environment for the private sector to invest in providing goods and services efficiently. The pre-requisites for attracting large inflows of investment and technology include macroeconomic stability and continuity, well established public institutions, an educated skilled workforce, protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and an efficient mechanism for resolving commercial disputes. While all these aspects are being addressed, highest priority in MTFD would be given to developing public institutions and the enforcement and efficient implementation of the legal system in a transparent manner. The new investment framework also focuses on enhanced Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to meet the increasing demand for physical infrastructure.

Excellencies

The 15th meeting of ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held in Astana on 1st October, 2005 adopted the historic "ECO Vision 2015" as basic reference document of the Organization. It stresses upon the need to promote sustainable economic and social development, raising living standards of peoples and bringing them closer through mobilization of the potential for regional cooperation in various fields during the upcoming decade. I would like to congratulate all member states for adoption of the ECO Vision 2015 and assure its fullest cooperation in achieving the desired objectives. The Vision 2015 has widely been circulated among all concerned departments in Pakistan for formation of policy framework to achieve the desired objectives. Trade, Investment, Infrastructure, Information Technology and Telecommunication are potential sub-sector to intensify our efforts to promote regional cooperation under this strategic Vision and align our own Vision 2030 with it.

Promotion of trade and investment among ECO Member States is one of the main objectives of the Organization. Following the signing of ECOTA in July, 2003 for progressive removal of non-trade barriers as well as gradual reduction of tariffs in the region, a protocol for the annexure of ECOTA on Rules of Origin, Anti-Dumping Measures, State Aid, IPRs was signed in July, 2005 at Istanbul. The said Protocol has been signed by four Member States to ECOTA i.e. Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. Early finalization and compilation of annexure of ECOTA is important for implementation and application of tariff concessions under the provisions of ECOTA and realization of provisions of ECOTA will be a major breakthrough for establishment of Free Trade Area in the ECO region by 2015 as envisaged in the ECO Vision 2015 adopted at Astana on 1st October, 2005.

An efficient transport and communications system contributes to economic growth by increasing trade, lowering transportation cost, timely delivery goods, enhancing economies of scale in the production process thus enlarging economic opportunities and commercial links among people. It also helps in integrating markets, strengthening complementarities, increasing access to regional resources, besides promoting tourism and foreign investment.

Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and its related annexures is very important and detailed document for trade facilitation in ECO region. After signing and ratifying by majority of the Member States, the Agreement is entering into force from May, 2006. The Transit Transport Coordinating Council (TTCC) will be established in six month time after entering into force of TTFA for monitoring. I am

sure the Member States will strive further to promote transport and communications related activities, including implementation of Transit Trade Framework Agreement to intensify economic cooperation. For this purpose there is also a need to launch a campaign in the Member States to create awareness on the benefits of the Framework Agreement.

With regard to the investment promotion, the text of the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) has been finalized. For signing of the Agreement by Pakistan necessary procedural formalities are being undertaken and we will be ready for signing shortly.

The Institutionalization of the Business Forum is very important for improving relations between private sectors of the Member States and enhancing trade and economic activities between the Member states. The private sector in Pakistan through Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry is being pursued to take appropriate action with regard to the establishment of Business Forum.

Mr. Chairman

Agricultural development and promotion of agro-trade has assumed increasing importance in view of promoting regional programmes for food security. Concerted efforts are required on all related issues to promote national projects and activities under regional food security in ECO region. ECO Regional Strategy on Industry is yet another important area for joint cooperation among Member States. The Draft text of the Strategy prepared by Pakistani expert will go a long way in the finalization of the ECO strategy on industrial cooperation among Member States.

Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Standardization, Accreditation and Conformity Assessment are other important areas for industrial development. The Plan of Action for Industrial Cooperation envisages for Member States the enforcement of industrial standards in the region in line with the international standards and improvement of quality management systems according to International Standard Systems (ISS). Pakistan has already adopted International Standards as national standards for quality.

Similarly activities relating to Human Resource Development, Health, Tourism are vital for enhancing economic integration and regional cooperation among Member States.

I am sure the 16th Meeting of RPC particularly at the level of experts represented at the working groups will review all these activities and prepare important recommendations for the consideration of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Chairman

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to conclude my statement by placing on record, once again, our sincere regards and best wishes to our hosts, the Iranian Government and the ECO Secretariat and particularly to the distinguished Secretary General for their excellent arrangement made for this Meeting.

I thank you very much.

Statement by Mr. Lutfi Elvan, Deputy Undersecretary of the State Planning Organization of the Republic of Turkey

*Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellency, the Secretary General of ECO,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Tehran, and to H.E. Secretary General, Ambassador Mr. Askhat Orazbay and his able staff for the preparations made for this meeting.

I would also like to congratulate you Mr. Chairman, for your election to the chairmanship of the 16TH Meeting of Regional Planning Council.

Today, we are here to review the ECO activities and programs and to improve our economic cooperation. In this regard, I would like to share my views with you and put forward some proposals.

The ECO region with its total GDP of US\$638 billion and population of 380 million has a great economic potential to be realized further. In order to benefit from this great economic potential the ECO was established in 1985 to develop our economies. So far, numerable regional projects have been produced in various areas. However, the ECO has lagged well behind in realizing those projects. There is indeed a considerable gap between approved projects and their implementation. In this connection, I would like to recommend strengthening the follow-up and evaluation mechanism of ECO with a view to shorten the period between planning and implementation. ECO Secretariat, embassies of Member States in Tehran and focal points in the member states should actively take part in the follow-up and evaluation process on regular basis .

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Another problem in the ECO works is that some Member Countries could not be involved into the ECO activities and projects sufficiently enough. I propose that those member countries should take more responsibility in carrying out their tasks assigned to them within ECO.

Mr. Chairman,
I would like to touch-upon another important point that the human resources capacity of the Secretariat should be promoted in a way that the Secretariat could carry-out its functions in an efficient manner.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

RPC meetings are usually being held in January or February in winter. Considering that the budget year, begins in January in Turkey and in some other members, and also difficulties of traveling during winter time, we might shift the date of RPC meeting, preferably to the end of the third quarter of the year.

With regard to the proposals made by the member countries for establishing of new ECO centers or Institutions, I would like to advise that the expenditures of the new centers have to be covered by the proposing country in accordance with certain criteria to be decided by decision making organs of ECO.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Now, let me briefly go over the sectoral developments we observed within ECO, and share my views with this august body.

With regard to trade and investment activities, I am glad to observe that the total trade volume of the ECO region amounted to US\$ 318 billion in the year 2004, which represents 28% increase compare to previous year, and that the share of this amount in the world trade reached to 1.9%. The intra-regional trade volume having been around 5% over the last five years obliges us to intensify our efforts towards implementing the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) at the earliest. ECOTA has a vast scope of goods coverage for tariff reduction and covers the elimination of all para-tariff barriers in the region as well. We expect that the early implementation of the ECOTA would substantially stimulate the current low rate of

the intra-regional trade. Therefore, ECO member states are in need of much more closer economic cooperation, and opening up their economies to each other with a view to attain higher level of economic and social development. In this context, we have to intensify our efforts for the realization of the early implementation of the ECOTA.

Let me inform you that my country has already initiated the ratification process, I hope it will be completed soon. In this context, I would like to call on the member states to sign and ratify the ECOTA trade agreement as soon as possible.

With regard to the Fast Track Approach to the ECOTA, I would like to reiterate that Turkey is willing to sign the Draft Protocol as it was agreed upon at the Second High Level Expert Group meeting held in Islamabad in March 2005.

Now, I would like to point out that ECO Trade and Development Bank is an important project of the ECO in terms of strengthening the financial aspect of the organization. The main objective of the Bank, is to finance trade and investment projects for sustainable development in ECO region. There is no doubt that this Bank will bring new dynamism to our endeavors in the field of trade, investment and development. I am happy to know that the agreement of the ECO Trade and Development Bank has entered into force last August. All three Members of the bank have appointed their governors. Let me inform you that Turkey, being the coordinator country for the establishment of the bank, is planning to hold the first meeting of the board of the governors in Turkey, in May 2006. Our hope is that the bank will be established in a year as envisaged in ECO Vision 2015.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Although we are aware that private sector is a key actor in economic cooperation among the member states, we have not been able to involve the private sector of the member states in our activities sufficiently enough through institutionalizing the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECOCCI). Meanwhile, we had to make some arrangements in the past to get the private sector involved in the ECO activities. In this regard, the ECO-ITC Joint Project on Expanding Intra-Regional Trade was launched in 2001. The 1st phase of the project has been successfully implemented in the period of 2001 – 2004, which encouraged the Member States and ITC to continue the project with its second phase for the period of 2006 – 2008. I have the honor to inform the esteemed gathering that Turkey will support the second phase by extending technical and financial support, I strongly believe that all Member States will do their best for the successful implementation of the project in the second phase.

In this context, I would like to express my view that the establishment of permanent secretariat for the ECO CCI and thus strengthening its institutional capacity has to be realized as soon as possible, so that these kind of activities could be organized by ECO CCI.

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to inform the distinguished house that Turkey will host the Second Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy, together with the First High Level Expert Group Meeting on Finance / Economy this year. I call on the Member States to actively participate in these meetings.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Concerning the ECO activities on transport and communication, I would like to emphasize with satisfaction that ECO Vision 2015 shows strong intention “to operationalize the container and passenger train projects, which would connect the landlocked countries of Central Asia with Europe through various routes in the region including the route of Iran and Turkey and the one through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkey”. Since the Vision 2015 also envisages supporting initiatives towards development of projects in a framework of North – South, East – West, TRACECA and the Asian Highway Network transport corridors in the ECO region”, this is time for us to realize some specific projects in the field of transport.

Mr. Chairman,

With your kind permission I am pleased to inform the august house on the fact that the new ferryboats to work in the Van Lake for passenger and container transportation will be launched in the coming years. We have already allocated the necessary fund in the annual investment budget.

Taking into consideration the importance of the Trans-Asian railway route we request the ECO Secretariat to prepare a report on the problems and difficulties being faced in some Member States on railway transportation and accordingly take necessary measures to tackle with those problems.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

The entry into force of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement on 19th May 2006 is another new development. I believe that the implementation of the Agreement would facilitate and increase the volume of transit trade among the ECO Member Countries. However, we should keep in mind that we might have to work further on this agreement during the implementation period, due to prospective difficulties.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

As for the energy, minerals and environment, it is noteworthy that the feasibility study on interconnection and parallel functioning of power systems of ECO Member States is underway. I hope that the study would contribute to the basic needs in this field, further facilitate the regional energy trade and as pointed out in the ECO Vision 2015.

In addition, we should increase the share of new and renewable energy sources in total energy supply taking into consideration concerns regarding the environmental issues. In this regard, the Working Group on New and Renewable Energy Sources should meet soon to elaborate on necessary approaches and strategic plan.

On the other hand, harmonization of various regulations of ECO Member States in the field of minerals and immediate compilation of Mineral Data are critical issues to attract foreign direct investment into region. For this reason, the member states with the coordination of Turkey, are preparing a Mineral Data Booklet for publication. However, the coordinator institution is not receiving harmonized and enough data from some member states in the format prepared by the Secretariat. I would like to propose that the Turkish Coordinator should publish the Booklet using available data complying with the format.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to express my hope that the new Directorate of Human Resources and Sustainable Development would be functional on poverty alleviation in the ECO region aiming at achieving higher prosperity for our countries, as envisaged in the ECO Vision 2015 and UN Millennium Development Goals.

In this context, it is essential for us to cooperate especially with international organizations to enrich our people's basic capabilities and proficiencies, enhance employment opportunities, and improve health conditions in our countries. In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to give greater importance to combating against illegal human and drug trafficking in the ECO Member Countries.

We are proud to observe that ECO Secretariat has completed two phases of Drug Control and Coordination Unit (DCCU) Project in cooperation with international organizations. We are of the view that the Secretariat should continue to work in this field and approach the international organizations / donors to provide necessary funds.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

With reference to the agriculture, I am pleased that the Secretariat has provided technical and financial assistances from FAO and IDB for the "ECO Regional Programs for Food Security and Agricultural Development". As a result of this assistance, it would be possible to realize the projects in the year 2006. In this regard, I would like to thank the ECO Secretariat, FAO and IDB for their valuable efforts and contributions.

Mr.Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Regarding the works and studies being done at industrial sector, I would like to urge the ECO Member States to exert all their efforts to finalize "ECO Regional Strategy on Industry" and "Framework Strategy for Sub-sectors".

We are aware of that the works on the project of "Standardization and Accreditation" have been continuing, up to now. I would like to emphasize that the Statute of RISCAM should be adopted and implemented without prejudice to Turkey's rights and obligations deriving from the European Union Acqui as well as international commitments.

Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to conclude my speech, wishing all the success for the distinguished participants in their deliberations at this meeting.

Thank you.

**Statement by Mr. Feridun Kemal Feridun, Director of Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs
Department of the Deputy Prime Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me and my delegation to participate in the 16th meeting of the regional planning council. I extend to you all the heartfelt greetings of the people and the government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

At the outset, I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation and profound thanks to the Secretariat of the ECO and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the warm hospitality that is being extended to us in this beautiful and historic city.

I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the people and the government of Pakistan. We are deeply saddened that the recent horrific earthquake claimed many lives and inflicted heavy material damage in Pakistan. in the wake of this calamity, the trnc has joined in with the international relief efforts and within this framework, our government has immediately dispatched to northern pakistan a search and rescue team to participate in the search for survivors as well as a medical team consisting of five doctors and nurses.

Furthermore, the Turkish Cypriot government sent to quake-stricken Pakistan, two airplanes transporting humanitarian aid materials including medicine, health equipment, food, tents and blankets

which were duly delivered to the Pakistani officials. I have the privilege to inform you that our campaign for donations in this humanitarian issue will continue and that we expect to provide more financial aid other assistance to the people of Pakistan in the days ahead.

Mr. Chairman,

Now, I would like to briefly elaborate the recent political developments in Cyprus.

Following the referendum on 24 April 2004, the Cyprus issue has taken a new turn and a new state of affairs has emerged. After such a strong “no” by the Greek Cypriot side in the separate simultaneous referenda, which meant overwhelmingly rejecting the comprehensive settlement plan of the UN secretary general, we are very grateful for resolution on the situation in Cyprus adopted at the 31st Islamic conference of foreign ministers, held in Istanbul in 2004. Since then, the aforementioned resolution has enabled the Turkish Muslim people of Cyprus to participate in the OIC under the name of Turkish Cypriot state as envisaged by UN secretary general’s comprehensive settlement plan. although this is a very strong message by the OIC, reaffirming the total equality of the two parties in Cyprus, we are further urging the member states to strengthen effective solidarity with the Turkish Cypriots with a view to helping us to overcome the inhuman isolation, and to increase and expand our relations in all fields and in particular direct transport, trade, tourism, culture, information, investment and sports contacts.

My government appreciates it very much that the eco has followed the suit and adopted a similar resolution in the 14th eco council of ministers meeting in Dushanbe Tajikistan where the council decided that “the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus should continue to participate in the eco activities under the name envisaged by the un secretary general’s settlement plan.” in line with the spirit of the resolution adopted in Dushanbe, we call upon all member states to further develop bilateral relations with the TRNC and to appeal to the members of the eco to extend to the Turkish Cypriot people every support in order to enable them to achieve their economic and political goals.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

A liberal economic system is being implemented in the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus. under this system, the promotion of the private sector with limited government intervention, the rational use of natural resources, the encouragement of investments that generate high value added and employment are given priority and importance.

Encouragement of foreign investment is among the primary objectives of our development policy. Consequently those wishing to invest in the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus can be sure of a positive government attitude. In this connection, the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus is keen to welcome investors from eco countries to the TRNC. Our relevant ministry would be at the disposal and service of potential investors and businessmen who would like to learn more about the extensive tourism and business opportunities that exist in the TRNC.

Mr. Chairman,

The TRNC is home to 5 excellent universities providing higher education to 25 thousand students from over 60 countries, charging very reasonable fees. We would welcome your consideration to include our universities in your available options for the higher education of your youth. Around 15 percent of these students are enrolled from OIC countries. The medium of instruction in all five universities is English and these institutions are offering education at very high standards in many fields. Furthermore, scholarships in limited numbers are granted to eco students every year.

Furthermore, TRNC provides a most hospitable welcome to tourists, with its friendly people, plenty of luxurious hotels and restaurants which provide Mediterranean and international cuisine, not to mention simpler and cosier places where many local dishes can be enjoyed, and its great natural beauty, which is unspoiled, unpolluted and uncrowded.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank you for your most kind attention and for your continued support to the people of the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus in our just struggle to secure our rightful place among the family of nations.

Thank you.

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