

The 15th RPC Meeting

Statements by the Heads of Delegation

(Tehran, 14-17 February, 2005)

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Statement of Prof. Dr. Nazir Ahmad Shahedi,

Deputy Minister of Ministry of Economy and Head of Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Name is GOD, who is kind and merciful.

*Excellency Mr. President;
Ladies and Gentlemen;*

It is great pleasure to express our participation in this big session with you excellencies representatives, to consolidate and deployment the region economic planning.

Allow me on behalf of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, myself, my colleagues, representatives my great gratitude on holding this magnificent session, and also wish to thank to Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Askhat Orazbay Secretary General and the Secretariat, that regulated this big forum.

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

Excellency Mr. President;

The holding session of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) at the level of, higher delegations, experts in the sector of economic and cultural and other sectors not only close the regional countries among each other, but also further consolidated our social relationship and bring an effective economic relations in the region.

Excellency, Mr. President;

It should be mentioned that war tragedy almost destroyed the whole establishments, such as: economic, social, agriculture, irrigation, energetic, roads transportation, communication, schools, hospitals and health centers, or partly damaged. So as result, has been destructed the whole internal productions and income, and also decreased the volume of exports-balance of payment, and made the state budget un-equilibrium and faced acute deficit.

The direct and indirect damaged of war estimated billions of US dollar, as result of war destroyed, 3000 schools, 150 hospitals and clinics, 90% high way asphalt, 100 bridges, thousands of transportation vehicles and the travelers, and more than one and half million resident houses, millions livestock and husbandry, tools, the irrigation system, agriculture and the industrial services.

H.E. Mr. President;

Fortunately, as result of Bonn agreements, the Interim Government of Afghanistan, established and after that the emergency assembly (Loya Jirga) founded Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, its main targets was to consolidate peace and security, by kind cooperation of countries, international communities, especially, ECO at the side of us and to get advantage of all sided assistances in reconstruction of Afghanistan.

H.E. Mr. President;

On the base of approved fundamental constitution in the country, the presidential election for the first time successfully performed and as result, H.E. Hamid Karzi for five years has been selected as first president of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Thus, with establishment of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, made its political and economic relationship re-strong and secure with the outside world and has been trying to consolidate whole country security and bring national unity, so the people and inhabitants of the country expressed their full support of this policy.

The main important issues, which has vary basic role to make constant security, in the country that the rehabilitation of national economy that, from one side increase the capacity of economic and social and gets rehabilitate and from the other side will secure, and provided jobs to the people.

By establishment of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, preserved security in the country, the repatriation of refugees, already have been started from out side the country and according to submitted report by UNHCR, dated month of September 2004, almost 3,021,126 persons repatriated, that the major problems of Afghan repatriated is the shelter problems.

H.E. Mr. President;

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan under three dimensions took operation into, (12) programmes under the National Development Framework (NDF), and this process has been following seriously.

National Military Development:

National military is one of the likened prominent and distinguished of the national unity and the clear intention and willing of the Afghan nation.

So on this base, the foundation of national military is established in the country and performs its big national patriotic duties in this way. Parallel with this development, the expansion and promotion of ability of the national military in the country process of collecting of arms and ammunition has been started in the month September and October 2004, and according to successful implementation of UNDP, report till now about 32000 persons have joined to this process, and about 28000 persons provided substitute job to them. The total individuals, who are entered to the process of (DDR) are 35700 persons.

To combat against cultivation, production and smuggling of narcotic abuse: The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan made new strategy to abolish production, cultivation and traffic of narcotic, that its brought a big limitation to society and economy, so the target is to reduce cultivation, production and traffic of narcotic abuse, and complete abolition is forecasted up to the year 2013 in the country.

It should be mentioned, that for effective campaign of narcotics the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has the excellent background, to cooperate us to wiping out production and use of narcotics at the level of region.

H.E. Mr. President;

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as an active member of the organization is responsible to implement the whole targets economic, that is confirmed in the Azmir Treaty. Afghanistan is one of the land locked country, of the ECO member countries. On the base of national regional benefits, we cooperate and has relations with the whole member countries and request to have necessary transit facility by the whole members countries, and according to the agreements of (commerce, goods transit and other international treaties) and also provide active participation to the growth of trade in the region.

H.E. Mr. President;

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan last year had some more achievements in ECO, and are as follows:

1- 2nd ECO, Trade and Investment Conference of the member countries held in the city of Kabul on 18th April 2004 and this was one of biggest international conference, which was after 25 years organized, approximately 600 participants form private and public sectors and foreign investors also participated in the conference. So this conference motivated to promote foreign investors and to establish the atmosphere of confident for investment in Afghanistan increased the level of references of foreign investors in the country.

2- In the above mentioned conference margin there was exhibited foreign countries production in exhibition, especially hand made handcrafts were showed in the exhibition, which that was more successful and effective for the conference.

3- With the holding of 7th General Assembly Meeting of ECO-CCI in Kabul, Afghanistan on April 20, 2004, efforts are being made to reactivate and make in an effective body of ECO, and the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry Secretariat and chairmanship are now for two year with Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kabul. This is an important achievement to Afghanistan, of course, this is the sign of confident and assurances of ECO member countries due to appropriate political stability and consolidation in the country, and so will reactivate Afghanistan to this organization, as in spite of logistical problems which this new established foundation has, but some activity has been fulfilled by this Secretariat that is trade arbitration, which is established facility to remove problems, and merchants struggles among the ECO member countries and also to provide Information Directory related to national exports and imports statistic and data of the member countries.

4- Secretariat of Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kabul, to remove financial problems, during conference by the founded members Islamic republic of Iran, Republic of Turkey and Islamic Republic of Pakistan were promised to cooperate and assist the chamber of commerce and industry, but it is regretted to say that not yet fulfilled.

5- The financial experts meeting to establish the (ARTF) Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund, was held in Kabul on 21 April 2004, in this meeting representatives of ECO member countries were reached to an agreement to establish this special fund for reconstruction of Afghanistan, so therefore in a meeting, which was held in Dushanbe 2004, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was pledged US\$ 5 million to this fund for reconstruction of Afghanistan and transferred to the trust fund account in Habib Bank in London. I as representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan appreciated the assistance of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in this magnificent session I also request the assistance of other ECO member countries to this special trust fund.

6- The bilateral agreement between Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was signed on feasibility study in construction of Nawar bridge in Hesarak District, Nangarhar Province, which was signed in Tehran on June 15, 2004, so by this agreement ECO paid US\$ 7200 for the survey of primary work of the said bridge.

7- The feasibility studies scheme proposal to build canals in Farah Province, by ECO sent to Afghanistan to have suggestion of Afghan authority, so after the confirmation of design by Afghanistan back sent to ECO Secretariat, the ECO, US\$ 23095 would give for implementation of the project to

Afghanistan disposal, and also the implementing of administrative procedure to final the project is under performances.

8- Prof. Dr. Shah Mohammad Mirwandi, Member of Science Academy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan received medal and certificate of science and technology award US\$ 4000 in ECO member countries conference which was held in Dushanbe, September 14, 2004.

H.E. Mr. President,

We would like ECO, get active interest for rehabilitation and reconstruction round in Afghanistan and along with participation in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country infrastructure, the ECO should cooperate us by joint-ventures projects, till in near future we achieve the equilibrium promotion and growth.

The specific suggestions and proposals of Afghan delegation, I do hope that in related committees would put into discussion determination and consideration in water and energy, health, customs, economic research, agriculture, and narcotics abuse.

I end my statement with request, of this to increase the economics relations among the ECO member countries.

With my best regards

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Statement of Mr. Ragim Guseinov,
the Head of Azerbaijan Delegation

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,*

Allow me, first of all, on behalf of the Republic of Azerbaijan to greet all participants of the meeting and express appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for holding 15th Regional Planning Council (RPC).

Your Excellency!

Nowadays in the time of globalization, when countries throughout the world are taking efforts towards integration into world economy, the regional cooperation is integral part of foreign policy of each country. In this connection, our country has actively cooperated within the framework of regional Organization. In terms of development of such relations, the more serious obligations fall on the ECO member states.

At the beginning, I would like to brief about economic achievements of my country. Since 1995 the macroeconomic situation of the Republic of Azerbaijan has stabilized, with annual growth of 10% and inflation of 2,5%. Even despite the relatively high inflation of 6,7% in 2004, GDP increased by 10,2%. The volume of foreign investments is more than \$17 billion, and this figure remains a leading place of Azerbaijan among the countries with transitional economy. It is known, that Azerbaijan has been implementing 2 projects of regional significance, so far. The first one is TRACEKA program envisaging revival of the Great Silk Road, which stretches from China to Europe. As you are ware, 7 countries from ECO have opted in this Program. The second project being implemented now is construction of main pipeline on Baku-Tbilisi Ceihan route aimed at transportation of the Caspian Sea oil into Mediterranean Sea. By the end of this year, this pipeline is supposed to transport 50 million tons of oil annually to the world markets. In nearest future we are planning to implement another project that is construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline to be able to transport natural reserves of Caspian gas to Europe.

All said above proves that successes achieved by the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of economic development for the short period be continued in future, and our country will make more contribution to the development of the region.

As of today, there has been made several important tasks on 4 priority trends defined by ECO, i.e. trade and investment, transport, energy and agriculture. As is known, ECOTA was signed in 2003. We highly appreciate that this agreement has defined specific tasks of the ECO member states. We hope that alike quickness will be achieved on the other activities. In line with this, formation of legal base of investments is also of paramount importance. We believe that Agreement on stimulation and protection of investments in the ECO region will be signed and amendments to ECOTA will be agreed upon in nearest future.

The steps taken within Organization in the field of transport are approvable, but are not satisfied. Saying more precisely, small share of region's potential is used in this field so far. More use of potential of TRACECA transport corridor by the ECO member states would be worthwhile in order to provide effective transportation in the region. From the point of development of transport relations, we deem it necessary to combine the railway networks of Azerbaijan and Iran. We have already started combining the railway transport with Turkey (Karu-Akhalkani-Tbilisi).

Region's security issue remains priority. It is known, that 20% of Azerbaijan territory is under occupation of Armenia, and Azerbaijan believes that the ECO member states will objectively consider this issue.

In the light of technological progress, cooperation of the ECO member states in the field of information-communication technologies looks like perspective.

In nearest future Azerbaijan is going to raise again an issue in relation to establishment of cotton-manufacturing countries' forum and has already made several suggestions for cooperation in the field of agriculture. We have also favored for speedy settlement of the process on interconnection and parallel functioning of the ECO member states' energy systems. Active steps are being taken in the field of industry, in particularly, on the eve of the 2nd HLEG meeting.

Our country is actively taking part in all ECO activities. You know, that recently we have held the 4th expert group meeting on TAEFOS in Baku and is planning to hold a meeting within ECOSAI as well as a meeting of Customs administration of the ECO member states, in April and in May 2005, respectively.

In order to improve efficiency of our Organization, I would like to attract your kind attention to 2 problems. The first one is insufficiency of existing financial resources. We deem it necessary to expand collaboration with financial institutions and donor organizations with an aim to seek and use new financial resources.

The second problem is difficulties being confronted in preparation of subsequent and purposeful specific proposals and projects in the field of expansion of economic cooperation and systematic and fast information exchange within ECO, relying on scientific basis. To this end, it would be worthwhile to set up Economic Research and Statistics Center. This idea was initiated by Azerbaijan during the ECO Summit meeting in Istanbul in 2002. I would like to thank my colleagues, who actively participated in discussion on setting up this Center. We forwarded the Charter of this Center to ECO Secretariat in accordance with 13th RPC meeting report. As you are aware, the 87th CPR meeting has considered this topic and decided to reconsider it in detail latter on. I believe that ECO Secretariat and the member states will take all efforts to set up this Center.

Thank you for attention.

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Statement of H.E. Mr. Majedi,

In the Name of God

*Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First of all I would like to welcome you to the 15th meeting of RPC and to express my happiness for the participation in this important meeting.

I hope that this meeting would produce tangible results for the ECO member states through availing themselves of this opportunity and sharing experiences and information.

His Excellency Mr. Shoraka, the esteemed Vice President and Head of State Planning and Management Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran elaborated in detail the importance of the regional cooperation in the era of globalization. Thus, I refrain from addressing this issue again.

The geographical location and neighborhood are realities, which definitely affected by ultra – borders factors which, vis-à-vis the current situation the countries play the least role in choosing them. They are eventually doomed to good neighboring with each other. Needless to say, strategic location of the region were our countries located and current global challenge, have made our cooperation a necessity and closely tied to each other.

The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that the ECO, characterized by 10 member states having approximately 400 million population and 7 million square kilometer area could play a leading role towards economic development and progress of its member states.

Although, a decade has elapsed since ECO started its work, the organization gained less tangible results than expected by member states. However, this fact should be taken into account that all documents and agreements required for establishing cooperation among members have already been drafted and mostly inked.

Yet, I would like to express the Islamic Republic of Iran's concern over non-implementation of the agreements signed. Now, Time is ripe for member states to take concrete steps towards implementing projects and documents. The Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the founding members in this organization, is ready to extend cooperation with other members to make these documents operational and state studying on fast tracking mechanism in this respect.

Dear Colleagues,

In view of all the responsibilities including, planning, reviewing policies and strategies, assessing the activities of Secretariat, preparing calendar of events and compiling economic reports of the region, this meeting could undertake a crucial role in this process.

To achieve these important goals, it is necessary to review constantly projects and agreements drafted in this organization and make stride to eradicate the hurdles through putting forward the practical solution. Establishment of the EPG following decision taken by 13th COM session, was an important step in line with attaining these goals. The said group made some recommendations on how to follow up and remove the operational obstacle on the way of implementing the ECO agreements. All these efforts are worthy of attention.

In this regard, convening of sessions and active participation of the member in senior officials meeting (SOM), the first session of which is going to take place between 12-13 April, 2005 in Tehran, could play a significant role in reviewing the projects launched by organization. On the other hand, to name countries as coordinator in order to make necessary arrangements for the implementing the projects, is also considered among practical initiatives taken in this direction.

Now, after 10 years since the establishment of the ECO, trade statistics among the members, are disappointing. For this reason, it is highly important to expand intra-regional economic transaction as a first step and then to expand it beyond the region. To realize these objective, finalization of the "ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) is a promising step in the current situation". All of us should make utmost effort to approve and put them into force. As mentioned in Dr. Shoraka's keynote speech, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to make effective the provision of the agreement even sooner than what stipulated in the document, provided that the other countries would be ready to do so.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that member states should expedite the implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and take stride towards the formation of a Free Trade Area by 2015 as emphasized upon during the 8th Summit.

Considering the emphasis during the 8th summit and 14th COM on the importance of the transportation and telecommunication in the process of inter-regional economic exchanges and further more, the attention paid by 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on transportation and telecommunication on the necessity of exciting political will at the highest level, all member should make effort to eradicate obstacles in the way of important projects particularly the passenger and container train.

Enforcement of these projects as symbol of solidarity and understanding among people of region is viewed as an important element in flourishing of cultural, trade and tourism relations in the region. I hope that those member states who are in the main transit route for these projects, would facilitate their implementation.

Considering the vital role of energy in economic development and huge energy resources such as petroleum, gas and other types of mineral resources in the region, enhancing cooperation in this section as one of the priority areas, possess highly importance. Unfortunately there has not been a remarkable activity in this section. For materializing of existing potentials it is necessary to take concrete measures in this context. Power system interconnection of ECO member countries is also an important issue that in view of different peak hours in member countries, could make great savings in power expenses and also provides possibility for power export to outside the region. Interconnection of power networks of the ECO region is perhaps one of the most accessible and the easiest goals that could be accomplished through international assistance.

Dear participants,

Let me extend my appreciation to ever increasing trend of enhanced industrial cooperation among the member states and hope that this kind of cooperation could be promoted more than ever. Holding the First Industrial Ministers Meeting in Tehran and EGM on industry in Turkey have provided suitable ground for cooperation in this section. We hope that cooperation in this sector will be continued with fruitful results, which could bring development and prosperity for the people of the region.

In order to implement the agreements of the First Industrial Meeting and enforce the obligations made by Islamic Republic of Iran in the consequent expert meeting, Ministry of Industries and Mines of the Islamic Republic of Iran had launched a website (<http://www.ettcenter.com>) to facilitate ECO technology transfer. It is obvious that the effectiveness of such measures could be materialized only through exchange of views and cooperation of all member countries.

Considering the importance of privatization and private sector development, increasing cooperation among private sectors of the member states is highly important. Effective measures could be taken in this regard by preparing the necessary legal and political requirement. Holding trade fairs and meeting of sellers and buyers among active business peoples at regional level are examples of such activities. We also welcome the proposal to institutionalize ECO Business Forum in order to promote private sector development.

In view of deeply rooted cultural and historical bonds in the region, there is great opportunity for cultural cooperation among member states of ECO. Such cooperation could secure solid and continuous cooperation in other sections.

Islamic Republic of Iran while appreciating the efforts made by ECO Secretariat in concluding cooperation agreements and MOUs with different international organizations particularly the United Nations bodies, believes that such agreements should pave the grounds for enhancing common cooperation and encourage them to provide financial resources and necessary technical assistance to facilitate the ECO projects.

Dear audience,

Taking into account the devastating and harmful effects of narcotics and cross borders organized crimes and due to considerable increase of these destructive phenomena in recent years, it requires more and more cooperation among the member states to eliminate the evil phenomena. We hope that the Secretariat while continues negotiating with international organizations to finance the current projects, should create necessary ground for continuation of activities of DCCU. Islamic Republic of Iran fully welcomes the cooperation of the member states to combat narcotics and in line with the decision made by 8th Summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, is ready to hold the first meeting of interior ministers of ECO in April 2005 in Tehran to strengthen the cooperation of member states in the field of the organized and trans boundary crimes such as drug trafficking, money laundering, smuggling etc.

We hope that with active and high level participation of concerned authorities of ECO member states in this meeting, it could make a solid basis for further cooperation in the future.

Concluding of my statement, I would like to appreciate the efforts made by the esteemed Secretary General and all personnel of the Secretariat for holding this meeting and timely preparation of necessary documents. I hope this meeting would take effective steps for advancing the objectives set for the organization.

Thank you.

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Statement by H. E. Mr. S. Tairov,

Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Islamic Republic of Iran

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,*

First of all, allow me on behalf of Kazakhstan delegation to express thankfulness to the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for holding this important meeting. I would also like to congratulate H. E. Mr. Makhmudov for having been elected a Chairman of this high forum.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has always declared about its firm adherence to subsequent development of regional cooperation and takes efforts for achieving economic prosperity.

We are aware that upswing of social-economic development of the Republic of Kazakhstan and reforms being carried out by the country will lead to revitalization of regional cooperation.

In terms of globalization, creation of favorable conditions for economic development of our countries is, first of all, to be the main purpose of joint efforts. Hence, the activities within ECO framework should be directed towards implementation of the specific projects and, first of all, in priority fields of cooperation.

At present, development of transport and energy communications is of paramount importance and very topical for the ECO member states. It is very difficult to talk about economic growth in the region without intensive development of transport and energy communications. You know that 7 ECO member states have no access to the world ocean. In this connection, Kazakhstan gives a paramount importance for the development of transit-transport possibilities of the region as a factor of intensification of regional trade. As you know, the Republic of Kazakhstan has initiated constructing the Trans-Asian railway main line with Europe, which will increase significantly the efficiency of transport capacities of the region.

Trade interconnections of the ECO member states are to be raised to the due level. It is just trade sector eligible to become an engine and give a push for other fields of cooperation. Now we have many problems in the trade and economic cooperation because of existing tariff and customs barriers hampering trade turnover among the ECO member states.

The ECO member states are to use the abilities of private sector broader while implementing specific projects in the field of industry and agriculture in order to revitalize regional trade.

Esteemed participants,

Holding joint and coordinated work aimed at improving and raising regional cooperation, and undertakings for implementation of ECO decisions approved earlier will result in achieving the goals set forth by our Organization.

Thank you.

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Statement by H. E. Mr. M. Sadyrculov,

Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic to Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Head of Kyrgyz delegation

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Let me, first of all, on behalf of Kyrgyz Republic and on my own behalf congratulate H. E. Mr. Makhmudov for having been elected a Chairman of this high forum.

I would like to also express my appreciation to the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran for warm hospitality and excellent arrangements created for all participants of this meeting.

We have to highly appreciate the preparative work made by all senior officials and staff of ECO Secretariat headed by H. E. Mr. Askhat Arazbai, ECO Secretary General.

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues,*

Significant events such as 14th Council of Ministers meeting and 8th Summit of the ECO member states were held in Dushanbe, since the last 14th RPC meeting.

During Dushanbe Summit, the Heads of our states and governments tasked ECO to take regular and intensive efforts towards growing and developing the region and gradual integration of the ECO member states into world economy, as well as to provide implementation of decision taken at various ECO meetings.

We all would like to see ECO as an instrument for achieving consensus and understanding, acting mechanism of concerted economic policy of our friendly countries in conformity with time requirements. It

is a fact that as of today, no country in the world is able to solve its national economy tasks without close collaboration at the regional level.

Thirteen years experience of cooperation shows necessity for concentrating efforts towards implementation of important decisions approved earlier and constant monitoring of projects and programs, in particularly, in priority areas such as trade, energy, transport and communications.

Esteemed Mr. Chairman,

For the last 3 years, Kyrgyzstan has been implementing a strategy aimed at improving investment climate. Within the framework of this strategy, we have prepared 90 bills and approved 54 laws. The outcomes of 2004 show the positive developments of economic growth, stabilization and improvement of main macroeconomic indicators, stable national currency rate. It is worth mentioning here, that GDP volume increased by 7,1%, while inflation was 2,8% during the last year.

Economic reforms carried out in Kyrgyzstan and opting Kyrgyzstan in WTO have resulted in making liberalization of foreign trade regime, removing most of trade barriers and reducing customs tariffs significantly. All this creates a ground for substantial development of trade with ECO member states.

In 2004, one third of total foreign trade turnover volume fell on the ECO member-states, of which 84,7% fell on Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, while 15,3% fell on Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Afghanistan.

Establishment of free trade zone in the ECO region by 2015, operation of ECO trade and development bank, and revitalization of ECO CCI are to be the most priority task for ECO. There is no doubt that accession of the other ECO member states in WTO and unification of tariffs and rules based on free market economy rules expands trade and economic relations among the ECO member states and increases regional trade volume significantly.

Development of the transport and communications infrastructure is also important for all of us. Necessity for political will of the ECO member states aimed at overwhelming impediments towards implementation of passenger and container traffic project on Trans-Asian main railway line on Almaty-Istanbul route was noted during the last 5th ECO ministerial meeting on transport and communication, held in Cholpon-Ata. We all realize the necessity for practical implementation of this project to be able to "revitalize" our Organization and become a quickener for other projects within ECO in the field of trade and tourism. I sincerely hope, that all problematic issues on this project will be settled during the 9th Heads of railway administration meeting of the ECO member states to be held in Kyrgyzstan in Summer of the current year.

Esteemed Mr. Chairman,

The national hydro-energy development priority and gradual increase of hydro-energetic potential in Kyrgyzstan is in line with decisions of heads of our states to provide by 2015 mutual interconnection of ECO member states energy systems. The Kyrgyz Republic has repeatedly underlined its high interest in the project on interconnection and parallel functioning of ECO member states energy systems at all high-level ECO meetings.

The other projects on elaboration and development of wealthy fuel-energy and mineral resources of the ECO region are waiting in the wings.

Dear colleagues,

While considering ECO calendar of events for 2005-2006, I would like to mention that we have to expand geography of meetings held and involve all members of Organization in its activity. We have also to underline the efforts of three-founding member-states, which render maximal political and financial support for advancing collaboration within ECO framework. Along with this, I am sure that holding a

number of sectoral expert group meetings in new member states will facilitate both advancing regional cooperation and awareness of ECO, as well as increase the interests of 7 new member states in Organization's activity.

Our countries have already passed the primary phase of collaboration, and it is time for us now to make substantial analyses and select the most priority regional projects with its subsequent implementation. I hope that the participants of the 15th RPC meeting will focus their attention on important and practical issues mentioned in the agenda.

In conclusion, let me express my thankfulness and appreciation to the host country for warm hospitality rendered for all participants of this meeting and wish success for the all participants.

Thank you.

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Statement by Mr. Muhammad Humayun Farshori,
Secretary, Planning & Development Division / Leader of the Pakistan Delegation

*Honourable Chairman,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Assalamo Alaikum!

It is indeed a great privilege and honour for me as head of the Pakistan delegation to participate in the 15th meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the ECO countries being held in this beautiful historical city of Tehran. I take this opportunity to convey our sincere gratitude to the brotherly Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the ECO Secretariat, for the warm reception, overwhelming hospitality and elaborate arrangements made for this important meeting.

Mr. Chairman!

2. Let me first of all congratulate Your Excellency on your election as the Chairman of this meeting. I feel confident that the RPC, under your able leadership, will not only carry forward the areas of cooperation initiated during the last RPC meeting held in Turkey, but also reinforce this process to the benefit of all the regional member states. At this juncture, it is our important duty to acknowledge with thanks, the valuable contribution to regional cooperation through RPC made by your worthy predecessor.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies & gentlemen!

3. Regional cooperation is increasingly being recognized as an effective vehicle for accelerating development by pooling the resources, expertise and information relating to the best practices. I hope that the keen interest and active role of the distinguished participants will set the stage for making this forum a role model of regional cooperation.

4. Before expressing my views on the broad issues on the agenda, I would like to apprise this august forum about the overall economic policy scenario in Pakistan. Currently the Government of Pakistan, under the leadership of honourable President General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, gives high priority to a regional approach to accomplish the goal of a prosperous, vibrant and progressive society.

5. Pakistan has taken a number of steps to achieve macro-economic stability and economic growth whereby the economy has taken its turnaround duly reflected in higher than targeted growth rate of 6.5%

in the real GDP, significant improvement in the external sector especially in the merchandize exports and remittances and accumulation of foreign exchange reserves. The country is moving towards a balanced internationally competitive, technologically driven and knowledge-based economy to become an industrialized nation in the foreseeable future. Pakistan economy is making rapid progress especially in IT, telecom, construction and services sectors. The Government is making all out efforts to make best use of available water, energy and mineral resources and improving the physical infrastructure including roads, railways, ports and dams. These efforts will provide firm basis for future sustainable growth in the country. The process has set a stage for taking the economy on a high growth path of 7.4% per annum during the Medium Term Development Framework planned for 2005-10. The benefits of this growth will certainly spill over to other regional economies and enhance trading activities within the region.

Mr. Chairman!

6. The Government of Pakistan greatly values the ECO Trade Agreement signed in July 2003 in the 2nd Ministerial meeting on Commerce & Foreign Trade by 5 member states. This is a major step forward towards the achievement of the goal of ECO Free Trade Area (ECOTA) in the region. The Ministerial Meeting also established a High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Trade Investment and other related matters to work as an institutionalized arrangement for prompt follow up and implementation of the decisions taken.

7. The present intra-regional trade among the ECO member states amounts to approximately US\$ 11 billion which is around 5.6 percent of their total foreign trade. The total external trade of ECO countries is around US\$ 198 billion which is 1.5 percent of the total world trade. It is hoped that elimination of tariff and non tariff barriers and implementation of other measures embodied in the Agreement will increase inter regional trade.

8. It is, however, through development of efficient physical infrastructure facilities that the flow of goods and services across the regional countries can be promoted. Pakistan, therefore, fully endorses the initiatives taken by the ECO Secretariat for the development of Rails, Roads, Shipping and telecommunications etc. In fact, Pakistan has embarked upon a programme for developing infrastructure to increase connectivity among the ECO countries. Construction of Gawadar Port and Mekran Coastal Highway will considerably improve Pakistan's connection with Iran and other ECO member countries. Feasibility studies for some important projects like the rehabilitation of main South-West Highway connecting Balochistan with Afghanistan and Chaman-Kandhar rail link have already been undertaken. Pakistan is also actively considering such projects as Iran-Pakistan and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipelines. I am sure similar initiatives would be under consideration of other friendly countries in the region in their national plans, beside the collective steps being taken by this forum.

Mr. Chairman!

9. I believe that the ECO, under your able guidance, will play a proactive role to accelerate the economic integration among the member countries. The present low level of intra regional trade will hopefully be substantially enhanced in the near future through the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers and the facilitation of transportation links among the member states. I, therefore, fully, support your Excellency's desire as well as the desire of other distinguished delegates to see active implementation of the decisions being taken at this high forum through the committed efforts of the ECO Secretariat. I hope that the deliberations of this forum especially at the level of experts represented at the working groups would lead to a fruitful and worthwhile outcome of this dialogue.

10. May I conclude, Excellencies, by placing on record, once again our profound thanks to our hosts, the Iranian Government, to the distinguished Secretary General, and to the diligent officers and staff of the ECO Secretariat for the meticulous arrangements made for this meeting.

I thank you very much.

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Isroil Makhmudov,

Deputy Minister on Trade and Economy of the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Head of Tajik delegation

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the outset, taking the opportunity I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for warm hospitality rendered for us and to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for holding this important meeting.

We consider this meeting as a continuation of the ECO Summit Meeting held in Dushanbe in September 2004 with an aim to take measures towards implementation of the activities planned within the Dushanbe Declaration.

Highly appreciating positive role of ECO and its huge potential, we realize that global changes taking place throughout the world will, without no doubt attract attention of the world community to ECO. This region relying on its united raw material, transport and food capacity may gain new industrial lines in the changing economic world.

This means, that formation of common economic area, trade-customs zones and economic strategy is to be main strategic aim of ECO.

First of all, it is necessary to underscore the ECO role as a guarantor for strengthening trade and economic collaboration and advancing investments in the region. In this context, accelerating mutual transparency process and accessibility of economies of their countries and the region as a whole, obtaining potential profits from investments flows, increasing employment, expanding trade and further economic turn is very important for the ECO member states.

Transit issue is one of the main factors hampering the trade and economic cooperation development. We have to mention here that it is impossible to achieve a due level of internal regional integration and expand trade and economic ties among the countries of the Organization without establishment of necessary structure. Hence, based on Kwetta Plan of Action and Program of Action for decade on transport and communication (1998-2007), we have to pay special attention to the development of transport and communication sector, effective utilization of existing infrastructure, improvement of transit potential, which is one of the main components, since some of the ECO member states have no developed infrastructure and access to the sea.

In this connection, we propose the ECO member states to speed up ratification of the Transit transport framework agreement (TTFA), which would provide an opportunity for smooth movement of goods through the ECO member states territory. As a preparatory work for this purpose, we are to review the existing legislations of the ECO member states in the field of transport. It is also necessary for us to consider the possibility for opting in international transport conventions and conventions on transit. We also offer to set up the automobile consortium, which would carry out goods and cargo within ECO framework, along with Special Commission for consideration of issues in relation to transit problems in the region, introduction of transport tariffs and approximation of the customs standards and norms.

As for transport, we may note the significance of opening international railway on Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul route envisaging development of the relations among the ECO member states. At the same time, the issue on coupling of through passenger wagons at Samarkand or Turkmenabad stations, which creates certain concern, has not been solved so far despite the several requests of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Along with automobile and railway infrastructure, we have to work out and agree on Agreement on cooperation in the field of air transport.

The trade barriers are the other impediments deterring integration process into the world economic ties.

We believe and trust that ECO being a regional organization will work hard towards achieving its one of the basic aims, i.e. remove trade barriers in the region and develop the trade between the ECO member states.

However, it is obvious that various discrepancies in the trade policy of the countries and different trade liberalization level require a long time for achieving this purpose. Expansion of trade and economic cooperation among the ECO member states is impossible without having and setting up necessary infrastructures. Unfortunately, despite the steps taken, the volume of intraregional trade among the ECO member states is not so significant and makes up at about 6-8%. Level and deepness of regional cooperation is far from being perfect.

For the time being, foreign and economic relations within the region are restricted to export and import operations. At the same time, the other forms of foreign and economic relations such as implementation of joint projects, establishment of the joint stocks, scientific-productive cooperation and introduction of "know-how" technologies cannot be developed. The conditions of the Agreements signed within ECO framework are not duly implemented so far.

In this connection, we deem it necessary to complete the preparative works on ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and ratify it by the remaining member states.

Tajikistan is very interested in developing cooperation with the ECO member states in the field of telecommunications. A plan for the development of telecommunication and postal links in the region determines the main trends of joint efforts towards providing modern telecommunication ties. Recently, Tajikistan needs in preparation and improvement of professional development in the field of telecommunications, establishment of joint stocks on the production of the telecommunication equipments.

There is a need for speeding up projects implementation process in the field of transport and communications, called, in its turn, to accelerate regional integration.

In nearest future, it is necessary for us to deepen mutual beneficial cooperation at a more high and qualitative level by revitalizing and taking measures towards improving activities of the ECO Science of Foundation, ECO Cultural Institute, ECO College of Insurance and ECO Trade and Chamber of Commerce, and speeding up the settlement of issues such as simplification of visa procedures for ECO member-states businessmen, establishment of common trade and information data-base and attraction of private sector for implementation of the projects and plans put forward by our Organization.

At present time, all world communities are taking steps in assisting and reconstructing Afghanistan, and Tajikistan being a close neighbor has its hands in the pie to this process.

It is glad to be noted, that ECO takes steps towards rehabilitation of Afghanistan by establishing and launching ECO Special Fund for reconstruction projects of Afghanistan, and ECO Feasibility Fund.

Tajikistan gets ready to render full assistance for all planned measures. The only thing we want to underline is to accelerate implementation process and trace achieved results on permanent basis.

Each country, besides ECO, is a member of some other regional organization. Analyzing the state of economic interrelations of many organizations, we may objectively acknowledge that collaboration of most of them are far from being perfect to be able to provide an opportunity to bring the very important and economically profitable projects and programs to logical completion. Summarizing small experience and assessing our organization's perspectives, I would like to mention that we have a great potential for implementing practical actions. Lets us study a work and experience of the other organizations and try to gain only advanced and constructional aspects.

Complex and effective utilization of region's water and energy resources is also an important field of regional collaboration. Continual growth of irrigation scales, active development of new lands and increasing in population of the region have exacerbated water problem, while development of production has caused increase in energy demand.

The ECO region possesses great reserves of hydrocarbon resources and colossal water-energy potential, which largely define its place in world economy. Complex and effective use of available potential provides an opportunity to strengthen the role of region's countries in defining market condition of energy resources and decreasing negative impact of fluctuation of the world prices on energy resources.

Along with this, taking into account the fact, that the energy resources are not shared equally between the countries of the region, we have to deepen our collaboration and effectively use those resources. For instance, great-explored reserves of hydrocarbons are located in Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, while huge water-energy potential is available in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In this connection, there is an urgent need for working out of complex program aimed at effective using water-energy potential in order to generate the cheapest and environmentally sound energy.

The ECO member states enjoy huge potential for the development of cooperation in the field of industry, agriculture, food industry, agricultural processing industry and civil engineering etc. In order to use potential on cooperation in rational and efficient manner, it is necessary for the ECO Secretariat to strengthen its work with representatives of business communities and private sector and to attract and involve them in implementation of the regional projects and expansion of the regional trade.

In this context, development of regional cooperation by means of establishing inter-sectoral relations within the region to attract foreign investment is very topical for us. It is necessary to develop regional labor sharing keeping in view the specific peculiarities of each member states, absolute and comparable advantages in the production of this or that items aimed at reducing expenditures for their production and increasing their marketability at the foreign markets.

Agrarian sector of all member states is developed. In this connection, settlement of issues such as provision of the region with food, increasing production and reducing losses of agricultural products by intensification of production and introduction of new technologies is topical field of regional collaboration. To this end, it is necessary to start a work towards establishment of common market of separate agricultural products of the ECO member states.

Joint activity in the field of economy, food and ecological security, management and transfer of technologies, reduction of poverty level could be a special field of cooperation. Almost all member states have been facing these problems, and that is why, they have to ginger up a work towards attracting and involving donor-countries and international organizations to render financial and technical assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to underscore, that at present, the ECO member states should take efforts for deepening economic integration, participating in implementation of the most perspective joint projects of paramount importance aimed at achieving progress and well-being of our people.

Thank you for attention.

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Statement by H.E. Mr. I. Akramov,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran

Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Esteemed Heads of Delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, let me express my gratitude to the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran for cordial welcome and high arrangement level of this meeting, which is devoted to strengthening the long-run cooperation underpinning of ECO member-states.

Let me welcome all the leaders of delegations that are present in this eminent and distinguished forum as such meetings promote evolution of mutual understanding and strengthening of interregional cooperation. I am confident that our proceedings will be highly fruitful and will give an impetus to the activity of our Organization.

I would like also to subscribe to those who expressed their gratitude to ECO Secretary General H. E. Mr. Askhat Orazbay for his active work and efforts made for development of our Organization.

Early in the third century, we observe with appreciation evolving changes in the ECO, its transformation into regional integration stimulant within which ECO member-states are striving towards pooling their efforts, resources and possibilities to meet common challenges having immediate significance for development of ECO states and people.

Today we may sum up and review activity of the Organization and our joint activities within the ECO over the last years of cooperation as well as exchange views on status and future cooperation prospects.

Dear Sirs,

Today the ECO Secretariat pays greater heed to addressing regional economic projects and programs and above all in the field of communications. ECO activity is more and more focusing on such important fields as transport, energy and telecommunications.

I am pleased to note that in recent years the ECO has won the recognition and gained the confidence of various international organizations and institutions.

ECO member-states' joint efforts have lead to strengthening the spirit of mutual understanding and confidence, which are important basis for further development of cooperation based on equality principles and consideration of national interests of each member of the Organization. Lasting operation of the ECO in its augmented membership is a cogent argument and conclusive proof of ECO member-states' adherence to the concept of developing mutually beneficial trade and economic relations.

Dear participants,

There is no doubt that the most promising trends of our cooperation are development of transportation systems and communications, construction of gas and oil pipelines that will both unite countries of ECO region and connect with other countries of the world.

The Republic of Uzbekistan puts great emphasis on the issues of institutionalization and operationalisation of various transit transportation routes and development of equitable trade relations.

In particular, it is worth mentioning cooperation efforts for rehabilitation of social and economic life in Afghanistan.

Many countries are rendering their assistance to Afghanistan under bi-or-tri-lateral treaties, yet you know that any help will be valuable. Therefore, it is a pleasure to note that through ECO Secretariat's and member-states' efforts this trend has been given a legal basis to be realized within the Organization.

The decision on establishment of the Afghanistan Support Fund was sound and topical, yet it is a matter of regret that the Fund's potential is not fully enabled.

I deem it necessary to promote and vitalize efforts to approaching international organizations and attracting financial funds for rendering economic assistance to Afghanistan.

I would like to emphasize that the Republic of Uzbekistan has an aspiration and posses enough potential for contributing its worthy and adequate input into construction of works and rehabilitation of transport infrastructure in Afghanistan. The striking example is practical realization of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H. E. Mr. I. A. Karimov's initiative on establishment of Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor.

Dear participants,

In conclusion, I would like to express confidence that our meeting will be held in the spirit of mutual understanding, mutual respect and reasonable concord as laid in the ECO foundation stone.

Thank you.

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**STATEMENT BY MS. İŞILAY YILMAZ,
THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF THE STATE PLANNING ORGANIZATION OF THE TURKISH
REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS (TRNC)**

*MR. CHAIRMAN,
MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL,
YOUR EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,*

IT IS A GREAT HONOUR FOR ME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 15TH MEETING OF THE ECO REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL. I EXTEND TO YOU ALL THE HEARTFELT GREETINGS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS.

AT THE OUTSET, LET ME BRIEFLY ELABORATE THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN CYPRUS.

THE TRNC HAS BEEN PURSUING A PEACEFUL AND CONCILIATORY POLICY ON THE CHRONIC PROBLEM OF CYPRUS. OUR GOVERNMENT PLACED ITS FULL SUPPORT BEHIND THE SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN'S GOOD OFFICES MISSION AND COOPERATED CLOSELY WITH UN AUTHORITIES. THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S SETTLEMENT PLAN WAS THE RESULT OF FOUR YEARS OF SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS CONDUCTED ON THE BASIS OF A NEW BI-ZONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND TWO CONSTITUENT STATES. THE PLAN WAS PUT TO SEPARATE REFERENDA WITH THE PRIOR AGREEMENT OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. THE PLAN WAS OVERWHELMINGLY ACCEPTED BY THE TURKISH CYPRIOTS WHEREAS THE GREEK CYPRIOTS CHOSE TO REJECT IT. IN THE LIGHT OF ABOVE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GREEK CYPRIOT SIDE HAS NO INTENTION WITH RESPECT TO THE REUNIFICATION OF THE ISLAND AND POWER SHARING.

SUBSEQUENTLY, THE SECRETARY GENERAL IN HIS REPORT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL CLEARLY STATED THAT THE REFERENDA DRASTICALLY CHANGED THE SITUATION IN THE ISLAND. IT CONFIRMED, ONCE AGAIN, THE EXISTENCE OF TWO EQUAL PEOPLES AND THEIR SEPARATE RIGHTS TO DECIDE FOR THEIR FATE.

*MR. CHAIRMAN,
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL ALSO CALLED ON THE MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL, "TO GIVE A STRONG LEAD TO ALL STATES TO COOPERATE BOTH BILATERALLY AND IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES TO ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY RESTRICTIONS AND BARRIERS THAT HAVE THE EFFECT OF ISOLATING THE TURKISH CYPRIOTS AND IMPEDING THEIR DEVELOPMENT".

TURKISH CYPRIOTS REMAIN COMMITTED TO A LASTING SETTLEMENT IN CYPRUS. ALMOST ONE YEAR HAS PASSED SINCE OUR PEOPLE, RESPONDING TO THE CALLS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, VOTED COURAGEOUSLY IN FAVOUR OF THE UN PLAN. HOWEVER WE ARE YET TO SEE THE TANGIBLE RESULTS OF OUR CLEARCUT RESOLVE FOR THE REUNIFICATION OF THE ISLAND. WE EXPECT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND PARTICULARLY THE BROTHER MUSLIM COUNTRIES TO POSITIVELY RESPOND TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL CALLS. WE ALSO APPEAL TO ALL ECO MEMBER STATES TO TAKE, AT BILATERAL LEVEL, CONCRETE STEPS TO PUT AN END TO THE ISOLATION OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TRNC.

WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC) ADOPTED A RESOLUTION TO END THE ISOLATION OF THE TURKISH CYPRIOT PEOPLE. RESOLUTION 2/31-P ON THE SITUATION IN CYPRUS WHICH WAS ADOPTED DURING THE 31ST SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, CALLED UPON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO TAKE IMMEDIATE CONCRETE STEPS AIMED AT ENDING THE ISOLATION OF THE TURKISH CYPRIOTS AND FURTHERMORE URGED MEMBER STATES TO CLOSELY ASSOCIATE WITH THE TURKISH CYPRIOTS WITH A VIEW TO HELPING THEM MATERIALLY AND TO INCREASE AND EXPAND THEIR RELATIONS IN ALL FIELDS INCLUDING DIRECT TRANSPORT, TRADE, TOURISM, CULTURE, INFORMATION, INVESTMENT AND SPORTS CONTACTS. MOREOVER, THE OIC DECIDED THAT THE TURKISH CYPRIOT PEOPLE SHOULD CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK, ACTIVITIES AND MEETING OF ALL OIC ORGANS UNDER THE NAME ENVISAGED BY THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL SETTLEMENT PLAN, NAMELY AS THE TURKISH CYPRIOT STATE.

MY GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES IT VERY MUCH THAT THE ECO HAS FOLLOWED 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 THIS CONNECTION, MY GOVERNMENT WOULD WELCOME A DECISION BY THE ECO EMULATING OIC PRACTICE AND ENABLING US TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND SUMMIT MEETINGS OF THE ECO AS WELL.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

LET ME BRIEFLY HIGHLIGHT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS. THE PER CAPITA INCOME HAS INCREASED FROM \$ 5,949 IN 2003 TO \$ 7,350 IN 2004, WHICH IS A CONSIDERABLE RISE. THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING THE COUNTRY HAS GONE UP BY 26%. MANY NEW HOTELS ARE OPENED FOR THE USE OF TOURISM. UNIVERSITIES ALSO OBTAINED GOOD SHARE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT BY INCREASING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS BY 25% IN THE YEAR 2004.

TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS HAS BECOME A CENTER FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION OFFERING INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY DEGREES AS WELL AS TURKISH ACCREDITED DEGREES. WITH 34,000 STUDENTS, UNIVERSITIES ARE GREAT DRIVING FORCE IN ECONOMY.

TO FACILITATE BETTER TRADE OPPORTUNITIES WE URGE ALL THE ECO MEMBER COUNTRIES TO OPEN UP TRADE OFFICES IN NORTH CYPRUS AND ALLOW US TO HAVE OUR TRADE OFFICES IN THE ECO COUNTRIES. BY ESTABLISHING OFFICES WE CAN IMPROVE TRADE, TOURISM AND SERVICE TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES. OUR CALL IS NOT THE RECOGNITION OF OUR STATE BUT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRADE AND OTHER CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN THE ECO STATES AND NORTH CYPRUS IS BOTH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AND IN KEEPING WITH OIC AND ECO RESOLUTIONS ON CYPRUS.

LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST, MY GOVERNMENT IS MOST PROUD AND GREATFUL THAT TWO WORKSHOPS ONE ON "AIR AND WATER POLLUTION CONTROL" (HELD AT GIRNE ON 25-26 AUGUST, 1998) AND THE OTHER ON THE "WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT TECHNOLOGY" (HELD AT EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY IN GAZİMAĞUSA ON 5-7 MAY, 2004) WERE HELD IN TRNC. WE ARE WILLING TO HOST NEW WORKSHOPS AND IN THIS REGARD, WE ARE EXPECTING THE ECO SECRETARY GENERAL TO INCLUDE NEW WORKSHOPS IN THE ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS TO BE HELD IN OUR COUNTRY.

I BELIEVE THAT WITH CLOSE COOPERATION, WE WILL ALL PROGRESS AND DEVELOP.
THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN

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