

## The 14<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting

**Opening Address of Ass. Prof. Dr. Abdullatif Sener, Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey**

( Istanbul, 04-06 December, 2003 )

*Annex-II*

*Distinguished Acting Secretary General of ECO,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Esteemed Guests,*

I am very happy to welcome and address you at the occasion of the 14th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council and wish you a pleasant stay in Istanbul.

*Distinguished Delegates,  
Esteemed Guests,*

The aim of ECO and similar regional cooperation organizations is to improve the living standards of their members. A close cooperation among ECO member countries is necessary in order to attain the desired wealth and prosperity levels. It is therefore of utmost importance for ECO countries to enhance their intra-regional as well as extra-regional trade relations. We are very happy to note that our efforts in this field are crowned by satisfactory results.

*Esteemed Delegates,*

As you well know, the ECO Trade Agreement has been signed by five countries at the ECO Trade Ministers Conference in Islamabad, capital of Pakistan, on July 15-17, 2003. We hope that the countries who have already signed the ECOTA will accelerate the ratification process and those who have not signed it yet will do so as soon as possible. I am firmly convinced that this agreement will contribute to increase the trade volume among ECO member countries.

*Esteemed Delegates,*

Another important topic among the ECO activities is the establishment of the ECO Trade and Development Bank. It is of utmost importance to complete the required ratification formalities and organize a tripartite meeting as soon as possible. I invite you to accelerate your endeavors in this respect.

*Distinguished Guests,*

One of the important topics of our agenda is the establishment of the permanent secretariat of the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI). I trust that you will work in close cooperation in order to finalize this subject at the General Assembly of the ECO-CCI.

*Esteemed Delegates,*

You are well aware of the fact that the expansion of trade requires a well-developed infrastructure. It is therefore necessary, taking into consideration the priorities and potential of the region, to enhance our cooperation in the fields of transport and communications as well as energy. I also wish to make a short comment concerning the development of ECO projects.

*Esteemed Delegates,*

It is important to increase the efficiency of transit trade and transportation means as well as multimodal transportation possibilities in order to allow the free movement of goods, people and services in our region.

We note with satisfaction that the cooperation activities taking place between railroad operators of the ECO member countries.

*Dear Representatives,*

You are aware of the fact that the weekly Istanbul-Almaty train services contribute greatly to the development of trade among member countries. I hope that some of the problems encountered by cargo trains will soon be solved thanks to your cooperation.

The weekly Istanbul-Teheran passenger train services are planned to be extended to Almaty, as a regular weekly service, with the cooperation of the Central Asian Republics. We hope that this project will be realized as soon as possible.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

We hope that the Action Plan concerning Direct Foreign Investment in the field of mining will be implemented rapidly.

We also note with appreciation the agreements signed with FAO as a result of the fruitful cooperation between the ECO General Secretariat and the International Institutions.

*Esteemed Delegates,*

Another point we wish to stress within the framework of ECO activities, is the importance of the fight against drug and the measures taken to stop the use of the ECO region for drug smuggling purposes. I wish to express my satisfaction for our cooperation concerning these measures, as well as those taken by member countries' customs authorities to fight against customs smuggling.

*Distinguished Representatives,*

Terrorist activities targeting innocent people have recently acquired a global dimension, threatening our country, our region as well as peace and stability all over the world. We all wish to live in a peaceful and stable environment and hope that our cooperation will enhance the stability of our region. I believe that fight against terrorism, which has acquired global dimensions, requires regional and global cooperation. I am also convinced that our close cooperation in the field fighting against drugs and customs smuggling must be extended to include fighting against terrorist activities as well.

*Honorable delegates,*

We are all aware of the efficient work accomplished by the ECO Secretariat. I wholeheartedly believe that the activities of the ECO Secretariat will continue at an increasing pace, in order to enable our countries to reach a more prosperous level.

I would also like to conclude by wishing you the best of success in your deliberations.

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