

The 13th RPC Meeting

Report

(Tehran, 20-22 April, 2003)

1. The thirteenth meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on April 20-22, 2003 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. The Preparatory/Review meetings of 13th RPC were also held on 20-21, 2003 at the premises of the ECO Secretariat. The meeting was attended by the delegations of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Secretary General of ECO and other relevant ECO staff. The representatives of the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus also attended the meeting. The list of participants is placed at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

INAUGURATION OF THE MEETING

a) Inaugural statement of the high dignitary from the host country

2. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Tahmasseb Mazaheri, Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A copy of his inaugural speech is placed at **Annex-II**.

b) Statement of the Secretary General

3. The Secretary General made a statement with regard to the meeting which is placed at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 2

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

4. H.E. Dr. Seyed Mohammad Hossein Adeli, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Economic Affairs and the Head of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Council adopted the following Agenda for its meeting:

1. Inauguration of the meeting.

a) Inaugural statement of the high dignitary from the host country.

b) Statement of the Secretary General.

2. Election of the Chairman.

3. Adoption of the Agenda.
4. Statements by the heads of delegation.
5. Consideration of the report of the Secretary General on ECO activities including the approved programmes and projects for 2002.
6. Consideration of the new programmes and projects for 2003 in the following areas:
 - a) Trade and Investment;
 - b) Transport and Communications;
 - c) Energy, Minerals & Environment;
 - d) Agriculture, Industry & Health;
 - e) Project Research;
 - f) Economic Research and Statistics;
 - g) Finance and Economics;
 - h) Inter-Regional ECO Activities;
 - i) ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies;
 - j) Drug Control; and
 - k) International relations.
7. Annual ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings for 2003-2004.
8. Review of the ECO's priorities of the Economic Cooperation Strategy.
9. Any other business.
10. Date and venue of the next meeting.
11. Adoption of the report.
12. Vote of thanks.

Agenda Item No. 4

STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF DELEGATION

6. The heads of participating delegation made opening statements, outlining their policies and views on the projects/programmes and activities of the Organization. Copies of the statements made available to the Secretariat are placed at **Annex-IV**.

Agenda Item No. 5

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON ECO ACTIVITIES INCLUDING THE APPROVED PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS FOR 2002

7. The Secretary General of ECO presented his annual Report to the Council on the activities of the Organization during 2003. A copy of the Report was circulated among member states on March 1, 2003 and the same is enclosed at **Annex-V**.

8. The Council appreciated the comprehensive report presented by the Secretary General and took note of the useful observations and suggestions made therein.

Agenda Item No. 6

CONSIDERATION OF THE NEW PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS FOR 2003

9. The Regional Planning Council (RPC) discussed the proposals, programmes and projects included in the working papers of the Directorates of ECO Secretariat, including status reports on the ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings for 2002, outlining the progress achieved in the implementation of the activities approved by 12th COM meeting and made the recommendations given in the succeeding paras proposing future course of action and activities in 2003 and 2004.

10. The Regional Planning Council (RPC) noted with appreciation the work of the Secretariat with regard to implementation of the decisions/ recommendations of RPC and other high level ECO organs and the ongoing Programme/Projects/Activities and Calendar of Events/Meetings for the year 2002 in all priority and non-priority sectors.

a) Trade and Investment

11. The Council, recognizing the importance of early completion of the process of ratification in respect of ECO Framework Agreement on Trade Cooperation (ECOFAT), requested Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan to expedite the approval/ratification process. The Council also requested non-signatory member states i.e. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to consider joining the said Agreement.

12. The Council while thanking the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting the 4th High Level Experts Group (HLEG) meeting on Tariff & Non-Tariff Barriers in Almaty on September 9-10, 2002, noted with satisfaction the positive contributions made by the member states in revising the draft ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and expressed the hope that the text of the proposed ECOTA would be finalized during the 5th HLEG meeting, scheduled to be held in Tehran on April 28-30, 2003. The Council noted with satisfaction the verbal/written confirmation received from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey and requested the remaining member states to confirm their participation in the said meeting as soon as possible so as to enable the host authorities to hold the meeting on the scheduled date.

13. The Council highlighted the importance of finalizing the draft ECOTA before the 2nd Ministerial meeting scheduled to be held in Pakistan on July 15-17, 2003 and urged the member states which had not yet furnished their views/comments regarding the consolidated revised version of the said Agreement to do the same before the 5th HLEG meeting.

14. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for their offer to host the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade on July 15-17, 2003 and requested the member states to confirm their participation, at the Ministerial level, to the Secretariat as well as to the host authorities. The Council also requested the member states to ensure implementation of the decisions taken in the 1st Ministerial meeting.

15. The Council, expressed satisfaction over the pace of implementation of the Joint ECO/ITC project on promoting Intra-Regional Trade and appreciated the offer made by the Republic of Kazakhstan to hold the 2nd Buyers/Sellers meeting on Food &

Beverages in Almaty on 26-27 May 2003. The member states were requested to ensure participation of the relevant business concerns in the said meeting.

16. The Council also lauded the efforts of the ECO Secretariat and International Trade Centre (ITC) in successfully organizing the 1st ECO Business Forum in Istanbul, Turkey on the sidelines of the 12 COM & 7th ECO Summit, held on October 14, 2002 and impressed upon the member states the importance of following up on the recommendations of the said forum in order to reap the desired benefits, i.e. promoting Intra-Regional Trade and improving the general investment climate in the ECO region.

17. The Council, expressed concern over the lack of active participation of ECO CCI in the activities of ECO and took note of the offer made during the 1st ECO Business Forum held in September last year by the Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchange of Turkey to permanently host the Secretariat of ECO CCI in Istanbul. The Council also took note of the offer made by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Mines to host the permanent Secretariat of ECO CCI in Iran. The Council further expressed the hope that the next General Assembly meeting will be convened very soon in order to take important decisions in this regard as well as other related issues such as restructuring of its Secretariat as well as to develop new mechanisms and modalities aimed at better and effective interaction between its member Chambers.

18. The Council, while alluding to the inability of the relevant trade support institutions of the member states to confirm their timely participation in the ECO Chamber General Assembly as well as ECO Trade Fairs, urged them to streamline their respective procedures in this regard. The Council, further recommended to merge together the ECO Chamber Trade Fairs and ECO Trade Fairs and requested the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to announce the date and venue of the 4th ECO Trade Fair, allowing sufficient lead time (at least three months) to the concerned bodies of the member states to make necessary arrangements for their participation in the said fair.

19. The Council, recognizing the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the 3rd meeting of the ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administrations (CHCA), requested the relevant host authorities to confirm the exact date and venue for the said meeting to the Secretariat. The Council also requested the member states to take the necessary follow up actions with regard to the decisions of the 2nd CHCA meeting held on September 2, 2002 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly regarding establishment of Data Bank on Smuggling and Customs Offences and urged the member states to furnish their comments on the draft Agreement submitted by the Republic of Turkey in this behalf.

20. The Council appreciated the readiness expressed by the Customs Administrations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Turkey to hold training courses for the customs officials of the member states in their respective Customs Training Establishments and requested these member states to convey the programme of their training courses for the year 2003 to the ECO Secretariat. The Council, welcomed the offers made by the Customs Administrations of

Turkey and Iran to organize a two weeks training course for the Afghan Customs Officials and a four days course on Harmonized System Nomenclature respectively. The said member states were requested to convey the details of these courses to the ECO Secretariat for onward transmission to the concerned Member States.

21. The Council, noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Iranian Customs Administration towards publication of the ECO Customs Newsletter (ECO CNL) and requested the member states to provide up to date information regarding their respective customs regimes to the management of ECO CNL.

22. The Council acknowledging the importance of disseminating information on trade and investment opportunities in the member states to the business community, urged the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to convene the meeting of the 3rd Seminar on Trade & Investment Information Networking in the ECO Region as soon as possible so as to finalize the Action Plan in this regard. The Council further urged the member states to ensure early implementation of the decisions taken during the 2nd Seminar on Trade & Investment Information Networking, held in Antalya, Turkey on October 26-27, 2000.

23. The Council, while urging non-signatory member states (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) to consider joining the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the member states, requested Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to expedite the process of ratification.

24. The Council while acknowledging the importance of early operationalization of the Trade and Development Bank as well as the ECO Reinsurance Company, requested Iran to expedite the steps for early operationalization of these two institutions.

25. The Council, expressed its appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 1st ECO Regional Investment Conference on Kish Island on February 17-18, 2003 and requested the member states to consider hosting the 1st HLEG meeting to finalize the text of the draft Agreement on Promotion & Protection of Investment among ECO member states (APPI).

26. The Council also welcomed the offer made by the Islamic State of Afghanistan to host the 2nd ECO Regional Investment Conference in Kabul on July 27-28, 2003 and requested the member states to ensure their participation in the said conference.

27. The Council expressed satisfaction over the efforts made by the ECO Secretariat in cementing the existing cooperative relations with international and regional organizations in the field of Trade & Investment and appreciated the initiatives such as the signing of MOU with the World Customs Organization, offers of technical assistance received from WTO, UNCTAD and UNESCAP as well as commitment of financial assistance from the Islamic Development Bank with regard to investment activities in the ECO region. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to continue

their efforts to forge closer relations with the above and other multilateral donor organizations for the economic development of the member states.

b) Transport and Communications

28. The Council welcomed the completion of several infrastructure projects envisaged in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007) in particular putting into operation the double track on Mashad-Tehran railway route (926 km) and construction of rail line on Kerman-Bam section (221 km) of the Kerman-Zahidan (540 km) in Iran and construction of the Kurgan Tube-Kulyab railway line (132 km) in Tajikistan as well as the new bridges over Ural river in Uralsk city in Kazakhstan and over Amudarya river on the Nukus-Khojeyli route in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, the Council emphasized early completion of important missing links such as Kerman-Zahidan sector.

29. While appreciating the ratification of TTFA by Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, the Council urged the Governments of the I.S. of Afghanistan, I.R. of Iran, Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan to complete the requisite formalities at national level to ratify the TTFA and its Annexes at the earliest to make them operational by January 2004 as well as requested the Uzbekistan Government to accede to TTFA and its Annexes as indicated by it at the 11th RPC. The Council welcomed the statement from the Republic of Kazakhstan that the Republic of Kazakhstan ratified the agreement and a formal letter to this effect would shortly be sent to the Secretariat.

30. The Council agreed to recommend early implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the 7th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities held in Dushanbe/Tajikistan on December 23-25, 2002. In this connection, the Council highlighted the particular need for urgent nomination of railway representatives of the member states to the Steering Committee (Coordinating Unit) to monitor and ensure smooth running of container trains on the Trans-Asian railway main line with names and contact fax/phones. Also, the railway administrations of Kazakhstan and Turkey were requested to continue their activities to extend the ECO route from Istanbul to European countries and from Almaty to Lianiyungan sea port (China) and intimate progress on the above subject to the ECO Secretariat before the 8th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway authorities. The Council also urged the member states to remove the remaining technical problems connected with the successful operation of container trains.

31. The Council, while appreciating the valuable work done by the Iranian railway authorities regarding the preparation of the second draft of the ECO Railway Network Map, requested the authorities in question to revise the second draft in accordance with the views and comments received from the member states.

32. The Council highlighted the need to publish the ECO Road Network Map at an early date and in this connection requested the member states to expedite their

comments enabling the Islamic Republic of Iran to prepare the final ECO Road Network Map in consultation with the member states.

33. The concerned ECO railway authorities namely RAI, KZH, KRG, TJD, TCDD, TRK and UTI were requested to fulfill their obligations envisaged in the MoU signed in Baku on October 31, 2001 and to put into effect all recommendations and the required actions proposed by the Task-Force for opening of international passenger traffic on Almaty-Tashkent-Turkmenabad-Tehran-Istanbul route of Trans-Asian Railway main line without any further delay. In this regard, the Council welcomed the assurance given by the representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan that this matter was under the active consideration of his government. The Council expressed the hope that a favourable opinion would result from this with regard to allowing the operation of this train through the territory of Uzbekistan.

34. The ECO railway authorities were requested to officially introduce their experts (with e-mail addresses) to the Working Group on the establishment of a common information area in railway transport to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest to ensure implementation of the Plan of Action as approved by the 6th meeting of the Heads of ECO railway authorities (Baku, November 1, 2001) at an early date.

35. The Council noted the readiness of the concerned authorities of Turkey to host the Working Group meeting to consider the Turkish proposals tabled at the 4th ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications (Izmir, September 26-27, 2002) for facilitation of road transport in the ECO region and to reconcile the inconsistency between TTFA and TTA in June 2003.

36. The Council requested the Civil Aviation Authorities of the I.R. of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey to furnish their versions of the draft Framework Agreement on cooperation in the field of air transport for improving the content of the draft Agreement prepared by the relevant authorities of Kazakhstan to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest.

37. While recalling the decisions of the 4th ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications held in Izmir (on September 26-27, 2002) regarding the ECO Shipping Company, the Council requested the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan to resolve the pending issues of the said Company.

38. The Council agreed to endorse the Report of the 13th meeting of the Directors General of National Telecommunication Companies and Postal Authorities of ECO member states held in Almaty on October 29-30, 2002.

39. The Council welcomed the statement from the representative of Pakistan that the draft ToR for a pre-feasibility study of the proposed TAEFOS project to connect Peshawar-Kabul-Herat-Mashad by Fiber Optic Cable would be provided to the ECO Secretariat in due course. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to do the same at an early date.

40. The Council requested Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to specify focal points for the National Inter-Ministerial Committees for border-crossing facilitation and promotion of international transport and furnish their particulars to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest.

41. While supporting the initiative of the Ports and Shipping Organization of the I.R. of Iran to host the meeting of the concerned authorities of the member states to consider the possibility of cooperation in the field of sea port and shipping facilities, the Council requested the member states to furnish their proposals for inclusion in the draft Agenda of that meeting as well as particulars of national authorities dealing with sea (water) transportation, national shipping companies, sea ports and their contacts to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest.

42. While recalling the decision of the 4th ECO Transport Ministerial meeting on Permanent Commission on Transport and Communications to set up an Expert Working Group to look into the possibility of creating an alternative structure to serve as a coordinator for the overall implementation of the projects envisaged in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007), the Council expressed the opinion that the Secretariat should continue to pursue the implementation of the said decision. The Council further observed that the member states should expedite the establishment of the Expert Working Group on the subject or propose some other strategy to resolve this matter at an early date.

43. The Council requested the member states to furnish status reports on the implementation of decisions/recommendations of the 4th ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications (Izmir, September 26-27, 2002) and the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007) at national level to the ECO Secretariat latest by January 1, 2004 as well as their development plans and projects to be implemented in the years 2004-2005 to increase the traffic capacity of their national railway and road networks particularly pertaining to ECO transport routes. In this respect, the Council appreciated the information provided by the member states to update the Annex I of the Working Paper.

44. The Council urged the relevant authorities in the member states to complete the requisite formalities at national level necessary for accession to the remaining international conventions listed in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications as early as possible and furnish the relevant information to the ECO Secretariat by January 1, 2004 through the relevant foreign Ministries.

45. In view of importance of intra-regional and inter-regional transport linkages development, the Council recommended to the member states and the ECO Secretariat to participate actively in the UN-Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation to be held in Almaty on August 28-29, 2003.

46. The Council welcomed the growing cooperation of the ECO Secretariat with international organizations and UN bodies in the fields of Transport and Telecommunications and highlighted them as essential to promote development of an efficient transit transport system. In this respect, the assistance provided by UNDP, IDB, UNCTAD, and UNESCAP was highly appreciated. The Council expressed its satisfaction over ECO's cooperation with OSJD, IRU, UNECE and TRACECA etc.

47. The Council appreciated the work of the Secretariat in connection with the implementation of ECO/IDB/ESCAP/UNCTAD joint project on Introduction of Multi-modal Transport Operations in the ECO region and requested the member states to arrange proper reception for missions of the international consultant to study the conditions at border crossing points to inspect physical and non-physical bottlenecks impeding transit transport operations.

c) Energy, Minerals and Environment

- **c-1 Energy**

48. With reference to para 58 of the 12th RPC report the Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum during the second half of the year 2003 in Tehran. Besides, the Council considered it expedient that prior to convening the aforesaid Ministerial meeting the 4th High Level Experts Task Group (4th HLETG) meeting on ECO Oil and Gas Pipeline Routes as well as a Joint Workshop with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) with the theme: "survey on international oil markets" be organized so that the outcomes of these two events are included in the agenda of the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum.

49. The Council reiterated its request to the relevant authorities in the member states to provide their utmost cooperation for successful convening of the aforementioned 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum and emphasized the need to continue its support for implementation of the outcome of the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy.

50. The Council observed the efforts of the Secretariat to get financial assistance to carry out feasibility study on the ECO Oil and Gas Pipeline Routes. Moreover, the Council suggested that the Secretariat should explore the possibility of allocating the research funds available to the subject feasibility study and seek CPR's approval of the feasibility project.

51. With reference to the Secretariat's report concerning the final agreement signed between the ECO Secretariat and IDB for the Feasibility Study on interconnection of ECO countries power systems and in accordance with the contents of the said agreement the process of selection and signing a contract with the selected consultant should be finalized before October 2003. The Council urged the concerned authorities in the member states to extend their utmost cooperation to the Secretariat so that the

deadline foreseen in the agreement may be met. The Secretariat was requested to circulate the bids evaluation report as soon as possible but not later than end of May 2003 to the member states. The Council requested the member states to submit their views on the report to the Secretariat at the earliest but not later than end of July 2003.

52. The Council positively took note of the report of the first Workshop on ECO Regional Power Trade Strategy, which was held on April 24-25, 2002 in Tehran and while considering the development of the power trade issues as integral part of the project of interconnection of ECO countries power systems and instrument for enhancing cooperation between the member states in the field of energy, the Council recommended the continuation of this type of workshops/meetings in future.

53. The Council recalled the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan during 12th RPC meeting to host the 2nd Workshop on Energy Conservation and Efficiency in Islamabad and requested the relevant authorities in Pakistan to arrange for convening of the subject event in the course of the year 2003. Turkey also proposed to conduct in October 2003 the Second Training Programme on Energy Efficiency and Conservation for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and ECO countries under the auspices of their National Energy Conservation Center(NECC) with the cooperation of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

54. The Council endorsed the Report of the Workshop on Petroleum Products, Market Study and Trade issues convened on May 6-8, 2002 in the city of Esfahan, Iran. While agreeing with the Workshop's recommendations to continue exchange of information and experiences in the field of oil refining, production and marketing, the Council invited the member states to execute these recommendations and to announce their readiness to host the next ECO event of this type. In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that if no other member state volunteered to host the meeting, Iran may host it during 2003-2004.

55. The Council appreciated the recent collaboration of the ECO Secretariat with the Energy Charter Secretariat (ECS) and took note of ECS indication to give positive consideration to a formalization of the relationship with ECO through reciprocal grant of observer status to ECO and Energy Charter Conference. With regard to the possibility of organizing joint ECO-ECS seminar/workshop during year 2003, the Council also requested the Secretariat to continue the contacts with ECS at working level in order to determine possible dates and other technical arrangements for the said event. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host it in Tehran in 2003.

56. The Council welcomed the proposal of the Republic of Turkey to host the Workshop on New and Renewable Sources of Energy in April 2004.

- **c-2 Minerals**

57. The Council stressed the need of the member states utmost collaboration in implementation of the Plan of Action for cooperation among the ECO countries in the field of minerals, adopted by the 12th RPC.

58. The Council was informed that the relevant authorities from the Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Uzbekistan have submitted the information required for the publishing of ECO Mineral Data Booklet (MDB). In order to ensure timely compilation of the ECO MDB, the Council urged the remaining member states to provide the requested data as soon as possible.

59. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the Second Mineral Experts meeting in Ankara on October 20-22, 2003. In this connection with reference to para 67 of the 12th RPC Report, the concerned authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed that the establishing on-line dynamic and multipurpose ECO Mineral Data Bank would need an amount of \$250,000 which had to be sought as grant from international donors such as IDB, UNDP, etc. The Secretariat was requested to explore the possibility to find such financial assistance.

60. Acknowledging the importance of absorbing the foreign investment in the mineral sector, the Council welcomed the convening of an event in this regard in the year 2003; a separate ECO Mineral Experts Group Meeting on legal and fiscal regimes for promotion of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the mineral sector with the financial assistance of the Islamic Development Bank would take place accordingly. The event would be organized jointly with the Directorate of Trade and Investment of ECO Secretariat.

- **c-3 Environment**

61. The Council took note with satisfaction of the Report of the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Environment together with the Plan of Action for Cooperation among ECO member states on Environment (2003-2007) and the Tehran Declaration on Cooperation among ECO Member States on Environment. The Council welcomed the offers of the relevant Turkish authorities to host the first meeting of ECO Working Group on Environment in the year 2003 and the Second ECO Ministerial meeting on Environment during the year 2004 in Turkey.

62. The Council urged the Working Group on Environment to explore ways and means for implementing the above mentioned Plan of Action and suggest its modifications if necessary.

63. The Council urged the member states concerned authorities to extend their full support and cooperation to the Secretariat for the implementation of the approved Plan of Action for cooperation among ECO member states on Environment (2003-2007).

64. The Council noted with satisfaction the Secretariat's efforts on enhancing of cooperation with the international organizations active in the field of environment. In

particular, the Council hailed the decision of the 22nd meeting of the Board of Governors of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) held in Nairobi on 3-7 February 2003 calling for strengthening its cooperation with ECO and urged the ECO Secretariat to pursue its cooperation and to sign their relevant MOU with UNEP.

65. The Council took note with appreciation the World Meteorology Organization (WMO) willingness for cooperation with ECO. The Council requested the Secretariat to take the necessary actions for finalizing the draft text of MOU forwarded to the Secretariat by WMO to be considered by the ECO policy making body and subsequent signature by the two Organizations.

66. The Council, reiterating the para 65 of the 12th RPC Report, requested the Secretariat to continue its current cooperation and contacts with international, regional organizations, institutions, banks such as World Bank, ADB, IDB, UNESCAP, ASEAN, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, OPEC, ECS, WMO, ROPME, etc. to achieve the goals in the field of energy, minerals and environment, as envisaged in the ECO basic documents.

d) Agriculture, Industry and Health

- **d-1 Agriculture**

67. The Council highlighted the priority areas outlined by the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Agriculture held on 23-25 July, 2002 in Islamabad, Pakistan and appreciated the role of coordinator countries in the specified areas such as: drought management (I.R. of Iran); water management (Pakistan); trade promotion (Turkey); development of post-harvest and processing industry (Turkey); and conservation of genetic material. The Council urged the member states to fully contribute to the ongoing activities in these fields.

68. The Council took note of the proposal of the I.R of Iran to be the coordinator country for the conservation of genetic material including the parameters of collection, identification, implementation and release of new varieties of plants.

69. The Council took note of the proposal of Pakistan to be the coordinator country on water management for organizing a training workshop on the subject matter for the ECO member states. Exact dates and venue of which will be communicated to the Secretariat by Pakistan in due course.

70. The Council took note of the offer of the Republic of Turkey, as the coordinator country on the development of post-harvest and processing industry, to host a workshop on the prevention of crop losses at post-harvest stages on November 3-14, 2003, in Ankara.

71. Considering desertification and land degradation as one of the most important challenges encountered by the ECO member countries, the Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the coordinator country for the drought

management, to organize an “International Course on Combating Desertification” on April 28- May 07, 2003, in Karaj- Iran.

72. The Council appreciated the offer of I.R. of Iran to host a workshop on drought management in August 2003.

73. The Council took note of the proposals of the Iranian delegation on sustainable development of aqua-culture (in collaboration with international organizations and donor agencies, especially FAO and JICA); establishment of regional bio-technology network; pest management, harmonization of quarantine rules and regulations (based on WTO regulations) and emphasized the importance of these issues in the achievement of food security and safety in the member states and suggested that these proposals be considered by the Senior Officials meeting on Agriculture to be held in November, 2003 in I.R. of Iran. A concept paper **Annex-VI** on cooperation with ECO member states presented by the I.R. of Iran had been received with appreciation. The Council requested the member states to convey their views and comments on the proposals, prior to the Senior Officials meeting.

74. The Council appreciated the signing of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Document, initiated by FAO to support the ECO endeavors in the field of food security and agricultural development. The member states expressed their support in realizing these objectives and agreed to provide necessary assistance in the implementation of the TCP, with the emphasis on the food safety aspects, according to international rules and regulations.

75. The Council, recognizing the need for further collaborative efforts to ensure region-wide food security and safety, called upon the member states to utilize the two workshops that would be held within the framework of the above-mentioned TCP which may serve as a follow-up of the first workshop on Food Security held in Istanbul in 2002, as well.

76. The Council noted with appreciation the proposal of the I.R. of Iran that the ECO Secretariat may initiate regional projects on harmonization of food safety and quality rules and regulations of the member states in accordance with the WTO rules with the assistance of international bodies such as FAO, WHO, Commission of Codex Alimentarius etc.

77. The Council, reiterating the importance of the WTO agreements in agriculture, welcomed the offers of Turkey and Pakistan to hold training courses on WTO Agreement on agriculture in September 2003 and 2004 respectively.

78. Cognizant of the importance of veterinary services in promoting food safety standards and increasing food security in the region and the need to prevent the spread of livestock diseases, the Council welcomed the offer of the I.R. of Iran to host the 1st ECO meeting of Heads of Veterinary Organizations in September 2003. This meeting

would, inter alia, consider the establishment of the ECO Veterinary Working Group. The Council urged the member states to actively participate in this meeting.

79. The Council agreed that in addition to the measures to be taken to control cross-border animal diseases and establishment of central units, i.e. laboratory and buffer zones, the First ECO Heads of Veterinary Organizations meeting would discuss the decisions of the task force meetings held in 1996 and 1998 whose outcomes remained valid since then. The Council advised that ECO be involved in the establishment of Regional Surveillance Centre for Food and Mouth Disease based in Tehran, initiated by the EUFMD (European Union, Food and Mouth Diseases) Commission.

80. The Council endorsed the establishment of a Mission jointly with donor agencies and relevant international organizations to identify short/medium/long-term areas of assistance in agriculture for Afghanistan for consideration of donors and requested the member states to nominate their representatives for this Mission and convey their views about the Terms of References and objectives of this Mission.

- **d-2 Industry**

81. The Council emphasizing the importance of prioritization of ECO activities and the strong political will of the member states in supporting its programmes and projects in the field of industry welcomed the offer of the I.R. of Iran to host the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Industry in October 2003 in Tehran. It was noted that the Ministers of Industry may also consider the preparation of an ECO long-term strategy/plan of action in the field of Industry. The Council requested the member states to convey their proposals in this regard and actively participate in the said meeting.

82. The Council noted with satisfaction, the output of the ECO Workshop on Privatization held in June 10-11, 2002, in Istanbul-Turkey, and welcomed the offer of the I. R of Iran to organize a High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on private sector development in cooperation with UNIDO and other related international organizations. The HLEG meeting would consider the possible areas of cooperation among the member states and would report its findings to the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Industry. The Council invited also those ECO member states which had considerable experiences in the above mentioned fields, to host similar events.

83. Reiterating the significant role of small and medium sized (SMEs) enterprises in economic development of countries through contributing to employment and GDP growth as well as to development of entrepreneurial skills, the Council took note with appreciation the output of the workshop on Development of SMEs held on September 30-October 02, 2002 in Tehran, I.R. Iran. In this connection, the Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host a 5 days workshop on SMEs in the last quarter of the year of 2003.

84. By the same token, the Council appreciated the Concept Paper **Annex-VII** on "Observatory on SMEs for member states of ECO" circulated by Pakistan.

85. The Council, appreciating the proposal of UNIDO to develop a regional initiative targeting the agro-related metal working industries in the ECO region, requested the ECO Secretariat to follow up the matter closely with UNIDO and acknowledged the offer of the I. R. of Iran to organize a workshop on the agro-related metalworking Industries in 2003.

86. The Council took note of the proposal of Islamic Republic of Iran to establish an institutional relationship among the member states with a view to cooperating in the field of intellectual property rights.

87. The Council took note of the willingness and readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran for training and research in industrial sector to all ECO member states.

- **d-3 Health and Population**

88. Being aware of the perils of the dissemination of diseases and epidemics, especially the spread of HIV/AIDS, the Council took note with appreciation the ECO/UNFPA joint initiative to organize a “Round Table Seminar on HIV/AIDS and Young People” on June 5-7, 2003 (tentative) in Bishkek and welcomed the offer of the Kyrgyz Republic to host this activity and requested the member states to encourage the active participation of their parliamentarians, NGOs and youth associations.

89. The Council took note of the proposal of the I. R. of Iran to organize a workshop on family planning and reproductive health matters, nutrition, adolescent health and tuberculosis control for sharing experiences, reviewing the strategies/programmes and finding out major constrains and solutions for ECO member states.

90. The Council took note of the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to initiate cooperation among the member states on harmonizing the drugs registration in order to facilitate the export and import of medicines, herbal medicines as well as medical plants in accordance with international standards.

- **d-4 Tourism**

91. Recognizing the importance of tourism industry in advancing national economic development and in promoting mutual understanding among member countries and to increase substantially the ECO region’s share in global tourism industry, the Council invited the member states to host the Third meeting of the ECO Expert Group on Tourism. The Council emphasized the importance of the involvement of the private sector and particularly tour operators to this meeting.

e) Project Research

92. The Council noted the Secretariat’s continued role in promoting the member states interest in the reconstruction of Afghanistan in line with the decisions of the

relevant ECO organs and the recommendations placed in the Summary Report of the Secretary General's visit to Afghanistan in February 2003.

93. The Council, taking into account the directives of the 12th COM as well as the 7th Summit held in Istanbul in October 2002, recommended that the member states should continue to enhance their bilateral assistance to Afghanistan in order to expedite reconstruction work there. They were also directed to keep the Secretariat posted on their bilateral programmes with Afghanistan in this connection.

94. The Council requested the Secretariat to devise a "Plan of Action" as decided by the 12th Council of Ministers and submit the same in due course through CPR for COM's approval. The Secretariat was informed that the proposed "Plan of Action" should be project oriented and in line with the priorities indicated by the Government of Afghanistan be prepared within the framework and decisions made during the relevant ECO meetings.

95. While taking note of various documents and concept papers produced by the Secretariat on the issue of reconstruction in Afghanistan, the Council requested for more detailed information on regular basis with regard to the implementation of ECO decisions. In this respect, the Council proposed that the Secretariat should identify the main coordinator countries designated by UN for various programmes in connection with the reconstruction in Afghanistan undertaken by international organizations in order to avoid duplication.

96. The Council recommended to the member states to expedite the work on the establishment of the ECO Special Fund for implementation of projects for Afghanistan keeping in view its national priorities. In this respect, the Council underlined the need for early convening of the Financial Experts meeting to work on the establishment of the Fund as decided by COM. Further, the Council recommended the early implementation of COM's decision to schedule the ECO Seminar to identify priority areas for initiating ECO assistance in Afghanistan's reconstruction process.

97. The Council urged the Secretariat and the member states to arrange pre-feasibility/feasibility studies of Afghanistan priority projects by utilizing ECO Feasibility Fund. The Council pointed out that the Secretariat and the Government of Afghanistan through its Embassy in Tehran should work closely for the projects to be identified/selected for implementation.

98. The Council proposed that apart from utilization of ECO Feasibility Fund for pre-feasibility studies in sectors such as transport and communications, energy, power supply, sewerage, health, an adequate amount out of the ECO Feasibility Fund, with the approval of Council of Ministers may be set aside for implementation of projects including training of Afghan officials to be approved, on case by case basis, by CPR.

99. The Council, while referring to the Secretariat's report on compilation of list of ECO projects requiring feasibility studies for 2003 from the member states and

evaluation of such projects as high, medium and low, requested the member states to identify the future course of action to be taken in respect of each project. Therefore, the Council directed the Secretariat to circulate an updated report of the list of projects.

100. The Council also asked the Secretariat's to prepare a plan of action for the agreed ECO projects in consultation with the member states. The Council recommended visits to the member states by the officials of the Directorate to ensure close coordination with the relevant authorities in this regard.

101. The Council took note of the Secretariat's continued follow up on the project of UNDP Capacity Building of the ECO Secretariat during its implementation in 2000-2002 and expressed satisfaction over the implementation of activities which were being carried out for the second phase of ECO-UNDP Programme. The Council requested the Secretariat to submit to the member states a final report on the second phase, on completion and in the meantime continue to seek support from UNDP in the same manner for future cooperation.

102. The Council expressed its thanks to the ECO Consultancy and Engineering Company (CEC) for hosting the 1st Conference on the role of the ECO-CEC in the development of member states held on March 27-29, 2002 in Lahore (Pakistan) and requested the member states to participate in the 2nd similar event to be hosted by ECO-CEC in Ankara (Turkey) in 2003. The Council recommended that the Secretariat may give an opportunity to the ECO-CEC for preparation of pre-feasibility/feasibility studies of ECO priority projects i.e. inter-connection of power systems of the member states which are being supported by Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and other projects especially projects related to reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Council recommended to the member states, to encourage the company to open its offices in other member states especially in Afghanistan.

103. The Council appreciated the coordinating role of the Secretariat in ensuring implementation of the decisions of the 12th COM, 7th Summit, WGSO, CPR meetings as well as submission of reports to the decision-making organs of ECO in this regard.

104. The Council while recalling the document prepared by the Secretariat entitled "ECO Feasibility Fund: utilization for pre-feasibility/feasibility studies" agreed that the utilization of the ECO Feasibility Fund for ECO priority projects should be activated and asked the Secretariat and the member states to take necessary steps in this connection within the framework of the ECO Functional Methodology.

105. The Council advised the Secretariat to strengthen its relations with various training institutions and centers within and beyond the ECO region, preferably training institutions in the ECO region. In this respect, the Secretariat was asked to organize training programmes for experts and senior officials in the member states responsible for implementation of ECO projects. The Council advised the Secretariat to approach for support UN institutions i.e. UNESCAP for support and enable the Secretariat to use the ECO Special Support Fund for organizing such training courses.

106. Since the ECO Functional Methodology entails selection of consultants from member states to be compiled in a roster, the Council requested the member states to provide the necessary information on their leading experts/consultants so the roster may be developed. The Council also asked the Secretariat to continue collecting information about the training and research institutions to create an ECO directory.

f) Economic Research & Statistics

107. The Council, while appreciating the work undertaken by the Secretariat in enhancing the cooperation on economic research and statistics activities in the region, requested it to pursue its activities as decided by the 4th meeting of the National Focal Points (NFPs) on economic research and statistics (Baku, 12-13 December 2002).

108. The Council requested the member states that have not hosted any NFPs meeting so far to consider making an offer to host the 6th meeting of the NFPs in 2004. The Council underlined that if NFPs meetings were held in different member countries, it would help promote and expand direct contacts and exchanges among NFPs in this vital area. The Council further decided that the 5th NFPs meeting would be held at the ECO Secretariat during September-October 2003 on full hospitality basis. The Council agreed to recommend that the member states should give higher priority on attendance of designated NFPs, at the annual meetings of NFPs.

109. The Council stressed the importance of enriching the deliberations of NFPs meetings by enlarging the scope of its agenda; more informative in terms of the current issues in the areas of economic, statistical analysis, and challenges faced by the region in the age of globalization. The Council encouraged the NFPs and the Secretariat to contribute technical papers/studies relevant to the agenda of the NFPs meetings.

110. The Council recommended that the member states may kindly advise their NFPs to provide the Secretariat with all requested statistical data and information to help it fulfil its mandate in the area of economic research and statistics. In this context, published sources of such data and economic information should routinely be mailed to the Secretariat.

111. The Council considered that the research proposals determined under ECO Joint Economic Research Programme are ambitious and, therefore, could not be implemented due to non-availability of funds within the sources of ECO Secretariat. The Council advised that a viable time-framed Action Plan for the implementation of the said Programme be agreed with the leading coordinators of each research proposal. The Council suggested that the Secretariat should actively approach the appropriate international financial donors, especially UNDP, IDB, World Bank and ADB to secure funding for the research proposals. In this connection, the Secretariat and the leading coordinators were requested to organize the planned initial meetings on these research topics.

112. The Council suggested that in order to strengthen cooperation in the ECO region, the Directorate should undertake specific research studies other than those included in the ECO joint economic research programme as and when proposed by any member states, subject to CPR approval and for which, if considered necessary by the Secretariat, regional experts may be employed. However, the Council emphasized that the implementation of research projects under the ECO joint economic research programme should be given priority over other research proposals.

113. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Directorate to prepare and publish ECO Annual Economic Reports. The Council requested the member states to urge their NFPs, as coordinators of data and information compilation for the said Report, to provide the necessary inputs including country reports as well as statistical data covering indicators such as human development indices, intraregional investment for the 2001 Report to the Secretariat by May 2003.

114. The Council was informed that the preparation and publication of an ECO Statistical Yearbook is a substantial programme, which should encompass officially authorized statistics.

115. Noting the efforts of the Secretariat and difficulties confronted in the collection of required statistics along with meta-data information and preparing comparable cross-country tables, the Council expressed the hope that the impeding problems in the finalization of the said book by 2003 should be resolved with the active support of the member states. The Council requested the Secretariat to continue implementation of this programme and prepare the first draft of the said yearbook with a maximum available data, and if required, curtail the range of indicators to be covered by this publication.

116. The Council urged the Secretariat to take the necessary action to obtain, process and disseminate officially authorized information and statistics on the member countries in its publications, while making sure to include proper annotations in cases where it would be obliged to use other sources.

117. The Council noted with appreciation that the Secretariat had organized a sub-regional workshop on 1993-SNA in Ankara in October 2002 with the collaboration of UNESCAP statistics division, UNSD, and State Institute of Statistics of Turkey to introduce/discuss key elements/issues of 1993-SNA and exchange experiences and strategies of ECO countries in its implementation.

118. The Council recalling the conclusions of the said Workshop recommended to the Secretariat, with the support of UNESCAP, OECD and Eurostat, scheduling of workshops on measuring the non-observed economy and implementation of 1993-SNA, where the different topics and techniques could be assessed in the light of the experiences of ECO countries. The Council requested the member states to consider offering host facilities for such workshops and underlined that the Secretariat's support to overcome the problems regarding data harmonization, should be encouraged. The

Council notified that subscribing to the IMF developed Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and adhering to the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) would be an important step in this regard.

119. The Council noted the Secretariat's efforts to finalize the preparation of ECO Business Guidebook and asked the Secretariat to continue its efforts according to para 92 of the 12th ECO RPC report and paste the prepared information on ECO Website instead of publishing a series of Guidebooks. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has given the assurance to provide the relevant information to the Secretariat as early as possible. The Council called the member states, particularly Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan that had not provided the required information in this regard to do so. The Secretariat was requested to put more efforts in providing analytical sections in its reports.

120. The Council recalled that the need for disseminating economic news/information of the member states on the ECO website that aim at providing regular news/information concerning important macroeconomic and sectoral performance of the ECO region. The Council noted with appreciation that the Secretariat had prepared a content/framework for publicizing the economic news/information of member states on the ECO Website and reserved special pages on the ECO website. The Council urged the member states to provide relevant news/articles on quarterly basis for this electronic publication.

121. Considering the existing capacities in the member states with respect to preparation of National Human Development Reports, the Council requested the Secretariat to take necessary measures, in consultation with UNDP to prepare a Human Development Report for the ECO region. The I.R of Iran stated its willingness for cooperation in this regard.

122. According to the decision of the 4th NFPs meeting on economic research and statistics (Baku, 12-13 December 2002), the Republic of Azerbaijan distributed a paper entitled "Centre of the Economic Cooperation Organization for the Economic Research and Statistics". The Council requested the Republic of Azerbaijan to furnish a detailed feasibility study and other necessary documents on establishment of the said Centre to the Secretariat for circulation among member states for further comments/views and consideration by CPR.

g) Finance and Economics

123. The Council welcomed the decision of the Council of Permanent Representatives recommending the institutionalization of ECO Ministerial meetings of the Finance/Economy Ministers on the pattern of the ECO Ministerial meeting in other sectors, subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers. The Council asked the Secretariat to seek the views of member states on priority subjects for these meetings.

h) Inter-Regional ECO Activities

124. Agreed activities are reflected in the sectoral reports. In the final report all inter-regional ECO activities would be grouped together under this item as agreed in the agenda.

i) ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies

125. The Council was informed about the developments regarding the ECO Regional Institutions and ECO Specialized Agencies, by the Secretariat, emphasizing their importance in their respective fields of activities. The Council expressed the hope that the formalities, which had not been completed as yet, may be completed without further delay so that the said Institutions and Agencies could become operational and effective.

126. The Council reiterated its earlier calls to the member states who had not yet ratified the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) Charter to do so and invited the two non-signatory member states namely the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan to consider acceding to the ECI Charter. Meanwhile, the signatory member states were expected to participate fully in the meetings and activities of the Institute as well as the Institute was advised to encourage participation of all the member states. The contributing member states, who have not done so, were requested to take appropriate steps to pay the budgetary contributions approved by CPR. The Council welcomed the appointment of the new President of the Institute.

127. While appreciating the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute, the Council took note of the status report prepared by ECI, which is placed at Annex. The member states were requested to lend support to various initiatives taken by the Institute.

128. The Council was apprised of the present status of the ECO Science Foundation, which could not be operationalized until now. The Council expressed the hope that the Basic Documents of the ECO Science Foundation would be finalized soon in the light of Secretariat's comparative study, enabling the concerned Pakistani authorities to convene the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the Council that it was in the process of completing the formalities and might be able to organize the First meeting of the Board of Trustees shortly.

129. The Council urged all the signatory member states, except the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Republic of Tajikistan, for expeditious completion of ratification formalities with respect to the Charter of the ECO Educational Institute so that the Institute could become operational at the earliest. The representatives of the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that their respective authorities concerned were also considering the ratification issue.

130. The Council, while appreciating the engagement of the Representative of ECO College of Insurance with the Council of Permanent Representatives in order to involve ECO member states in the affairs of the College, expressed the hope that the member states would enhance their participation in the activities of the College.

j) Drug Control

131. The Council lauded the launching of the second phase of the Joint ECO/UNODC Project in December 2002 with the recruitment of staff for Drug Control Coordination Unit. It urged the Unit to carry out its work according to its plan. The Council requested all the member states to (a) continue communicating drug-related information to DCCU in the ECO Secretariat for its publishing at [http:// www.ecodccu.org](http://www.ecodccu.org) and (b) actively participate in all ECO/UNODC project/events, which are included in the Calendar of Events for the year 2003 and suggested that member states may invite the ECO Secretariat, in relevant international or regional meetings on drug control matters.

132. The Council recommended to the ECO Secretariat, as envisaged in the joint ECO/UNODC project, to interact with the other international drug control organizations and share information on measures taken in combating illicit drug production and trafficking in the ECO member states.

133. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to forward a set of proposals relating to the drug control from the Drug Control Headquarters authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the member states for further consideration.

134. The Council took note of the Turkish proposal to organize relevant courses by Turkish International Academy for Combating Drugs and Organized Crimes (TADOC) and the Iranian proposal to organize training courses on combating illicit drugs at Tehran Regional Training Centre, for the ECO member states.

k) International Relations

135. The international activities of ECO in respect of all the sectors have been covered in respective sections. The concerned paras would be grouped together later in the final version of the report. For ease of reference the sectoral reports as recommended by the Preparatory/Review Committees have not been disturbed.

136. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretary General to further promote relations with international regional organizations and UN bodies and expressed the hope that the momentum would be maintained in the coming years. The Council further took note of the view of the Secretary General that such contacts would serve the twin purposes of creating international awareness of the work and achievements of ECO as well as ensure the possibility of seeking technical and financial assistance from international donor agencies.

137. The Council requested the Secretary General that ECO's cooperative ties with regional organizations such as ASEAN may be further promoted within the framework of cooperation agreements and the decision of the 7th ECO-ASEAN Ministerial meeting held in September 2002 at New York. The Council appreciated that ASEAN and ECO had agreed to cooperate in ten fields covering all priority areas of ECO.

138. The Council taking note of the growing international stature of ECO appreciated the ECO's initiative to hold the 8th Consultative meeting between the Executive Heads of four regional organizations (SAARC, Economic Forum for Pacific Islands, ECO, ASEAN) and UNESCAP at the ECO Secretariat this year. The Council further noted with interest the relevant sections of the Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan's address to the UN General Assembly in June 2002 recommending various specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the UN system and relevant international financial institutions to join in their efforts towards implementation of economic programmes and projects of ECO.

Agenda Item No.7

ANNUAL ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS/MEETINGS FOR 2003-2004

139. The Council considered the draft ECO Calendar of Events and Meetings for 2003 and 2004 in various sectors a copy of which is placed at **Annex-VIII**. The Council further asked the Secretariat to rationalize the said list by reducing and prioritizing the events and submit the same to COM for its approval through CPR.

Agenda Item No. 8

REVIEW OF THE ECO'S PRIORITIES OF THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION STRATEGY

140. The Council considered the need to review the priorities laid down in the ECO Economic Cooperation Strategy as required by the Rules of Procedures para 4(b). The Council after due consideration found it inadvisable to recommend any change in the said priorities.

Agenda Item No.9

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

141. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No.10

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

142. The Council welcomed the offer from the Republic of Turkey to host the 14th RPC meeting in December 2003 in Turkey. The exact dates and the venue would be decided through diplomatic channels.

Agenda Item No. 11

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

143. The Report of the 13th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 12

VOTE OF THANKS

144. On behalf of all the participating delegations, the Council expressed its deep appreciation and thanks to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the gracious hospitality extended to them.

145. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council also appreciated the efforts made by the Secretary General and his able staff for preparing comprehensive Working Papers and other documents, facilitating the work of the Council.

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