

The 12th RPC Meeting

Report

(Tehran, 06 March, 2002)

CON/RPC-12/03/Rpt. (Adopted)

1. The twelfth meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on March 6, 2002 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. The meeting was preceded by the Preparatory/Review meetings held from March 4 to 5, 2002 at the premises of the ECO Secretariat. The meeting was attended by the delegations of the Interim Administration 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

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**.

Agenda Item No. 2

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

3. 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

4. The Council adopted the Agenda, which is placed at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 4

OPENING STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF DELEGATION

5. 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

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON ECO ACTIVITIES DURING 2001

6. The Secretary General of ECO presented his annual Report to the Council on the activities of the Organization during 2001. A copy of the Report was circulated among Member States on February 12, 2002 and the same is enclosed at **Annex-V**.

7. The Council appreciated the comprehensive report presented by the Secretary General on the sectoral activities of the Organization and took note of the useful observations and suggestions made therein.

Agenda Item No. 6

REVIEW OF ECO APPROVED PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

8. 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 2001, outlining the progress achieved in the implementation of the activities approved by 11th COM meeting and made the recommendations given in the succeeding paras.

i) Transport and Communications

9. The Regional Planning Council (RPC) noted with appreciation the work carried out by the concerned Directorate with regard to implementation of the ongoing Programme/Plans/Proposals and Calendar of Events/Meetings for year 2001 in the field of Transport and Communications. Special mention was made of the launching of the Demonstration Container Train from Almaty to Istanbul via Tashkent and Tehran on the Trans-Asian Railway Main Line as well as the pilot run of a Passenger Train from Almaty to Tehran on March 14, 2002.

10. In this respect, the Council urged the respective railway authorities namely RAI, KZH, KRG, TJD, TCDD, TRK and UTI to fulfill their commitments as agreed in MOU signed by the 6th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway authorities in Baku on October 31, 2001 and put into effect all recommendations/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 during its two meetings held in Tehran on 9-12 December 2000 and 22-26 December, 2001 respectively.

11. The Council welcomed the readiness of the Republic of Turkey to hold the fourth Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications on 26-27 April, 2002. The Council also requested that the participation in the meeting would be at Ministerial level.

12. The Council noted the progress made in connection with the formulation of a flexible tariff policy for economic and efficient organization of railway transportation and requested the Member States to send their comments on the draft MOU on ECO Tariff Policy and sign bilateral agreements/contracts on direct and transit transportation of goods including the settlement of mutual payments as well as observed that the tariff rate for container transportation, at least for year 2002 should be competitive. It further recommended the setting up of a Sub-Committee on the ECO Railways Tariff Policy for revising the ECO Railway Tariff Policy for the international freight traffic for every freight year.

13. The RPC requested Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to designate their representatives to the ECO Permanent Commission on Transport and Communications (PCTC) before April 15, 2002, in line with Article 2 of its TOR, adopted by the 3rd ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications and endorsed by the 10th and 11th COM meeting so as to enable the ECO Secretariat to organize its 1st meeting definitely in the 1st half of 2002. In this context, the Council recommended, as a special case, hospitality offer by the ECO Secretariat to the delegates from at least new ECO members.

14. The Council, expressing strong support to the ECO/IDB/ESCAP/UNCTAD joint project on Introduction of Multimodal Transport Operations in the ECO region, requested the government of each Member States to designate a national counterpart who will act as the focal point for all project activities and convey his/her full name and contact fax/phone/e-mail to the ECO Secretariat. Also in this context, the Council requested them to send nominations for national consultants to the Secretariat for selection by ECO Secretariat in consultation with IDB/UNCTAD and UNESCAP.

15. The Council urged the Member States to expeditiously complete the missing road and rail links within the ECO region particularly Kerman-Zahedan railway line to facilitate expansion of intra-ECO trade. The Member States were also requested to convey a status report to ECO Secretariat in this regard on quarterly basis.

16. The Council reiterated, in particular, to Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to specify focal points for the National Inter-Ministerial Committees for border-crossing facilitation and promotion of international transport to the ECO Secretariat by 1st April 2002. It also requested the Member States to participate in the future Sessions of the UN SPECA Project Working Group (PWG) on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation.

17. The Council called upon the Member States to consider accession to international conventions listed in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007).

18. The RPC impressed upon the Member States namely Interim Administration of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan to complete the requisite formalities at national level to ratify the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and its Annexes at the earliest to make it operational. So far only Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan have ratified the TTFA. The Council requested Uzbekistan to put into effect its previous statement that it was ready to accede to the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (barring Articles 12 and 28) and its Annexes.

19. The Council, taking into consideration some coordination problems of the two Agreements i.e. TTFA and TTA, and to provide their harmonization for a smooth implementation, decided to transfer the TTA from Trade Directorate to Transport Directorate. To this end, the Council also decided to establish an Expert Group to work

on these two Agreements to harmonize them and eliminate problems likely to occur during their implementation phase. For the enhancement of the effectiveness of the Expert Group work, the Council urged the Member States to nominate representatives from the relevant public and private sector organizations i.e. transport associations, chambers of commerce, transport officials, customs officials, etc.

20. While reviewing the deliberations of the 4th Transit Trade Committee (TTC) and the 1st Sub-Committee meetings to consider implementation issues of Transit Trade Agreement (TTA), held in Istanbul in September and December last year respectively, the Council requested the Member States to furnish the information regarding transit fees & charges and procedures to the Secretariat. While appreciating the efforts of the Member States and ECO Secretariat in finding new mechanisms for implementation of TTA including printing, distribution and monitoring of the ECO Passage Document (EPD), the Council endorsed the recommendations of the 4th TTC and the 1st Sub-Committee meetings. The Council requested the Member States to expeditiously furnish to ECO Secretariat all the necessary data regarding volume of goods transited through the ECO region so as to enable the International Transporters Association (UNDT) of Turkey to prepare a feasibility study for establishing an independent organization which would be responsible for printing, distribution and monitoring of EPD.

21. The Council urged the non-signatory Member States i.e. Afghanistan and Uzbekistan to sign TTA as soon as possible to enhance its scope and effectiveness.

22. The signatory Member States who had so far not nominated their Guaranteeing Associations (GAs) were also requested to do so expeditiously to ensure early implementation of the TTA.

23. The Council noted with concern that despite the readiness of the Central Insurance Authorities of Iran (Bimeh Markezi Iran), 1st meeting of the ECO Insurance Sub-Committee comprising the representatives of the central insurance authorities of the Member States was not held. As a result, a draft ECO Interim Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability Insurance Scheme prepared by Iran in accordance with the Article 3 (para 1) of Annex-V to TTFA (1998) has not been considered yet. In this connection, the Council urged the Member States to convey their views to the Secretariat at an early date.

24. The Council requested the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to issue, after the endorsement of CPR, the blue prints of 2nd edition of the ECO Road and Railway Network Maps in year 2002 through the ECO Secretariat for circulation among Member States for their final consideration.

25. The Council reiterated its earlier recommendation to establish a Data Bank involving the ECO Road Network and Roadside Infrastructure using the format of UNESCAP and the data received from the ECO Member States. Also, it requested the relevant authorities of the Member States to furnish their views/comments on the draft

format of the Directory on ECO Road Network, distributed by the Turkish delegation during the RPC meeting last year, to the ECO Secretariat by 1st June 2002.

26. The Council appreciated that the Trans-Asia-Europe Fiber Optical Cable System (TAEFOS) has improved and urged the telecommunication authorities of Uzbekistan and Iran to expedite establishment of direct TAEFOS channels between Tashkent and Tehran to improve the existing communications system further.

27. The Council reiterated its request to the Member States namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to furnish the duly filled in format on training facilities in the fields of telecommunication and postal services, including their facilities for foreign students, to the ECO Secretariat without any further delay, preferably by 1st May 2002.

28. The RPC noted with appreciation the outcome of the 6th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities held in Baku on 31 October – 1 November, 2001 and endorsed its Report as a whole. They also called for establishment of a coordinating unit to monitor and ensure smooth running of the regular service of container trains as well as to provide for implementation of Plan of Action on establishment of a common information area in the field of ECO railway transport.

29. The RPC asked the railway authorities of Kazakhstan and Turkey to submit the reports on their activities (according to para 5 of the 3rd SWG meeting's minutes) to extend the ECO railway route from Istanbul to European countries and from Almaty to Lianiyungan Sea Port (China) to revive the ancient Great Silk Road to the ECO Secretariat by 1 July 2002.

30. The RPC also appealed to the Governments of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as Azerbaijan and Iran to jointly consider the coupling of the passenger and luggage wagons of Tajik Railway to the passenger train No. 19/20 Almaty-Tehran at Turkmenabad and Samarkand stations and Azerbaijan State Railway to the passenger train Tehran-Istanbul at Tabriz station respectively.

31. The Council expressed the hope that the problem concerning the Articles of Association of ECO Shipping Company (ESC) would be resolved amicably soon.

32. Recalling the decisions of the 1st meeting of the ECO Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines held in Karachi (Pakistan) on 12-14 February, 2001, the Council urged the Civil Aviation authorities of Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Turkey to transmit their version of the ECO Framework Agreement on cooperation in the field of air transport by 1st May, 2002. Also, the Council welcomed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 2nd meeting of ECO Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines in August, 2002 which was not held last year in Mashhad.

33. Recalling the recommendation of the 11th RPC, the Council recommended that a Working Group may prepare a Memorandum of Understanding for facilitation of road

transport, harmonization of road charges and fees and introduction of a Multilateral Quota for Road Transport Permits and called upon the road transport authorities of the Republic of Turkey to host the 1st meeting of this Group in the current year.

34. The Council noted with concern the non-materialization of 13th meeting of DsG of the Directors General of National Telecommunication Companies and Postal Authorities of the ECO Member States and recommended to the Member States that they may hold it this year keeping in view its importance for cooperation in the field of postal services. As regards communications, an expert level meeting may also be arranged in 2002.

35. The Council requested the Member States to furnish status reports on implementation of decisions and recommendations of the 3rd ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications (Islamabad, 27-28 April, 2000) and the projects envisaged by the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007) to the ECO Secretariat latest by April 1, 2002 to include in the documents for the 4th Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications to be held in Izmir, Turkey on April 26-27, 2002 to be preceded by senior officials meeting on April 24-25, 2002.

ii) Trade and Investment

36. The Council called upon the Member States to study the possibility of establishment of an ECO Free Trade Area within a reasonable timeframe.

37. The Council appreciated the fact that since its last meeting Kyrgyz Republic had also ratified the ECO Framework Agreement on ECO Trade Cooperation (FAT). However, the Council noted with concern the slow pace of the ratification process and requested those signatory Member States (i.e. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan) who have not yet ratified the Agreement, to expedite the approval/ratification process of the subject Agreement. The Council also requested non-signatory Member States (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to consider joining the FAT.

38. The Council lauded the contributions of IR of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, IR of Pakistan and Republic of Turkey and ECO Secretariat in drafting the proposed ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and expressed the hope that other Member States would also join the efforts in this regard so that ECOTA could be operationalized as soon as possible. The Council noted with concern that no meeting of the High Level Experts Group (HLEG) was held during the year 2001. It, however, appreciated the offer made by Republic of Kazakhstan to hold the 4th HLEG Meeting on Tariff & Non-Tariff Barriers in the ECO Region during the first half of current year. The Council urged the relevant host authorities of Republic of Kazakhstan to expeditiously confirm the exact date for the said meeting. If the meeting, for any reasons, could not be held in Kazakhstan, the Secretariat would hold the said meeting before the Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade.

39. The Council further urged the Member States to furnish their views and comments regarding the consolidated draft version of ECOTA to ECO Secretariat and requested those Member States who had not so far furnished their country versions of the Agreement to do so expeditiously. Subject to the successful holding of 4th HLEG in Kazakhstan, the Council requested IR of Iran to confirm the exact dates of the 5th HLEG meeting to the Secretariat.

40. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the progress made in implementation of the joint ECO-ITC project on promotion of intra-trade in the ECO region and noted with appreciation the successful holding of the Product Selection Workshop (March 13-15, 2001, ECO Sectt. Tehran) and 1st Buyers-Sellers Meeting (BSM) on Textiles & clothing, held in Istanbul on October 17-18, 2001. The Council emphasized that demand/supply surveys in the selected sector (i.e. agriculture and food products) may be carried out and company/product profiles containing detailed information be prepared in each of the Member States in the first half of the year 2002. At the same time, the Republic of Kazakhstan was requested to confirm the hosting of 2nd BSM on agriculture and food products at the earliest.

41. The Council noted with appreciation that the Republic of Turkey was ready to hold an ECO Business Forum (EBF) with the cooperation of International Trade Centre (ITC) and ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECO-CCI), on the sidelines of the 7th Summit meeting to be held in Turkey in October this year.

42. The Council appreciated the readiness expressed by IR of Iran to host the next meeting of General Assembly of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) in Tehran this year and requested the relevant host authorities to confirm the exact date of the said event to ECO Secretariat. The Council urged ECO-CCI to improve its performance by exploring new modalities aimed at better and effective interaction between the private sectors of Member States and proposed that the next meeting of its General Assembly may not only be used for reviewing and considering afresh the issue of Chairmanship of ECO CCI and the rules and procedures governing it, but also consider the issue of how to activate the ECO Chamber. In this respect, the Member States were requested to urge their national chambers to find new modalities and mechanisms which would lead ECO-CCI to play a more dynamic and active role in encouraging frequent interaction between business communities of the region. The Council further urged the Member States to participate actively and confirm their participation at the earliest in the ECO Trade Fair, scheduled to be held in Karachi on May 17-21, 2002. The Council also requested the ECO-CCI to consider organizing specialized trade fairs in future.

43. The Council, in pursuance of the decisions made by the 1st meeting of ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administrations (CHCA), held in Istanbul on September 27-28, 2001, requested the IR of Iran to furnish the exact dates of the 2nd meeting of the CHCA and the 2nd Expert Group meeting on establishment of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank. Furthermore, the Council requested the Republic of Turkey to convey the results of the studies regarding technical and legal aspects of the

establishment of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank for submission to Member States for obtaining their respective views/comments.

44. The Council also appreciated the readiness expressed by the Customs Administrations of IR of Iran and Republic of Turkey to hold training courses & seminars for the Customs officials of the Member States.

45. The Council, acknowledging the importance of establishing a Trade & Investment Information Network, requested the relevant host authorities of the IR of Pakistan to kindly confirm exact date & venue of the said Seminar at their earliest convenience.

46. The Council, endorsing the recommendations of the 2nd Seminar on Trade & Investment Information Networking in the ECO Region (Antalya, October 26-27, 2000), requested the Member States to:

- i. Nominate for ECO Trade Net Focal Points (except Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan);
- ii. Submit latest National Trade Directories in electronic format (except Turkey);
- iii. Furnish proposals to be included in a Plan of Action for developing the ECO Trade Net (except Turkey);

47. 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.

48. While agreeing to the recommendations made in the 1st Sub-Committee meeting on implementation of TTA regarding simplification and harmonization of visa regimes through a fresh Agreement, the Council requested the Member States to furnish details of their existing visa regulations along with their views on improving the scope and efficacy of the proposed new Agreement, to ECO Secretariat.

49. The Council appreciated the fact that the IR of Iran had ratified the Agreement on the establishment of ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECO-TDB) and requested its concerned authorities to deposit the instrument of ratification with the ECO Secretariat at their earliest convenience.

50. The Council appreciated the readiness of the Republic of Turkey to host the Trilateral Interim Committee Meeting for the establishment of ECO-TDB. The venue of the Trilateral Interim Committee Meeting on establishment of ECO Reinsurance Company would be determined by the IR of Pakistan and communicated to ECO Secretariat.

51. The Council, recalling the offer made by the IR of Pakistan during the 1st ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade, held in Tehran on March 4-6, 2000, to host the 2nd Ministerial Meeting, requested the relevant Pakistani authorities to confirm the exact date at the earliest.

52. The Council, while expressing satisfaction over the follow-up to the recommendations made by the 11th RPC meeting, held in Tehran on March 1, 2001, welcomed the offer made by IR of Iran to host the 1st Regional Investment Conference in Kish Free Trade Zone during the current year. The Council requested the relevant authorities of IR of Iran to furnish the exact date of the said Conference to ECO Secretariat as soon as possible.

53. Acknowledging the importance of forging closer cooperation with UN agencies, in particular, UNCTAD, ITC, ESCAP and UNDP; World Trade Organization (WTO), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), World Customs Organization and other international organizations, the Council appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretariat in this behalf. The Council urged the ECO Secretariat to continue its efforts to strengthen its existing relations with them and called upon these international agencies to enhance the technical and financial assistance to ECO in promotion of trade within the ECO region.

iii) Energy, Minerals and Environment

Energy

54. The Council expressed its appreciation for the presentation made by the representative of Islamic Republic of Iran discussing ways and means to promote the transaction of energy resources in the ECO region.

55. The Council approved the Report of the 5th Specialized Experts Task Group (5th SETG) meeting on Power held in Tehran on 21-22 July, 2001 together with the defined Terms of Reference, Scope of the Work and Plan of Action (determination of coordination function for the Project Secretariat) for the Feasibility Study on Interconnection of ECO Countries Power Systems to be performed under IDB's Technical Assistance (Grant) with the allocated amount of US\$400,000.

56. The council noted with appreciation the signing of the Technical Assistance (Grant) Agreement between IDB & ECO for the aforementioned feasibility study which was finalized and approved in accordance with the recommendation of 11th RPC Meeting.

57. Reiterating that the EM&E Directorate of ECO Secretariat will function as the Project Secretariat for execution of the feasibility study on Interconnection of ECO Countries Power Systems, the Council requested the concerned authorities in the Member States to extend full cooperation to the ECO Secretariat for implementation of its coordination function for the said feasibility study as outlined in the 4th & 5th SETG Reports. In this regard, the Republic of Turkey, while supporting the project and taking into consideration the connection of the Turkish Power System with the UCTE Power Grid, announced that they would only be able to participate in this ECO Project to the extent their obligations to UCTE permit.

58. While endorsing the outcome of the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum (Islamabad, November 8, 2000) as a significant stage to enhance the regional cooperation, the Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the Second ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum.

59. The Council called upon the relevant authorities in the Member States to provide their utmost cooperation for preparation and organization of the aforesaid 2nd Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum. In this regard, the Council noted that the five member countries including Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Turkey have already intimated their National Focal Points (NFPs) on Energy/Petroleum. The Council urged the remaining Member States to designate their NFPs on Energy/Petroleum at the earliest and inform the Secretariat accordingly.

60. The Council welcomed with appreciation the proposals of the Secretariat on New and Renewable Sources of Energy as a new ECO activity in the field of Energy and requested the Member States to forward their views and comments on the draft ECO Wide Policy on Energy at earliest convenience.

61. The Council recommended consideration of such a new activity on New and Renewable Sources of Energy as well as the text of the draft ECO Wide Policy on Energy to be included in the Agenda of the Second Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum. The Secretariat was requested to forward all the necessary documents and working papers for the above said meeting for the study and comments of the Member States well in advance.

62. The Council endorsed the proceedings of the Workshop on Energy Conservation and Efficiency and Report of Ad-hoc Committee meeting of Experts to prepare the Outline and Methodology for Energy Conservation in the ECO countries both held in Ankara on 5-6 December 2001 respectively, along with the enclosed Outline and Methodology for Cooperation in Energy Conservation between the ECO Member States, and welcomed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the next Workshop on Energy Conservation and Efficiency in Islamabad during the year 2002. The Republic of Turkey and Islamic Republic of Iran announced their readiness to organize training courses on the subject matter and would submit the detailed proposals to the Secretariat at the earliest possible.

63. The Council appreciated ECO Secretariat's effort in reflecting the electronic version of the ECO Energy Data Booklet (EDB) on the ECO Website and in preparation of EDB's version on the Compact Disks format, which were to be circulated among the Member States. The Council requested the Member States to continue their cooperation with the ECO Secretariat in preparation of updated version of EDB for the time period 1995-2000, 2005, 2010, and, at the same time, recommended that in future this activity would not have preference in the routine work of the Secretariat.

64. The Council took note with appreciation of the efforts of the Secretariat to get the financial assistance to carry out feasibility studies on the ECO Oil & Gas Pipeline

Routes. However, it was mentioned that the Member States are not in favour of financing this feasibility study themselves. The Secretariat may continue its efforts to get the necessary financial resources to arrange for the feasibility study to be carried out.

65. The Council, reiterating the para 63 of the 11th 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, OPEC, ECS, etc. to achieve the goals in the field of energy, minerals and environment, as envisaged in the ECO basic documents.

Minerals

66. The Council approved the Report of the First ECO Mineral Experts meeting on Enhancement of Regional Cooperation in Mineral Sector (held on October 29-31, 2001 in Tehran) as well as the Plan of Action for cooperation among the ECO countries in the field of minerals and requested the Member States for their utmost collaboration in this respect. Furthermore, the Member States were also requested to designate their National Focal Points on Minerals to coordinate and monitor the activities relating to the above mentioned Plan of Action.

67. The Council endorsed other decision of the aforesaid meeting concerning the designation of the Republic of Turkey as the Project Manager for the preparation of ECO Mineral Data Booklet and welcomed the readiness of the relevant authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish on-line Dynamic and multi-purpose ECO Mineral Data Bank. Turkey announced its readiness to host the second Mineral Experts meeting during the first quarter of 2003 or earlier subject to sufficient preparation necessary to convene the meeting.

Environment

68. The Council took note of the Report of the Training Workshop on Energy Resources Development and their Environmental Impact Assessment held in Tehran, on October 7-9, 2001 and requested those Member States who had not designated their National Focal Points (NFPs) on Environment to send their particulars to the Secretariat. The Focal Points should coordinate the regional activities in their own countries and forward to the Secretariat their proposals regarding the enhancement of regional cooperation in the field of Environment.

69. With reference to the para 66 of the 11th RPC Report, the Council reiterated the importance of holding of the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Environment and suggested that the meeting should be convened. The Council also reiterated that the working paper and matters to be discussed at the said meeting should be sent to Member States well in advance for their consideration and views.

iv) Agriculture, Industry and Health

Agriculture

70. The Council reiterated the need for prioritizing and streamlining the ongoing activities on agriculture and industry so as to provide an enabling environment for efficient cooperation among the ECO Member States.

71. The Council welcomed the announcement of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the First Ministerial meeting on Agriculture in Islamabad on 23-25 July 2002 and requested the Member States to actively participate in the meeting at the highest level.

72. The Council appreciated the valuable work done on Food Security by the Secretariat in cooperation with UNDP. Cognizant of the need to provide a regional framework for ECO cooperation on Agriculture, the Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to hold a Workshop on Food Security and Agricultural Cooperation in the ECO region in May 2002. The host authorities would communicate the exact dates by mid April 2002.

73. The Council noted the progress achieved on the assessment of the possibility of preparing a regional project document on ECO cooperation in Agriculture by ECO/FAO/IDB Joint Identification Mission and urged the Secretariat to follow up the subject to complete the task before the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Agriculture. In this regard, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were requested to kindly receive the mission by April 2002 for the completion of the first phase.

74. Reiterating the need to prevent spreading of livestock diseases, the Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a Workshop in Tehran on Diagnosis of Livestock Diseases in the field of Cow Plague on 30 June - 2 July 2002. The Council also urged all the Member States to actively participate in the event.

75. Taking note of the fact that the effective plant production and protection is one of the most essential components of agricultural development, the Council expressed its satisfaction on the work done in the related fields i.e. development of dwarf fruit trees, development of sugar beet seeds and pest management, and requested the Member States and the ECO Secretariat to follow up the matter under the food security workshop. Furthermore, the Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to submit its proposal on the development of sugar beet seeds to the Workshop on Food Security.

76. In view of the significance of coordinated measures to combat desertification and to save further degradation of land in the Member States, the Council welcomed the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a workshop on Sand Dune Fixation for which the exact dates would be communicated well in advance.

Industry

77. The Council took note of the importance of cooperation in the field of industrial restructuring policies particularly privatization and development of small and medium sized enterprises.

78. Taking note that privatization is one of the high priority areas in the industrial restructuring policies of the ECO countries, the Council expressed full support for the Secretariat's proposal to hold seminars/workshops addressing different aspects of privatization. In this regard, the Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host a Workshop on Privatization in June 2002 in Istanbul, Turkey. The Council also urged the Republic of Turkey to furnish exact dates at the earliest.

79. While reiterating the significance of the development of small and medium enterprises, the Council took note of the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the technical assistance of the National Iranian Productivity Organization and the Asian Productivity Organization (APO), to hold a workshop on the subject in the second half of 2002 for which the dates would be communicated at the earliest.

Health

80. Being aware of the impact of spread of diseases and the epidemics specially the spread of HIV/AIDS threatening the ECO region, the Council took note with appreciation of the offer of ECO Secretariat to organize with UNFPA assistance a seminar on HIV/AIDS Disease and Adolescent Health in 2002, and welcomed the offer of the Kyrgyz Republic to host this activity in Bishkek and requested other Member States to actively participate in the seminar.

Tourism

81. While emphasizing the importance of tourism in the economic development and promoting mutual understanding among the Member States, the Council welcomed the proposal of the Kyrgyz Republic to activate this sector at the regional level and urged the Secretariat to do a study on this issue. In this regard, the Member States were requested to furnish their proposals to launch regional cooperation on tourism for further study by the Secretariat and consideration by the CPR.

v) Economic Research & Statistics

82. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Directorate to pursue its activities as recommended by the 11th RPC meeting and the 3rd meeting of the National Focal Points (NFPs).

83. The Council expressed regret over the inability of Member States to host the 4th meeting of the NFPs on economic research and statistics. In view of the encouraging statements of support appreciating the Directorate and its activities, the Council urged the Member States to concretize their expression of support in more tangible form. In this respect, the Council urged the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to consider

making an offer to host the 4th meeting of the NFPs and convey a response to the Secretariat by mid April 2002.

84. In the absence of any offer of hospitality, the Council recommended to the ECO Secretariat to arrange necessary financial support from its resources to cover the full expenses for at least one participant from new Member States to ensure the scheduling of 4th NFPs meeting in 2002 which was postponed thrice last year due to lack of a host.

85. The Council urged two Member States, namely Afghanistan and Uzbekistan (economic research) to designate their NFPs and convey their particulars to the Secretariat.

86. The Council noted the progress made on the designing and implementation of the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme and impressed upon the Member States to designate appropriate research institutes/centers on each research topic that broadly have the same expertise as the leading coordinators for implementation of the said programme.

87. The Council highlighted the efforts of the leading research institutes and recommended them to undertake the responsibility of managing research projects and to finalize revision of draft research proposals in accordance with the recommendations of the consultant who had recently held meetings with them.

88. The Council took note of the proposal made by Iran and Turkey with regard to the expected outcomes/findings of the research topics currently under discussion and called the leading research institutes on each topics for reformulation of certain aspects of these proposals to remove duplication in the original drafts and reconcile their contents with the activities being pursued in other sectoral units of the ECO Secretariat.

89. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to prepare and publish the ECO Annual Economic Report each year. The Council requested the Member States to provide the necessary inputs for country reports as well as statistical data by mid July 2002 to enable the Secretariat to prepare the report for 2001.

90. Since, ECO Annual Economic Report could not be submitted to RPC this year, the Council asked the Secretariat to submit the same to one of CPR meetings for consideration/adoption which would thereafter be submitted to 12th COM meeting for approval.

91. The Council noted the progress so far made and the continuing problems impeding the preparation of ECO Statistical Yearbook and requested the Member States to support the Secretariat in the collection of missing statistical data for finalization of the said book by September 2002.

92. The RPC noted the Secretariat's initiative to obtain UNESCAP support for preparation of ECO Business Guidebook and asked the Secretariat to paste it on the

ECO Website instead of publishing the series of country reports, as agreed earlier in the 11th RPC. The Member States were requested to provide information to Secretariat in order to update the relevant pages of ECO Website on six monthly basis.

93. The Council recommended that the Directorate should act as coordinator for research workshops/activities and also undertake research studies on topics as and when proposed by Member States and for which if considered necessary, experts can be employed.

vi) Project Research

94. The Council appreciated the Directorate's evaluation of the ongoing ECO projects with suggestive grading as high, medium and low and urged the Member States who had not done so, to furnish their views with regard to their national priorities and identification of the need for consultants for some of the projects by the end of April 2002.

95. The Council noted with satisfaction the successful and effective management of the implementation of UNDP Capacity Building Project of ECO Secretariat and in this context urged the Directorate to continue its day-to-day activities as a focal point for implementation of incomplete consultancies under the Project and finalize, in consultation with Member States, new ECO projects under its future cooperation with UNDP.

96. The Council called upon the ECO Secretariat to make sure that proper and regular follow-up of decisions and projects is made and regular reports be presented to CPR.

97. The Council took note with appreciation of the efforts of the Directorate to promote the planned Conference on the Role of ECO Consultancy and Engineering Company (Pvt) Ltd. (ECO-CEC) to be held in Pakistan this month and asked the Secretariat to involve ECO-CEC on preparation of pre-feasibility and feasibility studies of ECO priority projects. The Council also welcomed the initiative of NESPAK constituent of ECO-CEC to open regional offices in other Member States i.e. Central Asian Republics and Azerbaijan and urged the respective Member States to cooperate with NESPAK in its bid to set up more offices in the region.

98. The Council appreciated that the Directorate had conducted training activities for ECO staff and advised the Secretariat to strengthen its contacts/relations with different training institutions/centers within and beyond the ECO region. In this respect, the Directorate was asked to organize training programmes for experts and senior officials in the Member States in charge of implementation of the ECO Projects.

99. The Council noted with satisfaction the coordination/organizing activities in respect of various meetings of the decision making organs of ECO i.e. RPC, COM, WGSO, CPR, Working Group to assist CPR and the Summit.

100. The Council, while appreciating the Directorate's efforts to prepare the Roster of Leading Experts/Consultants and Directory of Training and Research Institutions in the priority fields of ECO, urged other Member States who did not forward the required inputs for the said Roster and Directory to do so before 1st June, 2002.

101. The Council urged the Member States to undertake comprehensive research and analysis in line with the demands of project cycle as laid down in the ECO Functional Methodology and shortlist the priority ECO projects should for implementation.

102. The council further requested the Member States to indicate their national preferences with regard to the priority projects with the intention of seeking appropriate allocations, if needed, from the ECO Special Feasibility Fund to arrange Feasibility Studies/Visits necessary to promote region wide projects in Member States.

103. The Council, in view of the desirable role of the Directorate to ensure coordination within the ECO Secretariat as well as among the Member States requested the Secretariat to prepare a plan of action in consultation with the Member States, the agreed projects in different sectors and the current trends in regional cooperation as practiced in other regions. In this respect, the Council recommended visits by the officials of the Directorate to Member States to ensure close co-ordination with the relevant authorities.

vii) Cooperation in the fields of education, culture, science, status report on ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies and Drug Control

104. 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 have not been completed as yet, may be accomplished without further delay so that the said Institutions and Agencies could become more effective.

105. The Council reiterated its earlier calls to 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. The contributing Member States, who have not done so, are requested to take appropriate steps to pay the budgetary contributions approved by the CPR. It was also recommended that the President of the Institute may be appointed at the earliest.

106. While Council appreciating the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute, took note of the status report prepared by ECI, which is placed at **Annex-VI**. The Member States were requested to lend support to the initiatives taken by the Institute.

107. 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 long overdue first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that it would convey its views on the draft Basic Document soon. It also proposed to host the 1st Meeting of Board of Trustees in May/June 2002.

108. The Council urged all the signatory Member States, except the Islamic Republic of Iran and the 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.

109. The Council, while appreciating the presentation made by the Representative of ECO College of Insurance, expressed the hope that the Member States would increase their participation in the activities of the College. The Council also requested ECO College of Insurance to provide necessary documents and information to the Secretariat to be distributed among the Member States for consideration.

Drug Control

110. The Council noted the completion of the first phase of the Joint ECO/UNDCP Project and lauded the role of the Secretariat to finalize the Phase II Project with the UNDCP. The Council decided to reactivate the focal points during the Phase II of the project, in light of the report of the inventory mission carried out to ascertain their needs.

111. The Council requested all the Member States to continue communicating drug-related information to the ECO Secretariat for publication at [http:// www.ecodccu.org](http://www.ecodccu.org)

112. The Council requested the Member States to actively participate in all ECO/UNDCP project/events, which are included in the Calendar of Events for the year 2002 and suggested that Member States might wish to invite the ECO Secretariat, in relevant international or regional meetings on drug control matters.

113. The Council noted the information provided by the Republic of Turkey that Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crimes (TADOC) has invited the ECO Member States to participate in its seventeen international programmes to be realized with the cooperation of UNDCP in the year 2002.

114. The Council noted the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Regional Drug Training Centre affiliated to Police Force, based in Tehran, to organize drug law enforcement courses for law enforcement and custom personnel of the ECO Member States, upon their requests. The requests will be made to Drug Control Headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran through ECO Secretariat.

115. The Council recommended the ECO Secretariat, as envisaged in the joint ECO/UNDCP 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.

Agenda Item No.7

ANNUAL ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS/MEETINGS FOR 2002

116. The Council considered the draft ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings for the year 2002, prepared by the ECO Secretariat and endorsed it for submission to the Council of Ministers for approval. The draft Calendar is placed at **Annex-VII**.

Agenda Item No. 8

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

117. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 9

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

118. The Council, while considering that the 13th RPC meeting would be held in March 2003, requested the Secretariat to hold consultations with Member States to determine the venue of the said meeting.

Agenda Item No. 10

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

119. The Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 11

VOTE OF THANKS

120. 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 excellent arrangements made for the meeting and the warm hospitality extended to them.

121. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. Expressing its satisfaction with the arrangements made by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the meeting, 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.