

The 12th RPC Meeting

Statements of the Heads of delegations

(Tehran, 06 March, 2002)

Annex-IV

Statement by H.E. Dr. Sultan Hamid, Minister of Transportation of the - Islamic State of Afghanistan

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Statement by Mr. M. Sadyrkulov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to IRI

Statement by H.E. Dr. Sultan Hamid,

(Minister of Transportation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan)
Unofficial Translation

In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful

*Mr. Chairman,
honourable delegates
participating in the Regional Planning Council of ECO,*

I would like to express my thanks for warm and friendly hospitality of the Islamic Republic of Iran and I avail this opportunity to raise some points:

As known in the world, Afghanistan has endured 23 years of aggression, war and intrusion and has suffered from huge material and spiritual losses and damages. But, Bonn Conference which was a historical and unique opportunity for Afghanistan in international and national level, was leading to establishment and setting up an interim government in this country. This government which has been established by taking caution and observation of different aspects, symbolizes the manifestation of the determination and intention of different ethnics inhabiting in this country. With the powerful desire and will of the peoples, support of world community and help of God, this government is determined to lead Afghanistan to a higher and more plausible level of progress and development while observing all current and common regulations in the world and international community.

Tokyo Meeting put another proper opportunity at the disposal of Afghanistan and gave new hopes to this country. Now that the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) has held its annual Meeting as usual, I deem it necessary to inform all of our friendly participants that unfortunately Afghanistan has faced with many great difficulties in all areas discussing in this Meeting namely Transport & Communications, Trade, Energy, Minerals, Environment, Agriculture, Industries, Health and Research and in some extent, the world community is aware of that. However, by help of God and favour of our good friends at the international level, hopefully, new steps has been taken for reconstruction of Afghanistan in aforementioned fields and other realms. At present, there are some indications of interest by some countries for reconstruction of

Afghanistan. It would be much pleasant, proper and appropriate that ECO would take the initiative in reconstruction of Afghanistan and take the lead more than others in this regard and through a constructive and healthy competition to help this country to get reconstructed. A country which is considered as linkage between Central Asia and South West of the continent of Asia.

Narcotic drugs being an ominous heritage of dark period of Taliban rule including its plantation and extension, has got its damages on Afghanistan as well as world community. It is a great concern of the Interim Government of Afghanistan and we are seriously determined to eliminate and annihilate this great human plague. However, our strength has been divested and limited because of 23 years of war and we expect this Organization to help us in this regard seriously.

Another bitter reality is that Afghanistan is facing with very great economic problems because of being as a landlocked country. It would be more desirable, appropriate and God pleasing that the ECO Member States may pave the way for connecting this country to the free waters of Iran and Pakistan so that some urgent demands of the peoples of this land could be provided accordingly.

At the end while expressing once again my thanks and gratitude for the active participation of all members and sincere hospitality of the host country and in particular the honourable Chairman of this meeting who has allocated a considerable portion of his opening statement to the issues of Afghanistan, I would like to reiterate that Afghanistan as a member of ECO, expresses its deep commitments to the Izmir Treaty and I hope that the Member States of this Treaty would consider the reconstruction of Afghanistan at the top of their priorities and they would not permit that some differences among members would injure the body of this suffering and afflicted member of this Organization. We are very fatigue and ailing and we are in need of your friendly cooperation.

Vasalam.

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Statement by Mr. Tofiq Mansurov,

(Deputy Chief of the State Caspian Steamship Line - Azerbaijan)

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen*

Allow me on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to thank You Mr. Chairman personally and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hospitality and excellent arrangement of this 12-th RPC Meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

Ten years ago the Republic of Azerbaijan has announced its independence and it is necessary to mention now that the Government of Azerbaijan, in association with

various international organizations has already conducted necessary activities to implement economic reforms, broad liberalization of foreign and economic activity, privatization aimed at reaching the macro-economic stability in terms of market relations.

Inclusion of project research issues in the Agenda of the 12th RPC meeting is of great importance for Azerbaijan in terms of improving regional ties from geographic and local point of view.

In this connection Azerbaijan aims to widely use the cooperation and experiences of the ECO member states in the field of scientific and technical achievements, improving market relations and attracting investments from the ECO member states.

Mr. Chairman,

The issues on transport and communications are also very important for Azerbaijan in terms of development of the regional infrastructural ties of the member states.

As you aware, the geographic location of Azerbaijan provides an opportunity to create a reliable and economic corridor not for transport itself, but also for transit of fuel-energy resources.

Analysis of works and technical parameters, which have been received as a result of researches made, prove topicality of using Batumi (Poti) Tbilisi-Baku-Turkmenbashi corridor and further on as an economic and shortest way to the Black sea and to Central Asian countries. This route is the shortest direct railway and waterway link between Ukraine, Romania, Russia and Central Asian states.

Keeping in view the significance of the Baku-Turkmenbashi line, the shipping company provides additional expenditures for maintaining ferries in constant operational condition, which meets the requirements of international conventions.

There is no doubt that we will not be limited ourselves to providing access to various countries to make transportation of goods through our territory.

In order to ensure effective operation of transport corridor, it will be necessary to establish a comprehensive system on its maintenance according to legal-regulatory base in conformity with requirements of the international market relations.

Undoubtedly, all this presupposes reconstruction of the railway road and sea port, elaboration of specific programs on strengthening of logistics and on utilization of Caspian Sea shipping company's potential, which is considered to be the largest in Europe and meets national interests of Azerbaijan.

It is necessary to take into consideration the topicality and importance of the said corridor as a railroad and water-road route of the Great Silk Road to transport the basic cargoes made in these countries such as oil, oil products, cereals, containers. These products make the most part of transportation volumes, so far and are the basic prerequisites for greater favorable economic development in future.

We believe that loading of this corridor will be increased in nearest future with the help of all states concerned.

To this end, taking into account the importance of this issue, Azerbaijan has already started implementing "TRACECA" program. Giving a paramount importance to "TRACECA", Azerbaijan would like the ECO Secretariat to consider the "TRACECA" as a basic link of future development of transport system of the ECO member states. Linking this issue with a perspective development of transport artery of the ECO member states, Azerbaijan has already offered its proposal under consideration of draft Working paper.

The documents, which have been signed by the Head of states in Istanbul, on the construction of oil-pipeline from Baku to Ceikhan and Trans Caspian gas-pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey, will open new possibilities of development of the economic ties of all four ECO member states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Turkey).

Azerbaijan is also interested in global problems on environment and sustainable development of the ECO region. These issues are to be given special importance as well.

While considering the draft Working document of the 11th RPC meeting, held in Tehran from 26 February to 1 March, 2001, we have submitted two proposals, one is a project of the regional character titled "Seismic risk assessment in Anatolian and Central Asian region"; and the other one, is an interstate project titled "Border forests resources management in Iran and Azerbaijan"; we believe that implementation of this project can prevent degradation of forest resources and land erosion and forest fund of Iran and Azerbaijan.

Though these proposal have not been reflected in the decision of the 12th RPC Meeting, we hope that they will be reflected in the following ECO documents.

Forming of right approaches in tariff and tax policy of the ECO member states, especially in border crossing countries is an essential component for the development of trade and investment cooperation among the ECO member states. In this regards, it is necessary to consider the experiences of the specific ECO member states and, may be, the experiences of UN ESCAP countries in the field of tariff and non tariff barriers, customs-tax preferences and their effectiveness in cooperation. Forming of tax preferences and measures are to be taken along with reduction of tax competition.

As for the development of small and medium enterprises of the ECO member states, it is worthwhile to reveal common problems, which these industrial enterprises face, and to propose practical measures for removal of these impediments. These practical measures concern, first of all, small and medium enterprises in border crossing areas, and deal with registration of the small and medium enterprises, principles of leadership of rights and implementation of contacts, removal of the administrative barriers on tax system, improvement of an access small and medium enterprises to credits and consulting services ect. For this purposes, Framework conditions of business among the ECO member states as a whole, and first of all, border crossing countries, should be worked out. .

Technical cooperation of the ECO member states is a field, modernization of which can promote the development of small and medium enterprises. In this connection, there is a need to work out a long term programs on planning, to assist small and medium enterprises. As a whole, the technical cooperation with ECO member states can be considered as less extensive and effective than financial assistance.

Azerbaijan has already established close relations with all ECO member states in the field of education and culture. However the recent level of educational and cultural exchange among our countries does not meet the requirements of our peoples. In this connection, specific programs on the cultural and educational cooperation of the ECO member states is to be elaborated.

Mr. Chairman,

Keeping in view the limitation of time, I would like to complete my statement and say, that the Government of Azerbaijan is of a view that ECO has a good perspectives to further revitalize a cooperation among the member states and to render actual assistance to Azerbaijan, whose economy is in transitional period.

To this end, let me assure You Mr. Chairman that Azerbaijan is ready to actively take part and support all steps on the development of this cooperation within ECO.

Thank You

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Statement by Mr. M. Sadyrkulov,

(Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to IRI)

*Esteemed Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues,
Distinguished Secretary General,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

First of all, on behalf of our delegation and myself let me congratulate H.E. Dr. S.M-H. Adeli on his having been appointed a Chairman of this high forum.

Also, on behalf of our delegation I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the extended hospitality and cordiality and excellent conditions created for the work of our delegation in Tehran.

No doubt, the serious preparatory work done, on the eve of our meeting, by the ECO Secretariat and its officials headed by H.E. Dr. Abdolrahim Gavahi, ECO Secretary General, deserves the high mark and thankfulness.

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Nowadays the ECO region is in focus of the world community. The events in Afghanistan directly influence the vital interests and the future of every ECO Member-State (MS) and the entire region as a whole. The hopes of the world community for the end of the long lasting war in Afghanistan, that has sharply reduced the full-blooded development of the region, are reviving again.

We in Kyrgyzstan deeply believe that in the nearest future the ECO region will become the region of peace and stability, the region utmost attractive for the large-scale investments, prosperity and international economic cooperation.

The region and all the nations in it need stability and sustainable social and economic development. Today's world is developing at a high speed and unless we lay down common regional basis and trend for a steady development of the region within the next 10 years, we will get a poor fate in the era of global competition and economy.

Therefore, first we have to make the ECO region at least a region free of clashes, stable and attractive for investments. Then, on a long-term basis, effectively using the ECO mechanisms, institutions and legal base for the attraction of international investments, we will be able to secure the harmonious social and economic development of the region and build "a common economic house".

In this aspect our today's immediate task must be the post-war stabilization and rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

Hence we support the recent initiatives of Iran regarding the ECO's active participation in international programmes for the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan, including elaboration and implementation of the relevant regional projects and creation of an ECO foundation for the Aid to Afghanistan. Of course, it should be noted that the different MS have different possibilities, but the Government of Kyrgyzstan considers the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan to be the highest priority.

For instance, in Kyrgyzstan the Governmental Commission for provision of assistance to Afghanistan has been set up and a Special Representative of the President of Kyrgyzstan for Afghanistan (Mr. Joomart Otorbaev) has been appointed to coordinate the activity of Kyrgyzstan in this direction with that of international organizations and donor-countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me enumerate the ECO spheres of activities we consider priority:

- **Trade:**

Kyrgyzstan supports elaboration and adoption of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), which envisages progressive removal of trade barriers in the region;

We encourage the intention of the ECO Secretariat to involve the private sectors in the MS in trade programmes and projects to be executed jointly with the ITC on extension of intra-regional trade by holding the meetings of buyers and sellers;

We stand up for the Transit Trade Agreement (Islamabad, 1995), ratified by all the MS, to take effect as soon as possible, and we welcome the endeavors of the ECO Secretariat in this regard;

The Islamic Republic of Iran ratified the Agreement of the ECO Trade and Development Bank in 2001. We think we are all interested to have this Bank commenced at the earliest.

Taking this opportunity I would like to inform the participants that Kyrgyzstan also contributes to the promotion of trade in the region. The opening of the Iranian Trade Center (ITC) in Bishkek is scheduled in this April and the preparatory work for this has been completed.

- **Transport and telecommunication:**

We may mark a certain Secretariat-made progress in this sector. As known, the regular container train Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul has been launched already.

Memorandum on launching the first pilot passenger train Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran in March this year has been signed. It is a pleasure to know that the international community is interested in revival of the ancient trade routes with the alternative arteries that link Asia with Europe via the ECO region. As the UNECE informs, the freight container traffic Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul can be extended up to Germany.

Kyrgyzstan and 3 more MS have ratified the TTFA. We call upon the rest of the countries to do their best to make this Agreement operational as soon as possible.

On its part Kyrgyzstan explores every avenue to implement the project on the Kyrgyz transport corridor, which will make it possible to create the Euro-Asian transport railway mainline to connect the sea ports of the Pacific ocean with the sea ports in the Persian Gulf, Mediterranean sea and Europe via the territory of Kyrgyzstan. It will be possible after the construction of a new section of the railway from Kyrgyzstan to Kashgar (China) and reconstruction of some other railway branches. At the 1st meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Kyrgyzstan and China agreed upon the route of this railway. New with assistance from the ADB they have to conduct a feasibility study of the project, which will undoubtedly bring economic benefits to all the

ECO MS. Iran has supported the project at the 5th session of the intergovernmental (Iran and Kyrgyzstan) Committee.

- **Energy:**

We consider the project on interconnection and parallel functioning of power grids of the region to be priority and welcome the Agreement on technical assistance (grant) signed with the IDB. We also expect understanding and support of our colleagues from the other ECO MS for the speedy conduct of the relevant feasibility study.

As known, a number of oil deposits were discovered in Kyrgyzstan in 2000. Due to this we have got a greater stake in cooperation with the other ECO MS in the oil sector. To enhance prospecting of hydrocarbons, recovering and processing oil and gas, develop our own production of oil products the Government of Kyrgyzstan has adopted the “Programme for the development of oil and gas industry of the Kyrgyz Republic up to 2010” and passed some laws favorable for the foreign investors. Therefore we are inviting the oil and gas companies of the ECO MS to actively participate in exploration of our hydrocarbons.

We also in favor of the Secretariat’s project proposal on new and renewable sources of energy to be financed by UNDP, and the intention to incorporate this issue in the agenda of the 2nd Ministerial meeting.

The Kyrgyz railway has been designated a regional focal point for the SPECA programme on water and energy resources to be executed under the aegis of ESCAP and UNECE. We suppose that ECO could take an active part in this programme.

- **Tourism:**

The Izmir Treaty calls tourism one of the goals of our Organization. Globally tourism is a high profitable industry of services that annually brings billions of revenues to many countries of the world. Regular functioning of the international passenger train Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul by the Trans-Asian main line is supposed to boost the tourist turnover among our countries. Working out the Plan of actions (or a Strategy) for the development of tourism at the regional level is not an easy task and needs certain funds and time. Therefore Kyrgyzstan suggests that the ECO Secretariat should start working over this task with the international organizations and the ECO MS, which have got a weighty national experience in developing this promising branch of economy.

Mr. Chairman, Dear colleagues,

In conclusion, let me once again thank the hosts of this meeting for the cordiality and hospitality and wish all the participants health, well-being and success in our common affairs.

Thank you.