

The 11th RPC Meeting

Report

(Tehran, 01 March, 2001)

CON/RPC-11/01/Rpt. (Adopted)

1. The eleventh meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on 1st March, 2001 at the Institute of Political & International Studies (IPIS), Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran. The meeting was preceded by the Preparatory/Review Meetings held from 26th to 28th February, 2001 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. 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.

2. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Mohammad Reza Aref, Vice-President and the Head of Management and Planning Organization 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 2000

6. The Secretary General of ECO presented his annual Report to the Council on the activities of the Organization during 2000. A copy of the Report is placed 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 to further improve the performance of the Organization.

Agenda Item No. 6

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION 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 2000 – outlining the progress achieved in the implementation of the activities approved by 10th COM meeting- and made the following recommendations:

a)Transport and Communications

9. The Regional Planning Council (RPC) noted with appreciation the work carried out by the concerned Directorate of the ECO Secretariat with regard to implementation of the ongoing Programme/Plans/Proposals and Calendar of Events/Meetings for year 2000 in the field of Transport and Communications.

10. The RPC welcomed the completion of construction of the 226 km long Uchkuduk-Nukus railway line in Uzbekistan and strengthening of the Aktogai-Druzhba railway line and increasing the Druzhba interchange (border) station's traffic capacity to 7 million tons per year in Kazakhstan, in the context of implementation of the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007).

11. The RPC requested the Member States to designate their representatives to the ECO Permanent Commission on Transport and Communications (PCTC) before 1 April 2001, in line with the Article 2 of its TOR, adopted by the 3rd ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications and endorsed by the 10th COM meeting so as to enable the ECO Secretariat to organize its 1st meeting at the earliest.

12. 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 to the ECO Secretariat by 26 March, 2001.

13. The Council urged the Member States to expeditiously complete the missing road and rail links within the ECO region to facilitate expansion of intra-ECO trade.

14. The RPC 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 1 April, 2001. It also requested the Member States to participate in the 6th Session of the UN SPECA Project Working Group (PWG) on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation to be held in Almaty on 9-10 April, 2001.

15. The Council also reiterated to the Member States, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have so far acceded to two international conventions only, to consider accession to international conventions listed in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007).

16. The RPC urged the Member States namely Islamic State of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, 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, at least in the 2nd half of 2001.

17. The Council welcomed the statement of the Republic of Uzbekistan that it was ready to accede to the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (barring Articles 12 and 28) and its Annexes.

18. The Council noted with appreciation the readiness of the Central Insurance Authorities of Iran (Bimeh Markezi Iran) to fulfill their commitment to host the 1st meeting of the ECO Insurance Sub-Committee comprising the representatives of the central insurance authorities of the Member States and formulate a draft ECO Interim Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability Insurance Scheme in accordance with the Article 3 (para 1) of Annex-V to TTFA (1998) and furnish it to the ECO Secretariat by 15 March, 2001 for submission to the Member States.

19. The RPC requested the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Republic of Turkey, (particularly their railway authorities) to arrange a visit of the Working Group to study their existing railway information system in March-April 2001 for preparation of a comprehensive report in pursuance of the decisions of the 5th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities held in Almaty on 19-21 September, 2000.

20. The Council requested the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to issue, after the endorsement of CPR, the 2nd edition of the ECO Road and Railway Network Maps (500 copies of each) in year 2001 through the ECO Secretariat for circulation among the Member States, taking into account the final amendments proposed by the concerned Member States. The Member States were urged to communicate their views and amendments through the ECO Secretariat by end May, 2001.

21. The RPC recommended to the ECO Secretariat 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 preparatory review meeting, to the ECO Secretariat by 1 May, 2001.

22. The Council noted with appreciation the work done by the 1st and 2nd Experts Working Group meetings on Trans-Asian-European Fiber Optic Cable System

(TAEFOS) held in Tehran on 23-25 January, 2000 and Istanbul on 24-26 October, 2000 respectively and requested the Government of Uzbekistan to expedite establishment of direct TAEFOS channels between Tashkent and Tehran to remove the existing interruptions of communication.

23. The RPC requested the telecommunication authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to fulfill their previous commitment to furnish a draft format of Data on telecommunication equipment and its components to the ECO Secretariat to circulate the same to the Member States for consideration before the 13th meeting of Directors General of National Telecommunication Companies and Postal authorities.

24. The Council, keeping in view the importance of an agreed programme of joint research and designing activities in the field of telecommunications to be implemented by the Member States, requested the relevant authorities in the Member States to ensure participation of their representatives in the forthcoming meeting of Experts Group.

25. The Council urged the Member States to make efforts for entering into cooperation in the Information Technology sector. In this regard, promotion of E-commerce in the region may be explored. The ECO Secretariat may prepare a strategy paper on the subject, which may be discussed by CPR and later submitted to the appropriate ECO Ministerial meeting.

26. The RPC recommended to the 13th meeting of Directors General of National Telecommunication Companies and Postal Authorities of the Member States to consider status reports of the Member States on the conclusion of bilateral agreements between postal administrations within the ECO region for cooperation in the field of postal services including the international EMS and exchange of philatelic products as well as Pakistan's following proposals:

- i. Establishment of direct mail links between ECO Member States for development of postal services in the region.
- ii. Introduction of Express Mail Service (EMS) between ECO Member States.
- iii. Mutual reduction in the inward handling costs of parcel and EMS services.
- iv. Regular participation of qualified postal officials in the meetings of Directors General of Telecommunications and Posts of the ECO Member States held every year.

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 before 1 April, 2001.

28. The RPC noted with appreciation the outcome of the 5th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities held in Almaty on 19-21 September, 2000 and endorsed its Report as a whole and in this respect:

- i) Requested the relevant authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan to amend the existing bilateral railway border-crossing agreement by a new chapter titled "Passenger Transportation" in order to open the International Passenger Traffic on Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul route of Trans-Asian Railway main line at the earliest.
- ii) Urged the concerned authorities of the Member States to finalize reconciliation of the draft MOU among the involved railway administrations on the opening of international passenger traffic on Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul route of the Trans-Asian Railway main line prepared by the Task Force during its 1st and 2nd meetings held on 21-31 October and 9-12 December, 2000 in Tehran and recommended to sign it as well as to ensure completion of all organizational, technical, legal and financial aspects of the preparatory work at the earliest in order to open the above traffic within the 1st half of 2001.
- iii) Requested the Member States to support the activity of the Special Working Group to complete all preparatory work to launch the proposed demonstration container train on Almaty-Istanbul route before the 6th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, to be held on 24-26 September, 2001 in Baku.
- iv) Requested the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey to expedite their joining OSJD for the common benefit of the region and convey their applications in this respect to the OSJD committee before the XXIX session of OSJD Ministerial Conference to be held in Baku in July, 2001.

29. In light of the announcement from the Republic of Uzbekistan delegation that the Uzbek side was still not ready to discuss the project of the opening international passenger traffic on Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul route, the Member States strongly requested the Uzbekistan Government to review its position with reference to this ECO wide project, which is in line with the main objectives of the Treaty of Izmir (1996).

30. The Council requested the signatory Member States of the ECO Shipping Company (except Iran and Pakistan) to pay their shares to the revised registered capital of the Company by end April, 2001. Further, it was recommended that if, for the time being, the non-paying Member States were inclined to opt out of it, in line with the constitution of the Company, they could intimate their decision to the ECO Secretariat.

31. The RPC endorsed the Report of the 1st meeting of the Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines held in Karachi on 12-14 February, 2001 and approved the following, in particular:

- i) The conclusion of the meeting that further development of the ECO Air Project was not feasible and recommended to formulate an ECO Framework Agreement on cooperation in the field of air transport to increase the effectiveness of air services in the ECO region instead of the development of the ECO Air Project.
- ii) Initiative of the delegations of Pakistan, Turkey and Kazakhstan to prepare their versions of the above-mentioned draft Framework Agreement.
- iii) Decision on the establishment of a formal institutionalized relationship between ECO and ICAO and the approval of the draft MOU prepared by the ECO Secretariat.
- iv) Agreement of the meeting to grant 50% discount to the ECO Secretariat's staff and participants of all ECO meetings/events and the request to the remaining Member States' (viz Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) National Airlines to do the same. In this respect, the Heads of National Airlines were requested to issue the due directives to their sale offices/agencies and instruct them to provide the facility upon the request of the ECO Secretariat and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States and furnish copies of these directives to the ECO Secretariat by 1st April, 2001.

32. In pursuance of para 16 of the Report of the 3rd ECO Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications (Islamabad, 27-28 April, 2000), the Council decided to set up a Working Group to study the possibility of introduction of an ECO Multilateral Quota for Road Transport Permits and harmonization of bilateral road permit prices and appreciated the willingness of the road transport authorities of the Republic of Turkey to host the 1st meeting of this Group in the current year.

33. 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 by 1 December, 2001.

b) Trade and Investment

34. The Regional Planning Council (RPC) noted with appreciation the work carried out by the concerned Directorate of the ECO Secretariat with regard to implementation of the ongoing Programme/Plans/Proposals and Calendar of Events/Meetings for the year 2000 in the fields of Trade and Investment.

35. The Council expressed satisfaction over the signing of the ECO Framework Agreement on Trade (ECOFAT) by eight Member States during the 1st ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade, held in Tehran from 4 to 6 March, 2000 and noted that out of the eight signatory Member States, only the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Turkey had so far ratified the ECOFAT. The Council urged the remaining Member

States to expedite the process of ratification in order to bring into effect the early implementation of the Agreement. The Council further urged the Republic of Kazakhstan to deposit the instruments of ratification/approval with the ECO Secretariat. The non-signatory Member States i.e. Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan were requested by the RPC to consider, joining the Agreement so as to enhance its scope and effectiveness.

36. The Council endorsed the report of the Third High Level Experts Group (HLEG) meeting, held in Ankara (Turkey) on 22-23 November, 2000 and noted with appreciation the modalities developed by the HLEG for drafting the proposed ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA). The Council noted the importance of timely transmission of data and urged the Member States to ensure submission of their respective ECOTA drafts to the Secretariat by the end of March, 2001. The Council expressed the hope that HLEG would expeditiously complete its deliberations on finalization of ECOTA.

37. The Council also urged the HLEG to consider in its deliberations the possibility of the establishment of an ECO Free Trade Area.

38. The Council noted with appreciation the offers made by the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 4th and 5th HLEG meetings in Baku and Tehran in 2001 respectively and urged the host authorities to intimate the exact dates of the said meetings to the ECO Secretariat as soon as possible.

39. The Council noted with satisfaction the successful completion of the process of ratification of the Transit Trade Agreement (TTA) by the signatory Member States and urged Afghanistan and Uzbekistan to join the said Agreement. The Council expressed its concern over the non-implementation of the TTA despite the fact that it entered into force in December, 1997. The Council, therefore, urged the signatory Member States to try and remove the procedural impediments in the way of operationalization of the said Agreement.

40. The Council, however, appreciated the Secretariat's efforts towards finding ways and means for early implementation of the TTA mainly through a UNDP-funded consultancy and UNCTAD's offer to organize a Seminar on Customs Transit Management to be held in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

41. The Council also appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat to coordinate the implementation of the two Agreements namely Transit Trade Agreement (TTA) and Transit Trade Framework Agreement (TTFA).

42. The Council urged Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to expedite the process of nomination of their respective Guaranteeing Associations and intimate the names of the members to the Secretariat before the next meeting of the Council of Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA) in Turkey. The Member States were also urged by the RPC to submit their comments on the draft maps distributed by the Secretariat in the 7th

meeting of the Heads of Customs Administration (HCA), held in Baku in June 2000, showing transit routes and customs entry/exit points.

43. The Council endorsed the report of the 7th HCA meeting, held in Baku in June, 2000 and noted with appreciation the offer made by the Republic of Turkey to host the 1st meeting of CHCA in September, 2001. The Council urged the host authorities to intimate the exact date and venue of the said meeting to the ECO Secretariat as soon as possible. The Council also endorsed the idea of holding a meeting of Technical Experts, on the sidelines of the CHCA meeting to review the implementation of the MOU on Cooperation Against Smuggling and Customs Frauds and also to prepare a plan of action regarding establishment of a data bank on ECO smuggling & customs offences.

44. The Council noted with appreciation the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the following Seminars for the Customs Officials of the Member States from mid-June to mid-September, 2001:

- i. Better implementation of the Harmonized System Nomenclature;
- ii. Implementing the WTO Agreement on Customs Valuation.

45. The Council endorsed the report of the Second Seminar on Trade & Investment Information Networking (TIIN), held in Antalya (Turkey) on 26-27 October, 2000 and noted with appreciation the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to hold the Third Seminar on TIIN in 2001. The Council urged the relevant host authorities to intimate the exact date and venue of the Seminar to the ECO Secretariat for necessary planning of the event.

46. The Council also appreciated the offers made by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey to assist Azerbaijan and Central Asian Member States (ACAMS) in upgrading their IT capabilities and extending necessary technical assistance for establishing an effective trade & investment information networking within the ECO region.

47. The Council expressed satisfaction over the development of ECO Trade Net, aimed at increasing interaction between the private sectors of the Member States by provision of trade-related information and creation of awareness about trade opportunities within the ECO region and requested the Member States to follow-up on the recommendation of the Seminar viz; nomination of focal points for ECO Trade Net and provision of trade/business directories on electronic format.

48. The Council observed that some of the signatory Member States had not so far ratified the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the Member States. The Council, therefore, urged the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to expedite the process of ratification of the Agreement and also requested the non-signatory Member States viz; the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan to consider joining the said Agreement.

49. The Council was informed that the ratification process of the Agreement on ECO Trade and Development Bank was under due consideration by the concerned Iranian authorities. The Council, in turn, requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to expedite the process of ratification so that the said Bank and the ECO Reinsurance Company could simultaneously become operational as early as possible. At the same time, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was requested to kindly take necessary measures for the convening of the Trilateral Interim Committee (TIC) meeting for the establishment of the ECO Reinsurance Company. The Council was further informed that subject to the ratification by the Islamic Republic of Iran, a TIC meeting would be held in Turkey to review and discuss the issues related to the establishment of the Trade & Development Bank. The Council noted with appreciation the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the said meeting. The host authorities were requested to convey the exact date and venue of the said meeting to the Secretariat on completion of all the procedural and legal formalities.

50. The Council was informed that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan had decided to hold the 4th ECO Trade Fair and the 2nd ECO Chamber Trade Fair (previously postponed due to lack of adequate response from the Member States) simultaneously at Karachi (Pakistan) from 30th April to 4th May, 2001. The Council expressed its appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the said events.

51. The Council requested the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), the current Chairman of the ECO-CCI, to take measures to convene the meeting of the General Assembly of ECO-CCI facilitating the transfer of the chairmanship to the Azarbaijan Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The Council urged the ECO-CCI to improve its performance by exploring new modalities aimed at better and effective interaction between the private sectors of the Member States. The Council also endorsed the Secretariat's proposal that ECO-CCI should play an active role in the capacity building of the ACAMS through seeking technical assistance from trade-related international organizations like UNCTAD, ESCAP and ITC.

52. In order to promote investment in the region, the Council recommended that a Regional Investment Conference could be held and requested the Secretariat to make preparations for holding such an event. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize the first Regional Investment Conference in Kish Free Trade Zone. The Council urged the Islamic Republic of Iran to intimate the exact date for the Conference to the ECO Secretariat.

53. The Council noted with satisfaction the progress made regarding the implementation of the ECO/ITC Project on Trade Promotion and appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat in launching two major phases of the project, viz; the Product Selection Workshop (13-15 March, Tehran) and the Buyers-Sellers meeting (July, 2001, Iran). The Council noted with appreciation the cooperation extended by ITC for realization of this project as well as ECO's efforts in establishing a comprehensive trade and investment information networking system in the ECO region.

54. 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 endorsed the measures adopted by 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.

c)Energy, Minerals and Environment

Energy

55. The Council approved the Report of the 4th Specialized Experts Task Group meeting on Power (4th SETG, Tehran, 6-7 May 2000) together with the shortlist of Consulting Companies from the Member States for the feasibility study on Interconnection and Parallel Functioning of the ECO Countries Power Systems. Moreover, the Council requested the concerned authorities in the Member States to extend full co-operation to the ECO Secretariat for implementation of its coordination function for the said feasibility study as outlined in the 3rd SETG Report and amended by the 4th SETG meeting.

56. The Council noted with appreciation the Islamic Development Bank 's (IDB) decision to provide a Technical Assistance Grant to ECO to support carrying out a feasibility study for the project on Interconnection & Parallel Functioning of the ECO Countries Power Systems and also requested the ECO Secretariat and the Member States to make every effort for the finalization and signing of the Technical Assistance (Grant) Agreement between IDB and ECO in order to expedite the start of implementation of the project's feasibility study.

57. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to continue its negotiations with IDB for the performance of aforementioned feasibility study in the direction of the decisions taken by RPC including the increase of the amount of US \$400,000 already allocated by IDB. In case of not having the positive response from IDB, the ECO Secretariat will call for the 5th SETG meeting with the participation of IDB's technical and financial experts to redefine the new scope and Terms of Reference (TOR) of the study to be performed under the Technical Assistance Grant.

58. With reference to para 58 and 59 of the 10th RPC Report, the Council endorsed the Report of the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum (Islamabad, 8 November, 2000) together with the Joint Statement on Co-operation in Energy/Petroleum in the ECO Region and the Plan of Action for Energy/Petroleum Co-operation in the ECO Region (2001-2005).

59. While emphasizing that the outcome of the Ministerial meeting will pave the way for enhancing the regional co-operation, the Council called upon the Member States to provide full support for the implementation of the aforementioned Plan of Action and

designate their national focal points to coordinate and oversee implementation of its in-country components. In this regard, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey have already intimated their focal points. The Council also urged the High Level Experts Task Group (HLETG) to expedite their work.

60. The Council took note of the Report of the ECO and Energy Charter Secretariat (ECS) Coordination Workshop held at Ankara on 15-16 January 2001. The Council endorsed the recommendations of the above-mentioned Workshop and encouraged the ECO Secretariat to continue its co-operation with the ECS.

61. Reiterating the importance of regional co-operation in energy efficiency and conservation, the Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to hold Workshop on Energy Conservation and Efficiency and Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting of Experts to prepare the Outline and Methodology for Energy Conservation in the ECO Countries in Ankara on 23-24 May 2001 and requested all Member States to confirm their participation.

62. The Council appreciated the ECO Secretariat's efforts in preparation of the electronic version of the ECO Energy Data Booklet (EDB) to be provided on the ECO Website upon the approval of the Member States and requested them to cooperate with the ECO Secretariat in updating the information contained in the EDB for the time horizon 1995-2000, 2005, 2010.

63. The Council emphasized that the ECO Secretariat should extend its current cooperation and contacts with international, regional organizations, institutions, banks active in the fields of energy, minerals and environment such as the World Bank, ADB, IDB, UNDP, OPEC etc., for achieving the goals as envisaged in the ECO basic documents.

64. The Council took note of the Turkish proposal regarding the possibilities for technical co-operation in Petrochemical Industry and asked the Member States to cooperate in this respect.

Minerals

65. With reference to the Tehran Declaration (10 June 2000) which noted the region's rich mineral resources and called for enhancing co-operation in the mineral field, the Council requested the Member States to take active part in the ECO Minerals Experts Meeting on Enhancement of Regional Co-operation in Mineral Sector and Drafting a Plan of Action for Co-operation amongst the ECO Member States in the field of minerals to be held in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this regard, the Iranian delegation informed that the meeting could take place during the month of October 2001. The Turkish delegation proposed that the agenda of the meeting may cover, among other things, the promotion of investment in mining sector, formation of Minerals Data Bank and

Inventory in the field of Geology as well as preparation of Mineral Deposits Data Booklet.

Environment

66. The Council welcomed the idea of holding the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Environment in the course of the year 2001.

67. The Council, in pursuance of Regional Plan of Action on Environment and relevant paragraphs of 10th RPC Report as well as the Tehran Declaration, requested the ECO Secretariat to endeavour its effort to promote its relationship with international and regional organizations in the field of environment and inform the Member States accordingly.

d)Agriculture, Industry and Health

Agriculture

68. The Council took note of the need for prioritizing and streamlining the ongoing activities in order to make beneficial and efficient cooperation among the ECO Member States.

69. The Council emphasized the importance of accurate and updated information and data on agriculture sector to increase awareness of opportunities and welcomed the Secretariat's proposal to link the survey on exportable surpluses and importable deficits to the ITC project conducted by the Directorate of Trade and Investment, while requesting the Member States other than the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey to furnish the list of agricultural research and training institutes and experts and professionals in the agriculture sector.

70. Taking note of the fact that the effective plant production and protection is one of the most essential components of food security, the Council reviewed the proposals, which have been evolved in the past and urged the Secretariat to follow up the matter to develop actionable targets. The Council also welcomed the offer of Turkish Government to organize training courses on the following areas:

- Prevention of Crops Losses at the Post-Harvest Stages (Ankara 05-16 October, 2001);
- Prevention of Processed Food Losses at the Storage Stage (Bursa 05-16 October, 2001);
- Prevention of Horticulture Crops Losses at the Post Harvest Stages (Yalova, September, 2001 - exact dates will be fixed later).

71. The Council also took note of the ongoing cooperation between the Member States, particularly, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Kazakhstan in the area of dwarf fruit trees and called on the other Member States to join such cooperation in a region-wide context.

72. The Council, while emphasizing the importance of food security in the region, requested all Member States to actively participate in the workshop, which is planned to be organized under the UNDP Capacity Building Project. In this regard, the Council also appealed to all Member States other than the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey to furnish their country reports on Food Security. The Council also took note of the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on making use of Internet facilities in exchanging of views and experiences on the subject.

73. The Council reiterated the significance of measures to combat desertification and to save further degradation of land in the Member States and appreciated the offer of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold a training workshop on Sand Dune Fixation in May 2001 on hospitality basis. The exact dates of the workshop will be intimated to the Secretariat later. The Council also requested the Member States who had not furnished the requisite information to do the same.

74. Taking note of the importance of the Livestock Diseases in Agriculture, the Council welcomed the offers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey to hold the workshop on Diagnosis of Livestock Diseases in the field of Cow Plague in Tehran in June 2001 and Working Group meeting on Foot and Mouth Diseases in Ankara on 3-8 September, 2001, respectively. The Council also urged all the Member States to actively participate in those events.

75. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to hold the First Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Islamabad some time in November or December, 2001. The Council also requested the Member States to actively participate in the Ministerial Meeting at the highest level.

76. The Council appreciated 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 come up with an actionable project document. In this regard, the Council requested the remaining Member States to receive the Mission by the first half of 2001.

77. The Council recommended that the issue of the Maximization of Agricultural Production in the ECO region should be considered in the First Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November-December, 2001. In this regard the Council requested the Secretariat to include findings of the Joint ECO/FAO/IDB Identification mission to selected Member States and the ITC Project in promoting intra-ECO trade, to be considered in the First Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture.

Industry

78. The Council took note of the need to streamline activities in the field of industry, with special emphasis on the industrial restructuring policies, which are the most important concerns of the ECO Member States.

79. 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 while appreciating financial and technical assistance provided by IDB and requested all Member States to actively participate in those events.

80. The Council took note with appreciation the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Industry at the end of 2001 for which the exact dates would be conveyed to the Secretariat by the Iranian authorities. The Council also requested the Member States to actively participate in the Ministerial Meeting at the highest level.

81. The Council reiterated the importance of the development of small and medium enterprises in promoting cooperative schemes among the Member States for exchange and transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise in the field. The Council in this regard took note with appreciation of the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the workshop with the technical assistance of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) in September, 2001 on hospitality basis.

82. The Council welcomed the proposal of ICS UNIDO to organize a training course in Technology Management and Technology Transfer Negotiations in Tehran on 23-27 June 2001 and appreciated the generous offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to extend local hospitality for the said event subject to the reconfirmation of relevant authorities. The Council also urged the Secretariat to follow up the matter with ICS- UNIDO and the Member States. The Council in this respect requested the Member States to actively participate in the event.

Health

83. The Council also welcomed the Secretariat's proposal that the ECO cooperation in the field of health should continue on the basis of joint activities with the relevant international organizations. In this respect, the Council expressed satisfaction on holding a conference on Expanding Contraceptive Choice and Improving the Quality of Reproductive Health Programmes in Turkey, in May 2000, jointly with UNFPA and welcomed the continued cooperation with UNFPA on the population and family planning issues and urged the Secretariat to follow up the matter vigorously.

84. The Council took note with appreciation the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold Royan International Infertility Seminar as an ECO event provided the CPR would approve invitations, which would be sent to the relevant international organizations and non-ECO countries.

Human Resources

85. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the First Ministerial meeting on Human Resources Development. However, since the issue of human development has various aspects which could not be restricted to one Ministry or department and is a new subject for the Secretariat, the Council recommended that the First Ministerial meeting on Human Resources Development may be postponed until the requisite background studies have been undertaken by the Secretariat in coordination and cooperation with the Member States.

Tourism

86. The Council reiterated the importance of tourism in advancing national economic development and promoting mutual understanding and requested the Secretariat to draw up a format-questionnaire on the relevant tourism topics/data to be circulated to the Member States. The Council also urged the Member States to furnish the requisite information to the Secretariat, accordingly.

e) Economic Research & Statistics

87. The Regional Planning Council took note of the Status Report prepared by the Secretariat on cooperation in the fields of Economic Research and Statistics during the year 2000.

88. The Council endorsed the Report of the 3rd meeting of the National Focal Points (NFPs) on Economic Research and Statistics, held in Tehran on 18-20 November 2000, and requested the Member States to take necessary actions for implementation of the decisions/recommendations of the meeting. The RPC urged those Member States (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) who had not yet designated their National Focal Points on Economic Research to do so at the earliest and communicate their particulars to the ECO Secretariat.

89. The Council reiterated the importance of publishing an ECO Statistical Yearbook in consonance with the list of indicators approved by the 3rd meeting of the NFPs with some modifications. At the same time, the Council accepted the proposal of the State Institute of Statistics of Turkey to change the indicator of "Indexes of Average Monthly Wages in Manufacturing Industry" to "Indexes of Wages per Production Worked Hours in Manufacturing Industry".

90. The RPC appreciated the progress made with regard to the designing of electronic version of the Statistical Yearbook. While expressing its concern over the non-supply of complete statistics for the said publication, the RPC strongly requested the Member States (except Turkey and Azerbaijan) to furnish the missing statistical data (from all national sources) without further delay to enable the ECO Secretariat to prepare for the publication in June 2001.

91. The Council also highlighted the efforts of the Statistical Agency of Kazakhstan, the State Institute of Statistics of Turkey and the Statistical Centre of Islamic Republic of Iran to summarize the meta-data information to be supplied by the Member States. On the basis of the summary thus supplied, the Secretariat would publish a manual guidebook as supplementary document to the ECO Statistical Yearbook on the methodological issues of statistics for better understanding and comparison of country indicators. The Council requested Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to furnish the meta-data information along with index definitions, particularly used in their countries for compilation of socio-economic indicators and submitting the same to the ECO Secretariat by end May 2001.

92. The Council also took note of the technical assistance to be provided to the ECO Secretariat by UNDP for harmonizing the existing methodology of data calculation and dissemination in the ECO region.

93. The Council noted with satisfaction that the draft Annual Economic Report for 2000 had been prepared and distributed by the ECO Secretariat. The Council requested the Member States to furnish views/comments and descriptions of their respective country portions within a period of one month to enable the Secretariat to finalize the report for publication before the 11th COM meeting.

94. The RPC took note of the plan to publish the ECO Business Guidebook in series covering individual countries, starting from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey in May 2001, continuing with Azerbaijan, Iran and Tajikistan in July 2001 and on other countries in subsequent years as the data becomes available. The Council urged the Member States to provide the requisite and the missing information so that these publications may be finalized as scheduled.

95. While appreciating the progress made on the designing and implementation of the ECO Joint Research Programme, the Council, in particular, took note of the designation of some research institutes for coordinating implementation of the assigned research topics and the hosting of the Workshop as outlined below:

- i) The Institute for Research in Planning and Development functioning under the Management and Planning Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran to act as the leading coordinator for research topic No.1 "Prospects for Closer Regional Economic Integration of ECO Member Countries".
- ii) The Export Promotion Centre of Turkey (IGEME) to act as a leading coordinator for topic No.2 "Marketing Survey on the Selection of Potential Exportable and Competitive Goods and Products for Increasing ECO Intra Trade".
- iii) The Institute of Economic Research of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to act as the leading coordinator for topic No.3 "Comprehensive Study on the Demand and Supply of Energy in the ECO Region".

- iv) The Council considered the research proposal prepared by the leading coordinator of research topic No.1 (Institute for Research in Planning and Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran) and requested the Member States to submit their views/comments in this regard. The Council also requested the leading coordinators on topic No.2 and No.3 to do so until May, 2001. The RPC urged the Member States (except Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey) to designate Research Institutes for cooperating on the above research topics and submit their proposals to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest to initiate preparation of the Work Plan and the relevant Workshops.
- v) In this context, the ECO Secretariat would make efforts to seek funding from international sources for organization of research activities.
- vi) The RPC also recommended to the ECO Secretariat to initiate action through the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) for possible utilization of ECO Feasibility Study Fund to resolve financial problems encountering the ECO Secretariat in its drive to implement the ECO Joint Research Programme.

96. The Council reiterated the importance of establishing the ECO Intra-regional Network (ECO-NET) and requested the Member States (except Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkey) to provide the relevant information, as per the questionnaire already circulated among the Member States, not later than 10 April, 2001.

97. The RPC welcomed the ECO Secretariat proposal to publish economic news of Member States on the ECO Website and requested the Member States to provide information to the Secretariat on quarterly basis in accordance with the framework that will be circulated by the Secretariat shortly.

98. The Council could not reach an agreement who should host the 4th ECO Coordination meeting of the National Focal Points (NFPs) on Economic Research and Statistics. In view of the importance of the event, the RPC urged the Member States to review their positions and send a definite response by mid May 2001 about their intention whether they would be able to host the event. If there is no response, the meeting will be arranged at the ECO Secretariat on non-hospitality basis.

f) Project Research

99. The Council appreciated the activities of the Directorate of Project Research (DPR) for 2000, including the preparation of the updated list of ECO projects (Feasibility Studies) and requested the Member States to indicate their preferences with regard to the selection of the enlisted projects, taking into account regional economic interests. The Council approved a new project regarding Sarez Lake and measures to ensure its security with a request to the Republic of Tajikistan to present the project profile to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest.

100. The Council recommended to the DPR to evaluate the measures for ensuring early implementation of the ECO projects as outlined in the Working Paper, particularly the following:

- a) Projects must be formulated in line with a general framework to be distributed by the ECO Secretariat shortly.
- b) The Member States may prioritize the already selected projects in light of their national interests/priorities.
- c) The amount to be allocated from the ECO Special Feasibility Fund and the projects to be financed from the Fund may be identified on annual basis.
- d) Special expert level conferences and workshops/seminars etc. may be arranged, focusing on economic benefits and the need for developing strategic action plans for promotion of priority projects.

101. While approving the following activities of the DPR for 2001, the Council called upon the Member States to assist the Secretariat in its endeavors to implement the approved events:

- a) Publication of a book entitled “ECO Projects” to promote feasibility studies of regional projects.
- b) Completion of a Roster of Leading Experts and Consultants of ECO Member States in priority areas.
- c) Completion of the ECO Directory of Training Institutions of the Member States.
- d) Cooperation with the ECO-CEC on preparation of pre-feasibility and feasibility studies of the ECO priority projects.
- e) Soliciting, to the extent possible, assistance/support from international organizations, funding agencies, banks etc.

102. The Council also advised the ECO Secretariat to strengthen its contacts/relations with different training institutions/centres within and beyond the ECO region and also to enhance its existing relations with international organizations and international training institutions in order to organize training programmes for experts and senior officials in the Member States in charge of implementation of the ECO projects.

103. The Council appreciated the DPR’s active role as a focal point for implementation of the UNDP Capacity Building Project of ECO Secretariat and requested the Directorate of Project Research to finalize the Project on due date i.e. end of 2001.

g) 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 Status Report prepared by the Secretariat on ECO Regional Institutions and ECO Specialized Agencies. While emphasizing the importance of ECO Regional Institutions and ECO Specialized Agencies in their respective fields of activity, 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 operational at the earliest.

105. 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 i.e. 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 and; pending ratification, take appropriate steps to pay the budgetary contributions once approved by the CPR.

106. The Member States were also requested to supply on regular basis an English Daily/local newspaper and fortnightly magazines, published in their countries, as requested by the Institute. They might also exchange information on cultural/art events in their countries regularly with the Institute. While Council appreciating the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute, the Council took note of the status report prepared by ECI, which is placed at **Annex-VI**.

107. The Council was apprised of the present status of the ECO Science Foundation, which unfortunately 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 Pakistani side informed that it would convey its proposal on the draft Basic Document, at the earliest.

108. The Council urged all the signatory Member States 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 the 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 expressed with satisfaction at the completion of the first phase of the Joint ECO/UNDCP Project and requested the Secretariat to complete the necessary formalities for early approval of the second phase of the DCCU Project.

111. The Council requested all the Member States to continue the submission of drug-related information and urged the Member States to convey their views and comments on the "Provisional Country Profiles" and "Drug trends in ECO Region 1999-2000" sent to them by the Secretariat, at the earliest, if they have not done it so far.

112. The Council requested the Member States to actively participate in all ECO/UNDCP project/events, which are contained in the Calendar of Events for the year 2001 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 recommended to the ECO Secretariat, as envisaged in the joint ECO/UNDCP project, to interact with the other International Organizations dealing with the problems of combating drug trafficking, and exchange information on measures taken in combating the production and drug trafficking in the ECO Member Countries.

Agenda Item No.7

REVIEW OF ECO'S PRIORITIES LAID DOWN IN THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION STRATEGY

114. As provided in the Rules of Procedures (Para 4(b)), the Council considered whether there was a need to review the priorities laid down in the ECO Economic Cooperation Strategy. After due consideration, it concluded that given the ground realities and the continued national importance attached by the Member States to the present ECO activities, it would be inadvisable to review the said priorities.

Agenda Item No.8

FINALIZATION OF THE DRAFT ANNUAL ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS/MEETINGS FOR 2001

115. The Council considered the draft ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings for the year 2001, 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. 9

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

116. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 10

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

117. The Council requested the Secretariat to hold consultations with Member States in order to determine the date and venue of the 12th RPC Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 11

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

118. The Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 12

VOTE OF THANKS

119. 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.

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.

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