

The 9th RPC Meeting

Report

(Istanbul, 22-23 February, 1999)

No. CON/RPC-9/99/Rpt. (Adopted)

1. The Ninth Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 19-23 February, 1999. The Meeting was attended by the delegations of the following Member States: Azerbaijan Republic, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan, 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. Prof. Dr. Orhan Guvenen, Undersecretary of State Planning Organization (SPO), the Head of the Turkish delegation. A copy of his inaugural speech is placed at **ANNEX-II**.

Agenda Item NO.2:

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN.

3. H.E. Prof. Dr. Orhan Guvenen, Undersecretary of State Planning Organization (SPO), the head of the delegation of the Republic of Turkey was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Meeting.

Agenda Item NO.3:

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND APPOINTMENT OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE.

4. The agenda adopted by the meeting is placed at **ANNEX-III**.

5. The Council decided to form an open-ended drafting committee to prepare the report of the meeting.

Agenda Item NO .4:

OPENING STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF DELEGATIONS.

6. The heads of the participating delegations made their 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 THE YEAR 1998 INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTRUCTURING PROCESS.

7. The Secretary General of ECO presented his report on the activities of the organization during 1998. A copy of the report is placed at **ANNEX-V**. In his report, the Secretary General highlighted the salient activities of the Organization during the year under review and also presented suggestions and proposals for consideration by the Council.

8. The Secretary General apprised the Council of the status of ECO's relationship with various international organizations and the important activities regarding external relations. The Council appreciated Secretary General's endeavours in enhancing the ECO's image and in implementing various agreements and MOUs' with UN specialized agencies and other regional/international organizations.

9. The Council noted with appreciation the comprehensive report presented by the Secretary General on the activities of the Organization as a whole and took note of the observations made in part-IV of the report.

10. The Council welcomed Secretary General's suggestion to hold ministerial meetings in priority areas of cooperation provided that necessary preparations for such meetings be duly fulfilled.

11. The Council also welcomed the suggestion of the Secretary General that in specific circumstances some of the proposed ECO projects may be initiated on small scale, involving 3 or 4 Member States in accordance with the regular ECO procedures and then broadened in order to obtain financial and technical assistance more easily.

12. The Council noting with satisfaction that in pursuance of its last year decision, the time for holding RPC meeting had been advanced to the month of February this year, expressed the view that the following RPC meetings could be held in the same period, to facilitate approval of ECO proposals/plans/programmes in due time.

Agenda Item NO.6:

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ECO APPROVED PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS.

13. The Regional Planning Council (RPC) discussed the proposals, programmes and plans included in working papers and reports of the different Directorates of ECO Secretariat, including the Status Report on the ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings 1998, prepared by the Secretariat, outlining the progress achieved in implementation of those activities, and made the following recommendations in each sector for 1999.

- **A) Transport and Communications**

14. The Regional Planning Council adopted the Report of the 3rd Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities held in Istanbul on 3-5 November, 1998 as a whole and endorsed the following in particular:

(i) The decision to set up an Experts Task Group to study the possibility of opening of international passenger traffic on Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul route of the Trans-Asian Railway main line to be extended later to

Bishkek, Dushanbe, Ashgabat and Baku and the offer of UIC to arrange technical assistance for the said group to successfully accomplish its task;

(ii) Draft Terms of Reference prepared by the ECO Secretariat for the proposed study on manufacturing and repairing of rolling stocks (locomotives, passenger carriages, freight wagons), containers and other railway equipment in the ECO Member States in pursuance of para 5 of the Ashgabat Declaration (1997) and the decision of the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications (1998) and approved by the said meeting for submission to IDB for consideration;

(iii) The decision to establish a Group of Technical Experts to study the issue and prepare its recommendations on establishment of a viable common information system for management of transport routes of the "East-West" and "North-South" corridors which may be compatible with the existing systems for efficient organization of railway transportation on the basis of the results of UIC's latest research;

(iv) Request of the said meeting to the Turkish and Kazakh Railway authorities to jointly study the possibility of appointment of a common transport operator for the southern route of the Trans-Asian Railway line (which passes through the territories of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Turkey) and submit their report to the ECO Secretariat by 1st September, 1999;

(v) Request to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to finalize the ECO Road and Railway Maps with the help of the ECO Secretariat at the earliest and publish them prior to the 9th COM Meeting (Baku, May, 1999);

15. The Council noted with appreciation the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran has completed the draft ECO Road Network Map and ECO Railway Network Map and needed verification from other Member States before the maps were finalized and published. The Member States were requested to convey their final views on the said maps to Islamic Republic of Iran by the end of March, 1999. Thereafter the Iranian authorities would consider the maps finalized for publication.

16. The Council noted with satisfaction the outcomes of the 2nd International Conference, "TRANSEURASIA-98 " (Almaty, 19-20 May, 1998) and ECO Regional Workshop on International Land Transport and Transit Conventions (Tashkent, 9-10 June, 1998) and recommended to the ECO Secretariat to approach the relevant international organizations and agencies of the UN, EC and others dealing with transport and communications for assistance to implement their recommendations such as:

(i) To start in collaboration with UN-ESCAP, UN-ECE, EC, OSZhD, UIC and interested member countries preparatory work for running a demonstration container train from Almaty to Istanbul on the southern corridor of the Trans-Asian Railway line as proposed by "TRANSEURASIA-98 " Conference;

(ii) Approved the request of the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Railway Authorities (Istanbul, 3-5 November, 1998) to Turkish and Pakistan Railways to consider joining the OSZhD, the regulatory documents of which are used for all railway routes of "East-West" and recommended to the ECO Secretariat to establish a formal and institutionalized relationship with the OSZhD Committee;

(iii) Appealed to the Member States who had not done so to set up the National Inter-Ministerial Committees for border-crossing facilitation and promotion of international transport comprising of representatives of Government, customs, banks, insurance authorities, chambers of commerce, freight forwarders and shipping lines and transport operators from public and private sectors, and furnish their focal points and their Action Plans for 1999-2000 to the ECO Secretariat by 1st July 1999. They should review all domestic legislation, procedures and documentation to bring them in conformity with the provisions of international transport conventions particularly the provisions of the TTFA, as and when it comes into force.

17. The Council requested the concerned authorities of the Member States to initiate a formal presentation of the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007) at national level with a view to involving the private sector, international financial institutions and multinational corporations to encourage them to invest in the transport infrastructure development by using the facilities of mass media for this purpose.

18. The Council requested the relevant Turkish authorities to prepare:

(i) Recommendations to bring ECO Road Network in line with the International standards including identification of locations and construction of the minimum road infrastructure requirements (e.g. filling stations, vehicle service workshops, motels, cafes., etc.);

(ii) A draft directory of ECO road network, both in English and Russian, specifying the existing and planned road infrastructure;

with the assistance of the relevant road authorities of the Member States.

19. The Council reiterated its previous request to the relevant Turkish authorities to furnish the required breakdown of costs to the Secretariat at the earliest so that it could be taken into consideration by the CPR for sanctioning of funds from the ECO Feasibility Fund for the above works in due course.

20. The Turkish delegation requested the Secretariat to prepare and convey to them the Terms of Reference for the above study so as to enable the relevant Turkish authorities to determine the costs and perform the required task.

21. The RPC adopted the Report of the 3rd Meeting of HLEG to finalize the texts of Annexes of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement held at ECO Secretariat on 8-10 November, 1998 and recommended to the Secretariat in consultation with the Member States to arrange the 4th meeting of the said group to conclude the Annexes of TTFA and submit them, if finalized, for consideration by the forthcoming 9th Meeting of the Council of Ministers.

22. The RPC adopted the Report of the HLEG Meeting on the working mechanism of the proposed Permanent Commission on Transport and Communications (PCTC) held in Ashgabat on 5-6 December, 1998 with the following observations/recommendations:

(i) Without prejudice to the outcome of the said meeting and the legal opinion of the Secretariat on the issue, the Council believes that to avoid any organizational problems in future the idea of establishing a separate Secretariat of the proposed Permanent Commission with a separate budget may be reconsidered.

(ii) This matter may be reviewed by the relevant higher decision-making bodies of ECO with particular reference to the advisability of the establishment of a separate Secretariat for the proposed Commission;

(iii) The Member States were requested to furnish their comments/views on the draft TOR of PCTC at the earliest to enable the ECO Secretariat to prepare a modified version of the draft TOR for consideration of the 2nd High Level Experts Group Meeting on the said subject. The Secretariat was requested to finalize the modified draft Terms of Reference of the PCTC during the 2nd HLEG Meeting and submit the same to the relevant ECO decision-making bodies for consideration.

23. The Council approved the recommendation of the 2nd Review Meeting on Transport and Communications held at ECO Secretariat on 13 October 1998 that the contents of various ECO Secretariat communications regarding ECO Shipping Company may be given full publicity in the private sector in the Member States so that the public at large may become aware of the existence of the Company, its profitability and various terms of payment of the shares in the authorized capital as well as :

(i) The Council reiterated its previous appeal to the signatory Member States namely, Islamic State of Afghanistan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Turkmenistan to fulfill their obligations including payment of their shares to the capital of the company by 1st July 1999 to make it a financially viable concern.

(ii) The Managing Director of the ECO Shipping Company was advised to send a mission to the Member States for meetings with the relevant

authorities and concerned private sector companies to promote further development of the Company.

24. The RPC took note with concern that during the last about four years nothing had been done by the signatory Member States to implement the ECO Air Project and requested the relevant authorities of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the Meeting of Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines of the Member States to decide about the issue in accordance with the draft Agenda circulated by ECO Secretariat vide its telex/fax message No. CCTC/TCM/809215 dated 29 September, 1998 including the Turkish proposal to discuss initiation of studies to determine the passenger and cargo capacity of the ECO Region.

25. The Council adopted the Report of the 11th Meeting of the Directors General of National Telecommunication Companies and Postal Authorities of ECO Member States held in Islamabad on 1-3 February, 1999 including the following recommendations:

(i) The Member States may expedite their views on the draft Terms of Reference for conducting a study on the present level of production of telecommunication equipment components in the ECO region and the possibility of joint production of the components which were not being produced in the ECO region.

(ii) All international tender announcements in the field of telecommunications shall be provided to the ECO Secretariat for circulation all along the Member States. Bidders tendering for telecommunication equipments and products made in ECO Member Countries shall be accorded preferential treatment in accordance with the national rules and procedures. Further action shall be taken in the light of the recommendations of the Experts Group proposed to study the proposal for implementation.

(iii) Urged the Member States to cooperate with each other in facilitating mutual access to TAEFOC system of telecommunications.

(iv) Noted with satisfaction the proposed appointment of an Experts Group to formulate a detailed draft programme of joint research and design activities for implementation by the Member States;

(v) Recommended that Member States may consider revising downwards the Total Accounting Rates (TARs) and Collection Rates (CRs) so as to further facilitate the telecommunication traffic in the ECO region.

(vi) Requested the Member States to use the existing telecommunications and postal forum of the ECO for promoting the development of Postal services in the region by devoting one whole session to postal matters during the meeting of the relevant Directors General.

26. The Council endorsed the text of the draft MOU between ECO Secretariat and INMARSA T for cooperation in the field of mobile telecommunications and authorized the Secretary General of ECO to sign it with INMARSA T after completing the remaining necessary formalities.

27. The RPC took note with satisfaction of the productive participation of the ECO delegation in the 1st Session of the ESCAP Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure held in Bangkok on 18-20 November, 1998 and the preceding 3rd Meeting of the RICAP Sub-committee of ESCAP (17 November, 1998) particularly on cooperation and coordination of the relevant International Organizations' efforts for implementation of the following:

(i) Programme of Action for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007) as well as ESCAP -Regional Action Programme of New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and Pacific;

(ii) Transit Transport Framework Agreement of ECO and other similar arrangements being implemented by other international organizations and programmes such as TRACECA etc;

(iii) ESCAP/ECE Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

- **B) Trade and Investment**

28. The Council adopted the report of the First High-Level Experts Group (HLEG) Meeting on Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) in the ECO region (held in Tehran, 2-3 August, 1998). The Council noted with appreciation the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to hold the 2nd HLEG Meeting on Tariffs and NTBs in the ECO region. Furthermore, the Council urged the Member States to make necessary preparations for the meeting and submit the pending country reports on the trade barriers they have been facing in the ECO region as well as their proposals regarding a possible ECO trading arrangement.

29. The RPC also welcomed the recommendation to hold the Trade Ministers' Meeting at least once in every two years in order to accelerate cooperation in trade among the ECO Member States, which is envisaged in the ECO's basic legal documents (i.e. The Treaty of Izmir and the Economic Cooperation Strategy for the ECO region). The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Trade in the fourth quarter of 1999 in Tehran and recommended that the Senior Officials Meeting should be convened before the Ministerial Meeting to make necessary preparations.

30. The Council noted that although the Transit Trade Agreement entered into force in December 1997, it is not being implemented. In order to expedite the operationalization of this important agreement, the Council recommended the Member States to take the following actions before the 3rd Transit Trade Committee Meeting:

(i) Nomination of Guaranteeing Associations (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan) and preparing an informative note on the Functions of

Guaranteeing Association (Iran and Pakistan) before the 6th Meeting of Heads of Customs Administrations of ECO Countries scheduled to be held in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) in June 1999.

(ii) Maps of Transit Routes and Customs entry/exit points by those Member States who had not supplied the same.

(iii) Finalization of the amendments to the ECO Passage Document (EPD) (Rules and Regulations).

31. The RPC requested the concerned Member States (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey) to expedite the ratification of the Agreement. It once again requested Uzbekistan to consider joining the ECO Transit Trade Agreement.

32. The Council adopted the report of the Second Meeting of Transit Trade Committee held in Ashgabad in December 1998 and requested Azerbaijan Republic to nominate their representative to the Committee. Furthermore, the Council welcomed the Committee's decision to invite a member of Joint Transit Committee of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry to the TTC Meetings to represent the private sector in future deliberations. The RPC requested Turkmenistan to convene the 3rd TTC Meeting.

33. While adopting the report of the Fifth Heads of Customs Administrations Meeting held in Istanbul in October 1998, the Council took note of the proposal for the establishment of the Permanent Commission of Customs Administrations of ECO Countries and noted with appreciation the Islamic Republic of Iran's training activities offered to the Member States in the customs field and called upon the other Member States also to provide training services. The Council also appreciated the offer of the Republic of Uzbekistan to host the next (6th) ECO Heads of Customs Administrations Meeting scheduled to be held in June in Tashkent.

34. The Council noted with satisfaction the findings of Joint ECO/UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) Missions on Trade Efficiency Project submitted by the project coordinator from UNCTAD. As the UNCTAD's draft "Trade Efficiency Action Programme" had been submitted to the ECO Customs Administrations, the Council urged the Member States (except Kazakhstan and Turkey) to convey their views/comments on the said draft document. The Council also noted that UNCTAD may organize a seminar/workshop for ECO customs representatives to start the implementation of the project. The Council noted the Turkish proposal to simplify and harmonize the customs procedures of Member States, which will be addressed by the Project. The Member States may take necessary actions to accede to the international conventions such as Kyoto Convention in this regard.

35. The RPC expressed satisfaction with regard to the First Joint ECO/ESCAP Seminar on "Trade and Investment Information Networking in the ECO Region" which was held with financial and technical assistance of Islamic Development Bank (IDB). It was underscored that the establishment of such a networking system in the region would promote an enabling environment for expansion of trade through information exchange

and networking of trade and investment promotion organizations of the Member States. In this regard, the Council requested the ECO and ESCAP Secretariats to continue their efforts to follow-up the outcome of the said Seminar, particularly establishment of networking system through ECO- NET, TIS NET (ESCAP) and national trade promotion organizations of Member States. The Council also recommended that the 2nd Seminar on "Trade and Investment Information Networking System in the ECO Region" be organized with the cooperation of ESCAP. The Member States who wish to host this activity may inform ECO Secretariat of the venue and proposed date within two months.

36. The RPC called for the expeditious ratification of the ECO Trade and Development Bank Agreement (i.e. by Iran and Turkey) and finalization of its Headquarters Agreement. The RPC also urged signatory States to ECO Reinsurance Company to complete the signing procedure of the ECO Reinsurance Agreement and its Headquarters Agreement the soonest possible so that the two institutions commence their operations simultaneously as it is already agreed in MOU on ECO Reinsurance Company, signed in March 1995.

37. The Council requested the remaining Member States as well to consider joining the said institutions after their establishment.

38. The RPC once again recalled the entry into force of the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the Member States and requested that signatory Member States who have not ratified the Agreement (i.e. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan) to expedite the process and also invited the non-Signatory Member States (i.e. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) to join the Agreement. The Council, requested moreover, the Member States (except Iran) to inform the Secretariat about the implementation of the said Agreement.

39. The RPC reiterated the importance of the role of private sector in regional economic development, acknowledging the important role being played by ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI). However, it was observed that the activities of the Chamber and participation both in the Chamber Meetings and ECO Trade Fairs need to be improved further. Therefore, the Council requested the Member States to persuade their National Chambers to actively participate in ECO Chamber Meetings and ECO Trade Fairs. The Council also urged the Governments of the Azerbaijan and Central Asian Member States to recommend to their National Chambers to accept the Chairmanship of the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry according to the rules of procedures of the ECO-CCI. The Azerbaijan Republic requested the other ECO Member States to render to the Republic technical assistance in the elaboration of the project coordination activity of private sector of its economy.

40. The Council appreciated the financial and technical assistance offered by the WTO (Technical Cooperation Division) and the Government of Republic of Turkey for holding the 2nd WTO Seminar on Accession Procedures scheduled to be held on 20-22 April,

1999 in Antalya (Turkey). The Council also urged the Member States to participate actively in the Seminar.

41. The Council recommended the Secretariat to establish close contacts with WTO and arrange a working visit to the Headquarters of WTO in order to follow-up the issue of the ECO's observer status in WTO's relevant bodies.

42. The Council noted with appreciation the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 1st Expert Group Meeting comprising the Central Bank representatives or the related authorities of the Member States, on Mutual Payment Arrangement in Tehran in August 1999 and urged the Member States to participate in the said meeting.

43. The Council decided to postpone the holding of the 2nd ECO/ASEAN Workshop on Trade and Investment Opportunities in ECO/ASEAN Regions to the year 2000.

44. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the Seminar on Expansion of Trade in the ECO Region in 1999.

- **C) Energy Minerals and Environment**

45. The Council adopted the report of the 2nd High Level Experts Task Group meeting (2nd- HLETG) on ECO Oil & Gas Pipeline Route(s) held in Tehran on 25-26 January 1999.

46. The Council welcomed the involvement of ECO Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC) and other reputable consulting agencies (public and private) in the preparation of ECO Oil & Gas Pipeline projects/feasibility reports.

47. The Council welcomed the exchange of reports, information, data, etc., through Member States' own contacts between the already established international consortia in ECO region and ECO Secretariat.

48. The Council called upon the Member States to consider their bilateral/trilateral projects in the oil & gas sector as ECO regional projects.

49. The Council supported the ECO Secretariat's continuing efforts to seek financial and technical assistance from international financial institutions, banks, etc.

50. The Council welcomed the 2nd-HLETG meeting's decision on the basis of Turkish proposal that a Workshop may be organized by Turkey on familiarization and exploring the possibility of cooperation between ECO and Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) Organization.

51. The Council adopted the report of the Second Specialized Experts Task Group (2nd-SETG) Meeting on Interconnection and Parallel Functioning of ECO Power Systems (Ankara, 30 November-3rd December 1998).

52. The Council expressed its appreciation to the concerned Turkish authorities (TEAS) in preparing a Conception Preliminary Report on the Analysis of the Power Systems of ECO Member States. The Council welcomed and adopted the Terms of Reference for feasibility study (TOR) as prepared and proposed by the 2nd SETG meeting, and requested full support and cooperation of the concerned authorities in the ECO Member States for the said study to be started as early as possible.

53. The Council noted the concerned Turkish authorities' (TEAS) offer during the 2nd SETG meeting on power to be responsible for the coordination of the study and the Islamic Republic of Iran's readiness to do the same as they have expressed during the 9th RPC meeting. The Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to determine jointly the coordination function. The modalities of this cooperation will be finalized by TEAS of Turkey and TAVANIR of Islamic Republic of Iran prior to the next Council of Ministers' Meeting.

54. The Council requested the concerned authorities in the Member States to nominate their representatives for Steering Committee that will be formed to oversee the Consultancy work on the feasibility study at the earliest.

55. The Council further emphasized that Member States should take all necessary measures to apply for the IDB's technical and financial assistance as it has been outlined in the 2nd SETG Meeting's report.

56. The Council further called upon ECO Secretariat to take all necessary measures for preparation of project proposals to be submitted to the World Bank and other international financial institutions and pursue its efforts to seek their technical and financial assistance for ECO power projects.

57. With reference to paragraph-52 of the 8th RPC Report, the Council expressed its appreciation for the publication of the Energy Data Booklet by the concerned Turkish authorities which was circulated during the 9th RPC meeting.

58. The Council requested the concerned authorities in the Member States to review the said booklet and forward their updated data including the years 1996 and 1997 to ECO Secretariat for onward transmission to the concerned Turkish authorities within three months from the date of the 9th RPC Meeting. In case of the submission of sufficient data from the Member Countries the revised version of the booklet will be published. The Council also recommended to have updated data booklet published at regular intervals.

59. With reference to para-53 of the 8th RPC Report, the Council noted the views expressed by Member States on the draft phase-I report on Joint Study on long term development of ECO Energy Supply and Demand prepared by the Iranian International Bureau for Energy Studies (IBES) London.

60. The Council welcomed the Islamic Republic of Iran's (Project Manager) readiness to review the aforementioned draft report and forward its revised version by deleting the country profile sector to ECO Secretariat for circulation amongst the Member States for their views/ comments and approval. However, in case within three months of the date of first circulation the Secretariat receives no comments from the Member States the Project Manager may go ahead with its publication.

61. The Council welcomed the proposal by the Republic of Kazakhstan to host the meeting of the Executive Directors of Oil, Gas & Petrochemical Industries of ECO Member States in Astana during the 2nd half of 1999 to discuss regional projects, and to consider the issues for possible meeting of the ECO Energy/ Petroleum Ministers. The Council requested the ECO Member States to cooperate in this respect and confirm their participation. The Council took note of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's offer to host the ECO region's energy/petroleum ministerial meeting in Pakistan.

62. The Council appreciated Pakistan's willingness to hold the Second Meeting of the Chief Executive of National and Private Drilling Companies of ECO Member States and requested the meeting to be attended by ECO-CEC so that a final decision on the issue may be reached.

63. While expressing the importance of regional cooperation on environmental issues and pollution prevention/control measures, the Council requested the concerned authorities in the Member States to support and help regional activities in this regard. The Council welcomed ECO Secretariat's efforts on implementing the ECO-ESCAP Memorandum of Understanding in the fields of energy, minerals and environment and requested the Member States to cooperate fully with the Secretariat.

64. The Council took note of the Turkish request concerning the ECO Member States' support for long standing demand for deletion of Turkey's name from Annexes I & II of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

65. In pursuance of Ashgabat and Almaty Declarations, the Council requested the ECO Secretariat to take necessary steps in promoting the private sectors' participation in ECO region's energy, minerals and environmental projects. The Council considered harmonization of regulations and legislation on reduction/control of national/accidental land/sea disasters, etc., on the basis of promoting and encouraging investment in the region and reiterated the 8th RPC decision in this regard.

66. With reference to the para 60 of the 8th RPC Report and the proceedings of the Workshop held in Girne (27-31 August 1998) the Council requested the Member States to cooperate on regional pollution prevention/control as outlined in the aforementioned proceedings. The Council also took note of the Turkish project proposal on Establishment of Environmental Health Training Centre on Air and Water Pollution Control for ECO Region. The said proposal circulated during the 9th RPC meeting stated that Refik Saydam Hygiene Centre of Ministry of Health of Turkey will provide

technical support for the project with financial assistance from international funding organizations.

- **D) Agriculture, Industry and Health**

Agriculture

67. Based on the relevance, priority of the projects, plans, proposals and programmes to the goals and objectives of ECO, the RPC recommended the following proposals in the agriculture sector for 1999.

68. In view of the benefits and importance of developing institutional linkages among the Member States' agricultural research and development institutes, the Council endorsed the proposals of the Secretariat that all Member States should furnish complete details of their agricultural research and development facilities to ECO Secretariat within three months.

69. The Council welcomed the Secretariat's proposal to prepare a Directory of Experts/Professionals in the agricultural sector and urged the Member States to furnish the requisite details to the Secretariat within three months.

70. The Council thanked the governments of Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for furnishing country reports regarding their national efforts to combat desertification and requested the remaining Member States to furnish the same within three months. The Council also welcomed the offer of the Turkish authorities to host a workshop on the aforementioned subject during the spring of the year 2000.

71. The Council requested the Member States other than Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to furnish their country reports regarding their efforts to develop dwarf fruits trees within three months. On receipt of complete information and with the technical assistance of relevant regional / international organizations, the Secretariat would prepare a regional plan of action for cooperation among the Member States in this connection.

72. The Council while appreciating the cooperation among Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in the development of the sugar beet seeds, requested the said Member States to share their experience with the remaining Members.

73. While emphasizing the importance and significance of the food security issues, the Council requested the Secretariat to follow up and continue its contacts with FAO and Islamic Republic of Iran to finalize arrangements to hold a workshop on this issue, taking into account the proposals of the Government of Tajikistan.

74. The Council requested all Member States to furnish data/statistics on production/consumption, imports and exports of agricultural products on the proforma circulated by the ECO Secretariat within three months. It further proposed that this activity should be transferred to the Directorate of Research and Statistics in the ECO Secretariat for further follow-up and preparation of a report to be considered by the 10 RPC Meeting.

75. In order to identify steps for maximization of agricultural production in the ECO region, the Council proposed that a High Level Experts Group (HLEG) meeting may be convened to identify the possible areas for regional cooperation.

76. The Council endorsed the recommendations of the First Meeting on Plant Quarantine held in Adana / Istanbul (Turkey) on 21-25 October, 1998, and requested all Member States to take necessary steps for harmonization of their plant quarantine rules and regulations through consultations and review of their existing rules and regulations. It further requested the Member States to nominate their representatives for the High Level Experts Group (HLEG) meeting proposed to be held in Turkey on 6-8 April, 1999.

77. The Council while endorsing the recommendations of the 2nd Meeting of the Task Force on Establishment of Buffer Zones in the Border Areas of ECO Member States held in Istanbul on 7-8 December, 1998, thanked FAO for their valuable contribution in the meeting. The Council appreciated the recommendation of the meeting for the establishment of a Commission for Prevention and Control of Animal Diseases in ECO region. The ECO Secretariat was requested to explore possible sources of financing for the said commission in consultation with FAO.

78. While expressing satisfaction on the initiative of the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) for joint activities with ECO Secretariat in some areas of agricultural research, the Council welcomed the proposal of the ICARDA for a high level exchange of views between ECO and ICARDA during the year 1999 in this connection.

79. The Council welcomed the proposal to field a joint ECO/FAO/IDB mission to identify viable plans/programmes for cooperation among the ECO Member States in the agriculture sector and asked the ECO Secretariat to pursue this matter with the relevant regional and international organizations accordingly.

Industry

80. The Council while appreciating the cooperation of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan to furnish details of their focal points in the field of science and technology, requested the remaining Member States to furnish the complete information in this regard to ECO Secretariat, within three months.

81. The Council while endorsing the need to prepare a directory of experts/professionals in the field of science and technology, requested the Member States to furnish to the ECO Secretariat, the complete details of the relevant experts/professionals in this field within three months.

82. The Council was informed that ECO Secretariat after compilation of the information received from Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan on the compendium of incentives and concessions to promote industrial investment, circulated that paper to the relevant Members for vetting. The Council requested the remaining Member States

to furnish the necessary information to the Secretariat within three months for preparation of a consolidated paper on incentives and concessions for seeking technical assistance of UN-ESCAP and UNIDO for its review and analysis.

83. The Council welcomed the information that a Draft Regional Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment among the ECO Member States has been prepared by the ECO Secretariat and circulated to the Member States. It was discussed in the Working Group meeting held in ECO Secretariat on 31 January, 1999. While taking note of the recommendations of the said Working Group, the Council emphasized the need to establish a High Level Experts Group (HLEG) to discuss and, if possible, finalize this agreement.

84. Taking note of the steps taken by ECO Secretariat to strengthen its cooperative relationship with UN ESCAP and UNIDO for accelerating the pace of industrialization in ECO region, the Council endorsed the following proposals under process by ESCAP and UNIDO. The Council further desired that ECO Secretariat should pursue these proposals with UN-ESCAP and UNIDO for their early finalization.

- Training of trainers in management of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), particularly those which are export oriented (ECO-ESCAP).
- Strengthening Rural Small and Medium Sized Enterprises through the Development of Horizontal and Vertical linkages (ECO- ESCAP).
- National Workshop on private sector Development and Promotion of Investment (ECO- ESCAP).
- Regional Investment Programme for ECO Member Countries (Estimated cost US\$580,000) (ECO-UNIDO).
- Programme for Technology Capacity-Building in ECO Member Countries (Estimated cost of US\$350,000) (ECO-UNIDO).

85. The Council appreciated the efforts of the relevant Turkish authorities and the ECO Secretariat for holding the workshop on Small and Medium Sized Industrial Development in Ankara (Turkey) on 23-25 November, 1998 with the participation of a representative of UNIDO and took note of the recommendations of the said workshop. The Council also requested all the Member States to furnish their views/suggestions to develop a mechanism for strengthening cooperation among the Members in this connection.

86. The Council welcomed the offer of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a meeting of ECO Industry Ministers in Tehran at a time to be decided later. It recommended that a High Level Experts Group (HLEG) need to review preparations/arrangements for making this meeting useful and productive.

Health and Population

87. With regard to the preparation of a regional plan of action in the field of health for adoption of harmonized policies and action plans by the Member States, the Council asked the Member States to furnish to the ECO Secretariat concrete proposals for evolving a plan to promote cooperation among them in this regard, within three months.

88. The Council appreciated the proposals submitted by Islamic Republic of Iran for strengthening cooperation in the health sector and requested the Member States to offer their proposals / recommendations within three months. A High Level Experts Group would then review these proposals and would identify specific areas for further cooperation among the Member States.

89. The Council endorsed the proposal of ECO Secretariat to prepare a directory of training and research institutions of ECO Member States in the health sector. It requested the Member States to provide complete lists of their specialized health sector training and research institutions within three months.

90. While appreciating the UNFPA/ECO joint Conference on Male Involvement in Reproductive Health and Family Planning held in Baku (Azerbaijan) in September, 1998, the Council requested the Member States to intimate the Secretariat about the steps taken to implement its recommendations.

91. The Council welcomed the offer of UNFPA to hold a Workshop on Increase in Quality of Family Planning Programmes and Widening Methods Mix, Contraceptive Methods with special emphasis on Surgical Methods and Long Acting Hormonal in Turkey during 1999.

92. The Secretariat was requested to continue its contacts with UNICEF and WHO to explore possibilities for future cooperation in the health sector.

- **E) Economic Research & Statistics and Project Research.**

Economic Research & Statistics

93. The RPC adopted the report of the first meeting of the National Focal Points on Economic Research and Statistics held in Ankara on 14-16 December, 1998 and requested the Member States to take necessary actions for implementation of the recommendations of the meeting. The Council urged the Member States who had not yet designated their National Focal Points on economic research and statistics to do so at the earliest.

94. The Council endorsed the recommendation of the Working Group meeting held in ECO Secretariat on 14th February, 1999 regarding the publication of the revised version of the ECO Guidebook based on UNDP/UNITAR draft and comments/views *or* the Member States and requested the ECO Secretariat to publish and circulate the ECO Guidebook amongst Member States not later than April, 1999.

95. The Council endorsed the Secretariat proposal to compile and publish an Annual Statistical Yearbook. The Secretariat will collect the main socio-economic indicators from the Member States on the basis of the list to be prepared in collaboration with the State Institute of Statistics of Turkey. The Council welcomed the offer of the National Statistical Agency of Kazakhstan to prepare a questionnaire on methodological issues, which would be conveyed to the Member States for data collection. The RPC underlined

the importance of this publication and requested Member States and the Secretariat to finalize the preparation of the first issue of the book within the current year.

96. The RPC expressed its satisfaction with the setting up of the Local Area Network (LAN) in the ECO Secretariat. by April, 1999. In this regard the Council highly appreciated the donation of computers by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and technical assistance by the experts of UNDP/ APDIP provided to the Secretariat for computerization.

97. The Council noted with appreciation the efforts of the Secretariat to design and prepare the ECO Web Page to be put on the Internet and advised the Member States to fully cooperate with the Secretariat in updating the Web Page on regular basis. The RPC was informed that the electronic design of the ECO Web Page will be completed by May 1999 and will be available for users.

98. The RPC welcomed the initiative of the ECO Secretariat to establish an electronic intra network (ECONET) within ECO region for a faster communication of the required information between the Secretariat and the authorized offices of the Member States and requested the Member States to fully cooperate with the Secretariat by providing the relevant information as per the questionnaire already circulated by the Secretariat to accomplish the task. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to help the ECO Secretariat in the accomplishment of this task. The RPC also requested ECO Secretariat to arrange the required funding for the establishment of necessary infrastructure in the ECO countries.

99. The Council noted with satisfaction the establishment of Internet facilities and new library in the ECO Secretariat and requested Member States for assistance to enrich the library stocks with relevant books and periodicals. The Member States expressed their readiness to connect their national libraries with the ECO Secretariat library.

100. The RPC welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat to establish cooperative relationship with some international organizations/institutions such as ESCAP, IDB, UNDP, SESRTCIC and SIAP in the field of economic research, statistics and information technology. The Council appreciated the valuable assistance of IDB and Statistical, Economic and Statistical Research and Training Centre of Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) for training of the ECO research staff.

Project Research

101. The RPC welcomed the establishment of the new Directorate for Project Research(DPR) in the ECO Secretariat, and called upon the relevant institutions of Member States to fully cooperate with this Directorate to prepare feasibility studies of ECO projects, organize seminars and conferences on matters related to formulation and implementation of ECO priority projects, as well as to organize and conduct various training courses and workshops for experts and specialists involved in implementation of ECO regional projects.

102. The Council took note of the recommendation of the Working Group on the study of the list of projects and (feasibility) studies and urged the Member States to work out and send their views/proposals on the said report which inter alia, should include the following:

- (i) Most priority and promising projects;
- (ii) Most acceptable and feasible ways and means of their implementation;
- (iii) Possible sources of financing of feasibility studies and implementation of these projects;

103. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to compile all this information and data and identify priority projects at regional level on the basis of the views of Member States. The Secretariat shall monitor the expeditious implementation of these projects and update this list every year for consideration of the Council.

104. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize an International Conference on Investment Promotion in collaboration with ECO Secretariat. This event may be included in the ECO Calendar of Events for 1999. The Council also welcomed the readiness of the Plan and Budget Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran to assist ECO in conducting feasibility studies of regional projects.

105. The RPC took note of the recommendation of the Working Group that special importance should be given to the use of ECO Feasibility Fund which had not yet been used to finance feasibility studies of ECO projects and requested the Secretariat to make arrangements to fully implement Para 18 of the ECO Functional Methodology.

106. The Council recommended that the ECO Consultancy and Engineering Company's services should be fully utilized for carrying out feasibility studies, design and supervision of the ECO projects in accordance with its statute.

107. The Council noted that there was a strong need for training the senior officials, experts and specialists of Member States involved in implementation of ECO projects and advised the Secretariat to establish contacts with different regional and international organizations and financial institutions with the aim of organizing short-term training courses and workshops for the senior officials and experts from ECO region.

108. The Council endorsed the Secretariat's proposal to prepare an ECO Directory of Training Institutions and Roster of leading experts and consultants in the priority fields of ECO and called upon the Member States to submit all the required information needed by the Secretariat for preparation of these documents on priority basis.

- **F) Culture, Science, Education, Status Report on ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies and Drug Control**

ECO Cultural Institute

109. The RPC took note of the approval of the basic documents of ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Institute along with the

Charter of the ECO Educational Institute by the COM in May 1998. Regarding the ECI budget approved by the 28th CPR Meeting, and other issues related to the Institute, the Council recommended as follows:

- i) The Working Group constituted by the CPR to remove discrepancies between the ECI Charter and the subsidiary documents of the Institute should complete its task as soon as possible.
- ii) Remaining four signatory Member States namely; Azerbaijan Republic, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan may expedite the ratification process of the ECI Charter.
- iii) Pending ratifications, the signatory Member States were expected to participate fully in the meetings and activities of the Institute and take appropriate steps to pay the budgetary contributions.
- iv) The Kyrgyz Republic and Republic of Uzbekistan may consider to accede to the ECI Charter.

110. Regarding the holding of the 2nd Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Institute due since October 1998, Kazakhstan was kindly asked to reconsider the possibility of hosting the said event. The representative of Kazakhstan informed the Council that they would convey their decision to the Secretariat in due course.

ECO Science Foundation

111. The Council took note of the fact that the first Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ECO Science Foundation, to be hosted by Pakistan was postponed twice due to lack of quorum. The Council urged the Member States to ensure their participation in the BOT Meeting once new dates were proposed by Pakistan. It also urged the concerned Member States to accelerate the ratification process of the Foundation's Charter.

ECO Educational Institute

112. The Council requested 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.

Status Report on ECO Regional Institutions and ECO Specialized Agencies

113. The Council was informed about the Status Report prepared by the Secretariat on ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies. Regarding the Secretariat's proposal for possible involvement of UNDP for an overall reassessment study on ECO's regional institutions, the Council took note of this proposal.

Drug Control

114. The Council noted with satisfaction the recruitment of the core staff of the Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) to be established in the ECO Secretariat within the framework of the joint ECO/UNDCP project. The Unit was expected to be operational soon. In this connection, Member States were urged to attend training seminars and

other events envisaged in the Project. They were also requested to furnish required data and other relevant information to the DCCU once it became operational.

115. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed the view that with the recruitment of personnel for DCCU, the implementation of ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control will be materialized thus providing the ground for sharing experiences and participation in educational and training programmes on drug control.

116. The Council welcomed the holding of a Joint ECO-UNDCP Legal Training Workshop on Judicial Cooperation in drug-related casework for the ECO Region to be held in the first week of March, 1999 in Tehran. All Member States were urged to participate actively in the Workshop.

Agenda Item No.7:

FINALIZATION OF THE DRAFT ANNUAL ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS/MEETINGS FOR 1999.

117. The Council considered the draft ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings 1999 prepared by ECO Secretariat and finalized it with certain modifications for submission to the COM for approval. While taking note of the Status Report on the 1998 Calendar of Events/Meetings, submitted by the Secretariat, the Council agreed to recommend only important Events/Meetings for the year 1999. The Calendar of Events/ Meetings 1999 recommended by the Council is placed at **ANNEX-VI**.

118. The Council also appreciated the kind offer of some Member States who accepted to host certain ECO Events/Meetings and called upon the other Member States to volunteer to host those events for which venues had not yet been finalized. The Council also urged all Member States to confirm their participation at appropriate level in the scheduled events.

119. The Council further desired that the Secretariat should hold all those priority events/meetings where a host was not available during 1999 and also endorsed the proposal of the Secretariat, in compliance with the recommendation of the 29th CPR meeting that 30 % of other activities of each directorate should be held in the Secretariat Headquarters on non- hospitality basis. The RPC concurred with CPR recommendation that Calendar of events/meetings 1999 would be reviewed on quarterly basis to assess the possibility of actual holding of such meetings.

Agenda Item No.8:

PREPARATION AND CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL ECONOMIC REPORT FOR 1998.

120. The RPC reviewed in detail the draft Annual Economic Report for the year 1998, prepared by the Secretariat and requested the Member States to furnish detailed comments/views on their respective portions of the report and to fill in the missing

statistical data within a period of three months to enable the Secretariat to finalize the report for publication.

121. The Council approved the new design of the Annual Economic Report for the year 1999 proposed by Secretariat and revised by the first meeting of National Focal Points on Economic Research and Statistics. Taking into consideration the proposed new contents of the Report, the RPC recommended to the Secretariat to establish efficient networking system with the National Focal Points on Economic Research and Statistics for exchanging the relevant textual and statistical information.

122. The Council also agreed with the ECO Secretariat proposal to delete this item from regular items of agenda of RPC meetings from next year and to treat it as a part of the Directorate of Economic Research and Statistics Working Paper.

Agenda Item No.9:
ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

123. No issue was raised under this item of agenda.

Agenda Item No. 10:
DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING.

124. The Council welcomed the offer of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 10th meeting of the RPC in February 2000, on dates to be notified later.

Agenda Item No. 11:
ADOPTION OF THE REPORT.

125. The Report of the Ninth Meeting of the Regional Planning Council was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 12:
VOTE OF THANKS.

126. The Heads of the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Kyrgyz Republic expressed their deep appreciation and thanks to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and the warm hospitality extended to them.

127. 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 Republic of Turkey to hold this meeting, the Council also appreciated the efforts made by the Secretary General and his staff for preparing the comprehensive Working Papers which facilitated the work of the Council.

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