

The 7th RPC Meeting

Report

(Tehran, 26-27 February, 1997)

Adopted No. RPC-7/97/Rpt Dated: 27-02-1997

1. The Seventh Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Tehran on 26-27 February, 1997. The Meeting was attended by the delegations of all Member States (the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan Republic, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan, Republic of Uzbekistan), the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus and the Secretary General of ECO. The list of participants is at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No- 1: Inauguration

2. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Hamid Mirzadeh, Vice I President and Head of Planning & Budget Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A copy of his inaugural speech is at **Annex-II**.

Agenda Item No- 2: Election of Chairman

3. H.E. Mr. Niyazov Soyun, Deputy Minister of Power & Industry of Turkmenistan was unanimously elected as Chairman.

Agenda Item No- 3: Adoption of Agenda

4. The Agenda adopted by the meeting is at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No- 4: Appointment of the Drafting Committee

5. The Council decided to form an open-ended Drafting Committee to prepare the Report of the meeting.

Agenda Item No- 5: Opening Statements

6. The heads of the participating delegations made their opening statements outlining their general views regarding the activities of the Organization. Copies of the statements made available to the Secretariat are at **Annex-IV**.

Agenda Item No- 6: Report of the Secretary General

7. The Secretary General of ECO presented a Report, a copy of which is at **Annex-V**. In his Report, the Secretary General briefly highlighted the salient activities of the Organization during the year under review and also presented several concrete ideas and proposals for consideration by the Council. The Secretary General also apprised the Council of the status of ECO's relationship with various international organizations.

8. The Secretary General's proposal of review/preparation meetings scheduled as part of Secretariat's annual work programme to facilitate smooth transition during the course of 1997 was favorably received by the Council. In this regard, the importance of the creation of Adcock Committees in priority areas was also under lined.

Agenda Item No- 7:

Consideration and Adoption of the Reports of the Technical Committees

- **(a) Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (CECC)**

9. The Council adopted the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Committee with the observations / recommendations as recorded in the succeeding paras.

10. The Council endorsed the decision of the Committee to hold a High-Level Expert Group meeting to reappraise ECO preferential tariff arrangement and to find new mechanisms and approaches to enhance intra-regional trade. The programme of action and the status of the body to monitor the subject task shall be drawn up by the said Expert Group. The deliberations of the Group shall lead to a draft general agreement for progressive elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers among the ECO Member States. Keeping in view the progress of the work the Expert Group could be transformed to a standing body.

11. Recalling that COM in its Sixth Meeting in Ashgabat authorized the COD/CPR to undertake on its behalf all legal and administrative measures for the simultaneous establishment of ECO Trade & Development Bank and ECO Reinsurance Company the Council asked the Secretariat and founding Members to complete all necessary formalities regarding the establishment of two Institutions including the required amendments concerning initial capital subscription to be made in the Articles of Agreement of the Bank and in the MOU on ECO Reinsurance Company to facilitate early establishment of the two Institutions. The Council also urged the High-Level Drafting Committee to finalize the Articles of the Agreement of ECO Reinsurance Company in its Second meeting scheduled to be held at the Secretariat on 7-8 April, 1997 so that the Agreement could be submitted to the next meeting of the COM. The delegation of the Azerbaijan Republic expressed his country's desire to join the Bank after its establishment.

12. The Council emphasizing the importance of the implementation of Transit Trade Agreement, called for the early establishment of the Committee on Transit Trade by Turkmenistan. The Council also urged Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to expedite the process of ratification of the Agreement.

13. The Council took note of the information distributed by the Kyrgyz delegation regarding their offer to host the Second Exhibition of ECO Products in September-October 1997 and decided to include it in the ECO Calendar of Events.

14. With regard to the meeting of border officials to facilitate cargo and passenger traffic in ECO region and modernization of the existing facilities of customs entry points/gates, the Council decided to delete it from the ECO Calendar of Events for 1997-98. The Council also recommended that the Member States take note of the above-mentioned proposal and arrange meetings on the matter, between the concerned officials of the relevant authorities of the Member States to discuss the matter.

15. The Council urged the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan to join the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

- **(b) Committee for in the field of Transport and Communications (CCTC)**

16. The Council adopted the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Committee with the observations as recorded in the succeeding paras.

17. The Council felt that there is room for cooperation among the member countries in the area of air cargo that would facilitate the operation of ECO Air in the field of cargo and agreed that the possibility of preparing an Air Cargo Agreement among the Member States should be explored. Such an Agreement would define the principles and rules of conducting business and preferential treatments for an effective and quicker way of transporting cargo by ECO Air and the airline companies in the member countries. It was also agreed that to provide for a comprehensive arrangement including air cargo and the role of the private sector the Articles of Agreement could cover all air cargo related issues. The Committee noted that this subject would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Civil Aviation authorities and Chiefs of the Air Companies of ECO countries.

18. The Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a comprehensive report underlining measures regarding smooth flow of goods at Seraks railway border crossing and the arrangements necessary for enhancing its traffic capacity alongwith the general railway map of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a booklet titled "Golden Route".

19. The Council took note of the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold "Silk Road Transportation" and "Telecommunication Equipment" fairs consecutively in Tehran in June 1997.

20. The Council welcomed the country report submitted by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan alongwith the maps of road and rail networks of Pakistan which was not made available during the Sixth Meeting of CCTC.

21. The Council welcomed the proposal of Turkmenistan to hold the Second Ministerial meeting in the field of Transport and Telecommunications in Ashgabat in the first-half of

December 1997. It was agreed that the events related to transport and telecommunications should be organized before the said Ministerial Meeting.

22. The Council took note of the observations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan delegations that there is an urgent need to facilitate easy flow of transportation within the region.

23. The Council was informed of the proposal of the Azerbaijan delegation on completing the missing rail road links between: Azerbaijan. Iran and Turkey and provide collective efforts for renewing transportation by railway between Azerbaijan and Iran via; border station Julfa.

- **(c) Committee for Technical and Industrial Cooperation (CTIC)**

24. The Council adopted the Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Committee with the observations / recommendations as recorded in the succeeding paras.

25. The Council observed that there is no need for feasibility study for establishing ECO Data Bank and recommended that in order to establish ECO Data Bank the existing statistical bureau in the ECO Secretariat be supported with necessary contemporary computer equipment. In this regard. necessary technical assistance of relevant national statistical institutions of the member countries could also be made available.

26. While discussing the recommendations of the Committee as given under Agenda Item-6 (sub-para-3) of the Report of the Committee regarding feasibility studies in the fields of power equipment automobile and telecommunications, the Council emphasized that priority should be given to harmonization of industrial policies on issues such as tariff systems. Provision of incentives to the private sector, tariff and non-tariff barriers, streamlining bureaucratic procedures and legislations rather than focusing on individual feasibility studies.

27. The Council noted that in addition to Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, Kyrgyzstan has also notified their focal points for the dissemination of all information on scientific and technical fields and requested the other Member States to do so by the first week of April 1997.

- **(d) Committee for Agricultural Cooperation (CAC)**

28. The Council adopted the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Committee with the addition of the Azerbaijan proposal that the Member States need to cooperate further to promote silk production in the Region.

- **(e) Committee for Educational Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (CESCC)**

29. The Council adopted the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Committee with the observations / recommendations as recorded in the succeeding paras.

30. With regard to para-11 of the Report of the Committee meeting, the Council recommended that in case the Interim Committee of the Cultural Institute could not meet in early April 1997, the Committee may meet concurrently with the senior officials meeting of next COM meeting.

31. With regard to para-17 of the Report of the Committee meeting, the Council recommended that cooperation among National News Agencies of the Member States could be discussed by the authoritative representatives of the subject News Agencies who will meet on 26-27 April, 1997 in Tehran.

32. The Council discussed the proposal of the Republic of Turkey with regard to the establishment of ECO Educational Institute and agreed, in principle, to recommend to the ECO Council of Ministers the establishment of the Institute with its headquarters in Turkey and convening an expert committee to review the charter drafted by Turkey (copy attached as **Annex-VI**) with the aim of finalizing and submitting it to the following meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers.

- **(f) Committee for Cooperation in the field of**

33. The Council adopted the Report of the Sixth meeting of the Committee with the observations / recommendations as recorded in the succeeding paras.

34. All delegates actively participated in the discussion of the issue related to inter-connection and parallel functioning of power grids of the ECO Member States identifying it as one of priority projects in the field of energy which could benefit all Member States.

35. The Council while emphasizing the need for developing a Master Plan for priority projects in the field of energy stressed that this should be carried out with the participation of experts from ECO Member States as well as independent consultants.

36. With regard to para-19 of the Report on study to identify ways and means to deal with energy conservation and efficiency in the ECO Member States the Council decided to delete the word "independent" mentioned in that para.

- **(g) Committee for Drug Control (CDC)**

37. The Council adopted the Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Committee with the observations recorded in the succeeding paras.

38. Upon the proposal of the delegation from Pakistan, the Council agreed to delete the word "unanimously" in line-6 (para-6) of the Report of the Committee meeting. The delegation of Pakistan also pointed out that in para-7 of the Committee report the words "Drug Control Coordination Unit" be replaced with the words "Drug Control Coordination Mechanism."

39. Concerning the level and status of the Drug Control Unit / Mechanism in the Secretariat! the Council took note that the issue which was previously discussed in CPR would be submitted to the next COM for final decision.

40. Upon the request of the Secretary General, it was agreed that Member States shall send written confirmations in due course to the Secretariat to authorize the Secretary General to sign the project with the UNDCP.

- **(h) Committee for Cooperation in the fields of Environment & Health (CCEH)**

41. The Council adopted the Report of the Third Meeting of the Committee.

Agenda Item No- 8:

Finalization of the draft Calendar of Events for 1997-98

42. The Council adopted the draft ECO Calendar of Events for 1997- 98 prepared by the Secretariat with some amendments. The adopted draft Calendar is at **Annex-VII**. The Council requested the secretariat to further review the draft Calendar with a view to combining to the extent possible meetings and events on inter-related subjects (such as items 2 and 9 in the field of transport and communications etc.) and submit it to the Council of Permanent Representatives for finalization.

Agenda Item No- 9:

Preparation of the Annual Economic Report

43. The updated version of the draft Annual Economic Report prepared by the Secretariat was circulated during the meeting. The Council urged all Member States to furnish their comments as well as latest data to the Secretariat expeditiously.

Agenda Item No-10:

Any Other Business

Agenda Item No-11:

Date of the next Meeting

45. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the next meeting of the RPC in Tehran on dates to be notified later.

Agenda Item No-12:

Adoption of the Report

46. The Report of the Seventh meeting of the Regional Planning Council was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No-13:

Vote of Thanks

47. On behalf of all the delegations the Head of the Turkish delegation expressed 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.

48. The meeting concluded with a note of thanks to the Chairman for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The meeting also appreciated the efforts of the Secretary General and his staff in the preparation of comprehensive working papers to facilitate the work of the Council.

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