

199th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Report

14th January 2015
ECO Secretariat-Tehran

Report

The Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) held its 199th Meeting on 14th January, 2015 at the ECO Secretariat and under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark, Permanent Representative/Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The CPR meeting was attended by the Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives and representatives of all ECO Member States except Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The ECO Secretary General along with concerned officials of the Secretariat also attended the Meeting. The list of participants is attached as Annex-I.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

2. The Council adopted its Agenda as follows:
 1. Adoption of the Draft Agenda
 2. Adoption of the Report of 198th CPR meeting
 3. Preparation for the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC)
 4. Payment of Severance Package of outgoing staff from the savings of the Financial Year 2014
 5. Follow up to recommendations and decisions of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment
 6. Administrative matters
 7. Any other business
 8. Date of the next CPR Meeting

Agenda Item No.2

Adoption of the Draft Report of 198th CPR meeting

3. The Council adopted the Draft Report of 198th CPR meeting along with the amendment proposed by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The adopted Report was subsequently circulated to the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale dated 15th January, 2015.

Agenda Item No.3

Preparation for the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC)

i. Date and Venue

4. According to Chapter I(C) of the ECO Rules of Procedure, the Regional Planning Council (RPC) shall meet at least once a year prior to the annual meeting

of the Council of Ministers (COM), preferably in the beginning of the ECO fiscal year. The Secretariat vide its Note Verbale No.CFU/25th RPC/2014/1903 dated 14th December, 2014 had proposed to hold the 25th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council on 1-5 March, 2015 at the ECO Secretariat.

5. The Council fixed 1-5 March, 2015 as the date for the 25th Meeting of Regional Planning Council to be held at the ECO Secretariat.

ii. Draft Agenda

6. As per the ECO Rules of Procedure, the Draft Agenda of the 25th RPC Meeting was circulated by the ECO Secretariat to the Member States on 31st December, 2014, eight weeks in advance of the Meeting, for views and comments of the Member States.

7. Some Member States informed the Meeting that formal response from their capitals were still awaited. On explanation given by the Secretariat, the Council authorized the Secretariat to go ahead in preparation of necessary documents on the basis of existing draft agenda and fixed the deadline of 1st February, 2015 for the Member States to provide their inputs on the Draft Agenda, if any. Accordingly and as per ECO Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat will circulate to the Member States the Draft Agenda, annotated Draft Agenda and the sectoral working papers on 1st February 2015.

iii. Participation

a. Financial Support

8. In line with the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), the Working Group on “**finalization of proposed outline for implementation of EPG recommendations**” in its meeting held on 6th January, 2015 recommended that in order to ensure maximum participation from ECO Member States in the 25th RPC Meeting, and pending the final decision on the utilization of the Special Support Fund (SSF), the costs of participation (ticket and accommodation) of four (4) participants from each ECO Member State may be covered from the Feasibility Study and General Purpose Fund (FSGPF).

9. As recommended by the Working Group, the Council decided to provide accommodation and reimbursement of the cost of round trip air tickets (upto US\$900) for four (4) delegates from each ECO Member State from the Feasibility Study and General Purpose Fund (FSGPF) with a view to ensuring maximum participation in the RPC Meeting.

b. Confirmation of Participation

10. The Council requested the Member States to expedite confirmation of their participation at an appropriate level in the RPC Meeting and its preparatory/review committee meetings and convey the composition of their delegations and flight details, enabling the Secretariat to make logistical arrangements for the participants.

iv. Any Other Issue

11. Under this sub-Agenda item, the following issue was raised:

o Participation of Observers in the 25th RPC Meeting

12. Secretary General brought to the attention of the Council that in line with the Modalities for Granting Observer and Dialogue Partnership Status at ECO, the CPR approval is required to extend formal invitations to the Observers such as Turkish Cypriot State and Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking State so that they are able to participate in the forthcoming RPC Meeting.

13. The Council authorized the Secretariat to invite ECO observers, namely, Turkish Cypriot State and Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States to attend the opening and closing plenary sessions of the 25th RPC Meeting, as envisaged in the Modalities.

Agenda Item No.4

Payment of Severance Package of outgoing staff from the savings of the Financial Year 2014

14. The severance package for seven outgoing Secretariat's Staff, including "End of Service Gratuity", "Transfer Grant", "Leave Encashment" and the cost of their air tickets to their countries, had been foreseen in the budget of the financial year 2014. Since their tenures have been extended into the year 2015, the Secretariat requested the approval of CPR to make the payment of their severance packages from the savings of the year 2014.

15. The Council approved the proposal of the Secretariat to pay the End of Service Benefits from the savings of the financial year 2014 to the following Staff of the Secretariat, whose tenures have been extended into the year 2015:

- i. Mr. Mohammad Reza Malakooti
- ii. Mr. Mohammad Reza Sotoudeh
- iii. Mr. Amir Mohammad Javaheri

- iv. Mr. Mohammad Hossain Amini
- v. Mr. Muhammad Farooq
- vi. Mr. Muhammad Yousaf
- vii. Ms. Zukhra Abisheva

Agenda Item No.5

Follow up to recommendations and decisions of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment

16. 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment was held on 15-17 December 2014 in Istanbul, preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). The Meeting reviewed state of environmental agenda of the Organization, including the implementation of the decisions and recommendations approved by the "ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment" held on 25 June 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya and made decisions and a set of key recommendations and action points for tackling emerging regional environmental challenges and strengthening ECO cooperation with relevant international organizations. The outcome documents of the Meeting (Reports of the SOM and Ministerial Meeting, and the Istanbul Declaration) had been circulated to the Member States through Secretariat's Note Verbale No. EME/5th MMENV/2014/1924 dated 24 December 2014.

17. The "Istanbul Declaration on Climate Change and Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development" was adopted by the Ministers as an important document for adopting applicable common approaches on combating climate change and promoting a green economy, development of coherence and synergy in adaptation-related actions among key stakeholders and policy makers and elaboration of relevant frameworks/platforms within the ECO region.

18. Having referred to two ECO ministerial meetings on environment in 2014, the Secretariat briefed the CPR about the outcomes of the Ministerial meeting on Environment. The Istanbul ministerial meeting reached a set of key recommendations and agreements including the need for a regional State of Environment (SoE) Report for ECO region in collaboration with the UNEP; revision of the ECO Plan of Action on Environment, in line with the ongoing processes/initiatives of the international community; expansion of ECO cooperation with international organizations, particularly UNEP, including through observer status; and the designation of environment and impacts of climate change as the cross sectoral priority of the ECO. The Secretariat requested the Council's support for implementation of these decisions when they are brought to CPR.

19. Pakistan delegation, while appreciating the briefing given by the Secretariat, asked the Secretariat to clarify whether a study had been conducted within the ECO region to highlight the best and worst environmental conditions in terms of pollution and biodiversity in the region. The delegation emphasized that the Secretariat, at the first stage, should identify the environmental problems of the ECO region, and if deemed necessary, hold the Ministerial/High-Level meetings to get further instructions/decisions on the identified issues.

20. Acknowledging the validity of the intervention by delegation of Pakistan, the Secretariat informed the Council about the efforts to identify environmental problems of the Member States and the Region as a whole. The existing Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and the mechanisms such as National Progress Report (NPR) have long been contributing to this process. As mandated by the Ministers, a State of Environment (SoE) Report for the ECO region will be prepared in collaboration with UNEP which will also help identify areas for actions. SoE will cover all the necessary information pertaining to the environmental issues of the ECO region. In the upcoming visit by UNEP Regional Director to the Secretariat, the ways and means to develop the envisaged SoE would be discussed.

21. The Council took note of the views/comments of the Member States and requested the Secretariat to take necessary measures to follow-up for implementation of the decisions taken by the Ministers .

Agenda Item No.6

Administrative matters

22. The Council received the recommendations by the Selection Panel and made the following decisions:

- i. Research Officer for Trade & Investment (Category II, P3)

23. The Council appointed Mr. Muhammad Safdar (Pakistani national), as Research Officer for Trade & Investment, (Category-II, P3) in place of Mr. Muhammad Farooq, for a period of four years effective from the date of his joining the Secretariat.

24. The Council also extended the tenure of Mr. Muhammad Farooq (Pakistani national), Research Officer for Trade & Investment until 31st March 2015 or till joining of his successor (Mr. Muhammad Safdar), whichever is earlier.

ii. Database Officer (Category II, P3)

25. The Council extended the tenure of Mr. Muhammad Yousaf (Pakistani national), Database Officer, until 30th June 2015 or till joining of his replacement, whichever is earlier.

iii. Programme Officer for Agriculture, Industry & Tourism (Category-II, P3)

26. The Council renewed the tenure of Mr. Hasan Sahin (Turkish national), Programme Officer for Agriculture, Industry and Tourism for a full term or until the date of his superannuation, whichever comes earlier.

iv. Programme Officer for Environment (Category-II, P2)

27. The Council extended the tenure of Mr. Reza Samieifard (Iranian National), Programme Officer for Environment, (Category-II, P2) till the joining of his successor, effective from 26th February, 2015.

v. Swapping of nominees against the posts of Steno-Secretary (Category-II, P1)

28. The 198th CPR meeting had appointed Messrs. Muhammad Omair and Muhammad Ayoob Brohi in place of Messrs. Nazir Ahmed and Shafqat Amir (Pakistani Nationals), who are completing their tenures on 15 January and 8 March, 2015, respectively.

29. Upon the request of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Council agreed that Mr. Muhammad Omair and Mr. Muhammad Ayoob Brohi, will now replace Messrs. Shafqat Amir and Nazir Ahmed, respectively.

vi. Steno-Secretary (Category-II, P1)

30. The Council renewed the tenure of Mr. Shir Aqa Hamidi (Afghan National), Steno-Secretary (Category-II, P1), for a full term or until the date of his superannuation, whichever comes earlier.

vii. Archivist/Librarian (Category-II, P1)

31. The Council appointed Mr. Saeid Tabatabaei (Iranian National) as Archivist/Librarian (Category-II, P1) in place of Mr. Mohammad Reza Sotoudeh for a period of four years effective from the date of his joining the Secretariat.

Agenda Item No.7
Any other business

32. Under this agenda item, the following issues were raised:

i. *Inclusion of Railway Project Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) in the draft Work Programme*

33. Delegation of Republic of Azerbaijan, while referring to the ECO delegation's successful visit to the IDB Headquarters and the agreement by both sides to prepare draft Work Programme for future cooperation, requested the Secretariat to include the railway project of Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Republic of Azerbaijan) in the draft Work Programme and share it with the Member States for their consideration.

34. The Council requested the Secretariat to take into account the proposal of the Azerbaijan delegation. In response, the Secretary General assured the Council that the above-mentioned railway project will be included in the draft Work Programme of the ECO-IDB and the Member States will be informed accordingly.

ii. *Recovery of Arrears from the Kyrgyz Republic*

35. Kyrgyz delegation informed that the Kyrgyz Republic had paid its all outstanding dues along with contributions of 2014 towards Secretariat budget at the end of December, 2014.

36. Secretary General appreciated the Government of Kyrgyz Republic, particularly the distinguished Kyrgyz Ambassador for fulfilling the commitment. He assured that Kyrgyz Republic has restored its rights as regard the appointment and participation in the activities of the Organization.

iii. *Recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG)*

37. Turkish delegation raised his concern that the Working Group on "finalization of proposed outline for implementation of EPG recommendations" does not move on the right track. The Idea from the beginning was to make the things more easier within the Organization and making ECO more functional. Delegation referred to some of the Working Group recommendations and observed that for instance organizing additional meetings such as Senior Officials Meetings would not serve the purpose. Also, hiring consultant to make studies for the Organization may not be useful given the fact that international consultants are not familiar with ECO and its conditions.

38. Iranian delegation as the Chairman of the Working Group explained that so far, twelve working group meetings had been convened and various aspects of implementation of the EPG recommendations had been discussed. He referred to the decision of hiring consultant and the terms of reference for the consultancy services and invited the Turkish delegation to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group and share with the Member States its proposals.

39. The Secretary General acknowledged the need for simplifying the things in the Organization and underlined that at the same time there is a need to work carefully to make things efficient. This was the main idea behind EPG process, funded by Turkey, which produced valuable recommendations. The Working Group is discussing the ways and means to properly implement these recommendations.

iv. Case of Mrs. Nuriye Yener, Ex-Documentation Officer (Cat.II, P2)

40. Turkish delegation brought to the notice of the Council that Mrs. Nuriye Yener, Ex-Documentation Officer (Category-II, P2) proceeded to Turkey on leave and could not travel back to the Secretariat due to her health conditions. Delegation stated that a medical certificate issued by the Turkish authorities was sent to the Secretariat, which could not be taken into account by the Secretariat. Resultantly, it adversely affected on her salary and end of service benefits. Delegation requested the Secretariat to consider her medical certificate and make arrangements for payment of her full entitlements.

41. Secretary General, while explaining the background of the case, informed that the Secretariat did not challenge the validity of her Medical Certificate, issued by the relevant Turkish authorities. There are regulations which have been applied to her case. He invited the Turkish delegate to the Secretariat to discuss her case with the concerned officials of the Secretariat. If still unsatisfied, the Turkish delegation may bring the case for CPR decision.

v. 3rd Meeting of the ECO High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Health related Millennium Development Goals and Post 2015 MDGs

42. Iranian delegation informed that the 3rd Meeting of the ECO High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Health related Millennium Development Goals and Post 2015 MDGs will be held on 20-21 January, 2015 in Tehran. Delegation further informed that the quorum has been achieved for the Meeting.

vi. Financial Situation of the ECO Secretariat

43. Secretary General informed the Council that non-payment of outstanding dues by three ECO Member States namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is creating severe financial difficulties for the Secretariat. He requested the concerned Member States, who are in arrears, to pay their outstanding dues of previous years. Furthermore, Secretary General urged the Member States to pay their annual budget contributions at the earliest, as stipulated in the rules.

44. The Iranian delegation reminded the Council that the Working Group on EPG recommendation will soon convene its exclusive meeting on budgetary issues and requested all Member states to participate in the discussions.

vii. Holding of the Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting

45. Secretary General informed that in accordance with the Treaty of Izmir, the Council of Ministers shall meet at least once a year. However, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has not yet confirmed the dates for the 22nd COM and 13th ECO Summit. He drew the attention of the Council that an imminent meeting of the Council of Ministers is required to address the pending critical issues, including appointment of new Secretary General and two Deputy Secretaries General, approval of the Calendar of Events, approval of the Budget 2015 and other budgetary related matters, particularly the scale of assessment. He proposed the Council that an extraordinary one day COM meeting may be convened at the ECO Headquarters or in any other ECO Member States, as soon as possible but not later than April 2015, to discuss and make necessary decisions on the above mentioned pending issues. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan may host the regular 22nd COM/13th ECO Summit, when it is deemed suitable. He also underlined that in case of having COM meeting in the Secretariat, the host country (Iran) may consider helping the Secretariat in the organization of the Event, including through extending the hospitality.

46. Pakistan delegation informed that they are still waiting a response from the capital regarding the dates of 22nd COM and 13th ECO Summit. Regarding the new proposal by the Secretary General, the delegation said that the Secretariat may wish to circulate it among Member States through Note Verbale. It will be shared with the capital and response will be communicated to the Secretariat.

47. Iranian delegation informed that the proposal of the Secretariat for convening the extra-ordinary COM Meeting in April 2015 would be conveyed to the Foreign Minister's Office and they will revert back to the Secretariat.

48. Given the importance of the matter, the CPR requested the Secretariat to submit its proposal for holding the COM meeting in April 2015 to the Member States, including the host country, for their consideration and feedbacks. Meanwhile Secretariat was also requested to start preparation for the COM meeting, including developing its draft agenda. Draft Agenda and the dates of COM meeting would be finalized by the next CPR meeting.

viii. Participation in the 5th Assembly of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), 17-18 January, 2015, Abu Dhabi, UAE

49. Secretary General informed that the 5th Assembly of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) will be held on 17-18 January, 2015 at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). He referred that the Renewable Energy Sources (RES) have become substantial subject for both the economical and environmental perspectives and utilization of which will help in accelerating the economic, social and sustainable energy development of the ECO countries. He further informed that the Director General of IRENA (Mr. Adnan Amin) visited the ECO Secretariat and agreed to prepare the scope of future cooperation between the two organizations and based on which an inter-institutional MoU may be elaborated for signature between the two organizations. Considering the special and important complementary role of the renewable energy in ECO's overall energy portfolio, participation of an ECO delegation at the 5th Assembly of IRENA would be important for ECO-IRENA ties. Secretary General requested the Council to allow the Directorate (EME) to participate in the subject meeting.

50. Upon the request of the Secretary General, the Council authorized the Director (EME) to participate in the 5th Assembly of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), scheduled for 17-18 January, 2015 at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Agenda Item No.8

Date of the next CPR meeting

51. The Council welcomed the kind offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 200th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) on **18th February, 2015** in the Qazvin (Province) of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Council requested the host country (Iran) to convey the programme of the visit to Qazvin to the Secretariat for circulation to the Member States.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H.E. Dr. Nasser Ahmad Noor, Ambassador
- Mr. Mohammad Ebrahim Barekzai, Counsellor
- Ms. Zahra Badaghi, Administrative Assistant

Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

- H.E. Mr. Javanshir Akhundov, Ambassador
- Mr. Kanan Nazarov, Counsellor

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark, Permanent Representative/Director General
- Mr. Abulfazl Mohammad Alikhani, Director of ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Ahmad Safari, Deputy Director of ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Tofiqh Sedigh Mostahkam, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Mohammad Hashemi, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Ahmad Karimi, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- Mr. Serik Zhumabekov, Minister/Counsellor
- Mr. Ermek Sadykbekov, Second Secretary

Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- Mr. Kochorbaev Musa, First Secretary

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmad, Counsellor

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- Mrs. Manizha Rahimi, Third Secretary

Embassy of the Republic of Turkey:

- Mr. Baris Saygin, Counsellor
- Ms. Sevgi Ilhan, Second Secretary

ECO Secretariat:

- H.E. Mr. Shamil Aleskerov, Secretary General
- Mr. Hayri Maraslioglu, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, Director (EME)

- Mrs. Mavjuda Nurova, Assistant Director (CFU)
- Mr. Gaffar Erbek, Chef de Cabinet
- Mr. Bahram Heidari, Legal Adviser
- Mr. Shafqat Amir, Secretary
- Mr. Muhammad Adnan, Administrative Assistant
- Ms. Aynur Mammadova, Russian Translator
- Ms. Nurgul Duissenova, Russian Translator
- Mr. Amir Mohammad Javaheri, Persian Translator
- Mr. Mohammad Reza Malakooti, IT Expert
