



Report of 28th Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)

Islamabad, Pakistan
11-14 December 2017

Report

The 28th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on 11-14 December, 2017 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Meeting was attended by the delegations from all the Member States i.e. the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, and Turkmenistan, as well as the delegation of ECO Secretariat. The Meeting was also attended by the Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States in their capacities as Observers. The Representatives of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies also participated in the Meeting. *The list of participants is placed at Annexure-IV.*

2. The 28th RPC Meeting consisted of the two Segments (a) Senior Officials Segment and (b) Ministerial Segment.

SENIOR OFFICIALS SEGMENT

3. The Senior Officials Segment, preceding the Ministerial Segment was held on 11-13 December 2017. In his inaugural statement during the Senior Officials Segment, His Excellency Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General, welcomed the ECO Member States, Observers and Specialized Agencies, Institutions & Affiliated Bodies to the 28th Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting in the beautiful city of Islamabad. The Secretary General profoundly thanked and appreciated the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, especially the Ministry of Planning, Development & Reforms for hosting the landmark 28th RPC Meeting and providing warm hospitality to all delegates.

4. The ECO Secretary General presented a comprehensive overview of the main activities of the Organization undertaken during the Year 2017, including successfully holding of 13th ECO Summit and 22nd COM (*February-March 2017, Islamabad*), which adopted historic documents - ECO Vision 2025 with Implementation Framework and Islamabad Declaration. He mentioned that the Secretariat has made enormous efforts in realizing the overarching objectives of the Work Programme in 2017 in various segments, *inter alia*, ongoing efforts in early effectuation of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), enhanced regional transport and connectivity within the ECO Region, successfully holding of the 2nd Meeting of ECO Ministers of ICT in Baku (4-5 December 2017), development in signing and ratification of agreements and achieved tangible progress in projects in various sectors of the Organization. Moreover, the Secretary General affirmed that the Secretariat will vigorously pursue the ongoing and future planned ECO Projects and activities in line with ECO Vision 2025 with synergic cooperation of Member States and financial support of Regional and International Financial Institutions. He hoped that the 28th RPC Meeting will further define the roadmap for pragmatic activities and programmes for the Year 2018 and onward. *A copy of statement is placed at Annexure-III.*

5. H.E. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan warmly welcomed all delegates to Islamabad for attending the 28th RPC Meeting. The Federal Minister while highlighting the enormous regional and global changes taking place, *inter alia*, economic disparity issues, political rivalries, security challenges, environmental hazards, terrorism and extremism threats, he called for adopting collective ECO Regional efforts to address these challenges for upholding peace, stability, prosperity and economic development in the ECO Region, as well as to achieve the sustainable development goals as enshrined in the UN

Development Agenda 2030. The socio-economic activities in the Region will be guaranteed through enhanced regional trade and investment opportunities with elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, promotion of free trade through operationalization of ECOTA, regional connectivity, infrastructure development, regional energy markets, oil and gas pipelines (TAPI & CASA-1000), as well as coping with climate change issues, promotion of tourism industry and rooting out the menace of terrorism and extremism.

6. The Minister further stressed the need for fortifying synergic and coherent regional efforts to implement the ECO Vision 2025 in order to make the Organization more effective, dynamic and vibrant. *A copy of his statement is placed at **Annexure-V**.*

7. H.E. Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui, Secretary Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms (Head of delegation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan being the current COM Chairman) was elected as Chairman of the Senior Officials Segment of the 28th RPC Meeting. The Secretary while thanking the participants upon his election as Chairman of the Meeting underlined the importance of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) Meeting and called for adopting appropriate decisions during the Meeting to help Member States in strengthening regional economic cooperation in a synergic and coherent manner.

8. The following Eight Sectoral Committees, constituted under respective Chairmen, held detailed deliberations/review discussions and drafted (i) Annual Work Programme 2018 and (ii) ECO Calendar of Events 2018 for endorsement by the Ministers and final approval by the ECO Council of Ministers:

S#	COMMITTEE	CHAIRMAN
i.	Trade & Investment	Mr. Irfan Davudov, Deputy Head, Department of Economic Cooperation and Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan
ii.	Transport & Communications	Mr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi, Director for Transit and Trade Facilitation, Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
iii.	Energy, Minerals & Environment	Mr. Selcuk KOC, Head of Department, Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey
iv.	Agriculture, Industry & Tourism	Mr. Abdolfazl MOHAMMAD ALIKHANI, Deputy Director General for International Environmental and Sustainable Development Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran
v.	Projects, Economic Research & Statistics	Mr. Fatih UNLU, Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey
vi.	Human Resources & Sustainable Development	Dr. Muhammad Afzal, Chief, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
vii.	Drugs & Organized Crime Coordination	Dr. Muhammad Afzal, Chief, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
viii.	ECO Regional Institutions/ Specialized Agencies/ Affiliated/ Bodies International Relations	Mr. Javid Musayev, Counsellor, Embassy of Republic of Azerbaijan in the IR Iran

Consultation Meeting on Reforms in ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies

9. The Consultation Meeting on “Reforms in the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies” was also held on 13 December 2017. The Heads of Delegation discussed and reviewed the overall performance of ECO Institutions from different perspectives, *including* causes and effects lower membership; establishment of inter-secretariat coordination mechanism (*nature and scope of activities*), Reform of the Organizational Structure of the Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions, financial and administrative issues; strengths and weaknesses of the current recruitment policy of the Specialized Agencies; role of CPR in bridging the gap in decision making and follow up in absence of BoT of the Specialized Agencies in sessions; mechanism for enhancing the cooperation among the Headquarters of the Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions and the Diplomatic Corps of the ECO Member States in the host countries.

10. The Council called for undertaking necessary reforms in all ECO Institutions so as to make the ECO more efficient and effective, equipped with required capabilities and resources to better serve the noble objectives of Organization for socio-economic development in the ECO Member States in line with decisions of the 13th ECO Summit and 22nd Council of Ministers (COM) (February-March 2017, Islamabad).

11. The Council further called upon the Secretariat to prepare an outcome Report of the Consultation Meeting and circulate it among the Member States for their views/comments. After feedback received from the Member States, a comprehensive evaluation Report on Reforms in the ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies will be developed by the Secretariat and submitted to the next COM for consideration.

MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

Agenda Item No.1

Inauguration/Opening

12. The Ministerial Segment of the 28th RPC Meeting started with recitation from the Holy Qur'an and playing of National Anthem of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

i. Opening Remarks by ECO Secretary General and Chief Guest

13. H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General profoundly thanked the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for making excellent arrangements for the 28th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council from 11-14 December 2017 in Islamabad. He also welcomed and appreciated the delegates from ECO Member States, Observers and ECO Institutions for actively participating in the Meeting. He touched upon the overall state of play of ECO and progress made since last 27th RPC Meeting held in December 2016, as well as ECO Vision 2025 along with its Implementation Framework, adopted by the 13th ECO Summit and 22nd Council of Ministers (February-March 2017, Islamabad).

14. The Secretary General also hoped that the Member States and the Secretariat will follow up and implement the key outcome decisions taken during the 28th RPC Meeting in 2018. *A copy of his statement is place at Annexure-VI.*

15. H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in his inaugural statement, warmly welcomed the delegations to Islamabad and deeply appreciated their active participation in the 28th RPC Meeting. The Deputy Chairman while underlining the significance of the ECO Regional Planning Council Meeting called upon the Member States to implement ECO Vision 2025 and other decisions taken during the 13th ECO Summit and 22nd Council of Ministers, held earlier this year in Islamabad. The Deputy Chairman further stressed that the priority be given to ECOTA, ECO-TTFA, ECO Decade for Enhanced Energy Cooperation (2013-2015), as well as other ECO Programmes and activities on trade facilitation, industrial standards, food security, health in line with UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, which will certainly lead to prosperity and economic development in the ECO Region. *A copy of his statement is place at Annexure-VII.*

ii. Election of the Chairman

16. H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was unanimously elected as Chairman of the 28th RPC Meeting. In his brief remarks, the Deputy Chairman thanked the participants on reposing confidence into him. He hoped that the decisions and recommendations generated

during the Review Committees' Meetings will generate fruitful outcomes for strengthening regional economic cooperation among the Member States.

iii. Adoption of the Agenda

17. The Council adopted the following agenda of the Ministerial Segment.

Agenda of the Ministerial Segment

1. *Opening of the Ministerial segment*
 - i. *Opening addresses*
 - ii. *Election of the Chairman*
 - iii. *Adoption of the Agenda*
2. *Statements by the Ministers/Heads of delegation*
3. *Ministerial Luncheon*
4. *Adoption of the Ministerial outcomes*
 - i. *ECO Work Programme 2018*
 - ii. *Calendar of Events 2018*
5. *Any other business*
6. *Date and Venue of the next Meeting*
7. *Adoption of the Report of the 28th RPC meeting*
8. *Closing*

Agenda Item No.2

Statements by the Ministers/Heads of delegation on the implementation of the decisions of the 27th RPC Meeting

18. The Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States made their country statements, highlighting policies, programmes and activities of the Organization at national, regional and global levels, including the progress achieved on implementation of the decisions taken during the 27th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (5-8 December 2016, Tehran). *Copies of their statements are placed at Annexure-VIII.*

19. The Heads of delegation of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Secretariat of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States also made their Statements. *Copies of their statements are placed at Annexure-IX.*

20. The Heads of delegation of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies, including ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF), Educational Institute (ECO-EI), ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECO-TDB), ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI), ECO Postal Staff College, ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC) for Implementation of RPFs, and ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) also delivered their statements, elaborating activities and progress achieved since last RPC Meeting. *Copies of their statements are placed at Annexure- X.*

Agenda Item No.3

Ministerial Luncheon

21. During the Ministerial Luncheon, hosted by H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the implementation prospects of the "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" with special emphasis on "economic and planning" in the ECO Region was discussed.

Agenda Item No. 4

Adoption of the Ministerial Outcomes

i. Annual Work Programme 2018

22. The Meeting adopted the Annual Work Programme 2018, which was recommended by the Senior Officials and submitted for its final approval by the ECO Council of Ministers (COM). *Annual Work Programme 2018 is placed at Annexure-I.*

ii. Calendar of Events 2018

23. The Meeting also adopted the Calendar of Events 2018, which was recommended by the Senior Officials and put forward for its final approval by the ECO Council of Ministers (COM). *Annual Work Programme 2018 is placed at Annexure-II.*

Agenda Item No.5

Any other business

24. The Republic of Kazakhstan informed the Council about the establishment of the Astana International Financial Center designed to enhance investment climate.

Agenda Item No.6

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

25. The Council decided to organize the next 29th RPC Meeting in December 2018 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

Agenda Item No.7

Adoption of the Report

26. The Council unanimously adopted the Report of the 28th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council.

Agenda Item No.8

Closing Remarks

27. On behalf of all the participating delegations, the Council expressed its deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, including the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms for providing warm hospitality and making excellent arrangements for successfully organization of the Meeting.

28. The Council also appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretary General and the Secretariat staff for preparing comprehensive documents and assisting the hosts in making the 28th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council in a successful manner.

29. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chairmen of Ministerial Segment H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Deputy Chairman and H.E. Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui, Secretary Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for conducting respective segments with proactive deliberations in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council also appreciated the Chairmen of various Sectoral Committees for successfully conducting the business of their respective Committees.
