



225th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Report

7th December, 2017
ECO Secretariat - Tehran

Report

The 225th CPR Meeting was held on Thursday 7th December 2017 at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Iran. It was attended by the Permanent Representatives/Representatives of all ECO Member States except Turkmenistan. The ECO Secretary General along with concerned officials of the Secretariat also attended the Meeting. The list of participants is enclosed as *Annex-I*.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

2. The Council adopted the following Agenda of 225th CPR Meeting for deliberations:

Agenda

1. *Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 225th CPR Meeting*
2. *Adoption of the Draft Report of the 224th CPR Meeting*
3. *Preparations for holding the next (28th) RPC Meeting at the Ministerial level on 11-14 December 2017 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan (continued)*
4. *Follow-up to the decisions of 22nd COM Meeting and 13th Summit: New Scales of Assessment and ECO Reforms. (continued)*
5. *Holding of 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting on 16-17 April 2017 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan*
6. *Approval of the Lists of Events/Meetings and Conferences/Workshops/Seminars/Training courses to be supported/financed from Special Support Fund (SSF) (continued)*
7. *Participation of Turkic Council Secretariat at 28th RPC Meeting on 11-14 December, 2017 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan*
8. *Administrative and financial matters:*
 - a. *Secretariat's Budget proposal for the financial year 2018*
 - b. *Recommendations of the Selection Panel*
9. *Any other business*
10. *Date of the next CPR Meeting*

Agenda Item No.2

Adoption of the Draft Report of 224th CPR Meeting

3. The Council adopted the Draft Report of the 224th CPR Meeting contained in the document ECO/CPR/224/2 (30th October 2017) which was circulated to the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFU/CPR/224th Meeting/2017/1364 dated 30th October 2017.

Agenda Item No.3

Preparations for holding the next (28th) RPC Meeting at the Ministerial level in December in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Continued)

4. Deputy Secretary General (T&I, AIT, IR and PERS) Mr. Kanan Nazarov briefed the Council about the latest status of 28th RPC Meeting (**11th - 14th December 2017 in Islamabad (Pakistan)**). He said that the ECO Secretariat has received composition of delegations from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey as well as delegates of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies. Invitation Letters from H.E. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of Planning, Development and Reforms to the respective Ministers of the Member States have already been issued. Moreover, the Secretariat has also sent the copies of the Invitation Letters to the respective Embassies in Tehran for further pursuance. He also informed the Council that

ECO Secretariat's Advance Team has left for Islamabad today where it will hold meeting(s) with the concerned authorities for coordination and arrangements of the 28th RPC Meeting. Deputy Secretary General further informed the Council that a Consultation Meeting on Reforms of Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutes and Affiliated Bodies is also being organized on 13th December 2017 for which relevant papers have already been circulated. He said that "*ECO Day*", as proposed by the ECO Secretary General, is also being celebrated on the sidelines of 28th RPC on 14th December 2017 in coordination with the concerned authorities of Pakistan.

5. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Pakistan* taking the floor briefed the Council regarding the arrangements by the host authorities for the 28th RPC Meeting. He said that almost all arrangements with regard to accommodation, transportation and reception upon arrival/departure of the delegates of the Member States for the 28th RPC Meeting have been completed. The Representative requested the Council for provision of exact itineraries of the delegations of the Member States for their onward conveying to the host authorities. He hoped that with the departure of ECO Advance Team to Islamabad, the remaining arrangements would be finalized in coordination with the concerned authorities.

6. The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of *Afghanistan* informed the Council that the Minister of Afghanistan has recently been appointed and would not be in a position to attend the 28th RPC Meeting. However, the Deputy Minister of Afghanistan will attend the Meeting. He said that composition of Afghan delegation will soon be communicated.

7. The CPR Chairman while appreciating the briefings also requested the distinguished Council Members for provision of list of Heads of Delegation enabling the host authorities for making appropriate arrangements for the high dignitaries such as boarding and lodging, reception etc.

Agenda Item No.4

Follow-up to the decisions of 22nd COM Meeting and 13th Summit: "*ECO Reforms*" and "*Scales of Assessment*"

8. As proposed by the CPR Chairman in 224th CPR Meeting, an Informal Meeting of Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives was held at the residence of Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 26th November 2017 where the issues of (i) Scales of Assessment, (ii) ECO Reforms, (iii) approval of Calendar of Events to be supported from SS Fund and (iv) ECO-ASEAN cooperation were discussed in order to submit a position before the CPR meeting.

9. ECO Secretary General briefed the Council by stating that the Secretariat has received the official positions of the Member States on the Scales of Assessment and ECO Reforms except from Turkmenistan who would soon be submitting their official position in this regard. He said that the Secretariat has already circulated the updated compiled positions of the Member States in a tabulated form. The issues were thoroughly deliberated in the Informal Meeting on 26th November 2017. ECO Secretary General said that soon after the RPC Meeting, the ECO Secretariat would develop *new versions* of Scales of Assessment and ECO Reforms which would then be discussed, preferably in beginning of January 2018, by the Working Group for submission of its outcome to the next CPR Meeting.

10. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Iran* made a query that this (25th) CPR also has to adopt the coming year's budget of 2018, so what is the impact of negotiations on the new Scales of Assessment on the Budget 2018?

11. ECO Secretary General explained that this issue will be discussed under Agenda Item No.8 "*Administrative Matters*".

12. The Council agreed for holding the Working Group's meeting to discuss the issues of Scales of Assessment and ECO Reforms in the 2nd week of January 2018. The Secretariat will notify the holding of the Working Group's Meeting for submission of its outcome to the next CPR Meeting on the basis of Secretariat's new version of Scales of Assessment and ECO Reforms. The Meeting also requested the Secretariat to circulate the new versions of the proposals well before the Working Group's meeting enabling it to go through the newly prepared documents.

Agenda Item No.5

Holding of 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting on 16-17 April 2017 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan

13. The Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Tehran vide its Note Verbale No 1235 dated 28 October 2017 informed the Secretariat that in accordance with the decision of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan dated 20th October, 2017, the 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting has been scheduled on 16th -17th April 2018 in Dushanbe.

14. Deputy Secretary General (T&I, AIT, IR and PERS) briefed that the Republic of Tajikistan proposed to hold 23rd COM Meeting on 17th April 2018 preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting on 16th April 2018 in Dushanbe (Tajikistan). He informed the Council that the requisite proposal has already been conveyed to all the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFU/2017/1421 dated 8th November 2017 refers. Furthermore, the ECO Secretariat also prepared "General Guidelines" for organizing the COM Meeting which has already been forwarded to the Republic of Tajikistan. He said that the ECO Secretariat has also received the copies of Invitation Letters from the Embassy of Tajikistan signed by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan addressed to the respective Foreign Ministers of the Member States. These Invitation Letters will be forwarded by the Secretariat to the Embassies of the Member States by next week. Deputy Secretary General also informed the Council that the Republic of Tajikistan has also sent a list of various meetings and events which Tajikistan proposes to host during its COM Chairmanship in 2018. The list has already been circulated among the Member States and will also be considered during the 28th RPC Meeting.

15. The Representative of the Republic of *Tajikistan* also informed that the Republic of Tajikistan proposed to organize the 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting on 16-17 April 2017 in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and sought support from the Member States. He said that Invitation Letters from the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan addressed to the Foreign Ministers of the Member States have already been despatched. He requested early confirmation of the Member States which will help the host for making proper arrangements.

16. The Ambassador of the Republic of *Uzbekistan* conveyed the request of Uzbekistan for inclusion in the Agenda of 23rd COM Meeting regarding Uzbekistan's request for cancellation of its so-called "*accumulated debts*" to Orgnaization.

Agenda Item No.6

Approval of the Lists of Events/Meetings and Workshops/Seminars/Training courses to be supported/financed from Special Support Fund (SSF)

17. The issue of approval of two Lists of Events/Meetings and Conferences/Workshops/Seminars and Training courses, to be supported/financed from Special Support Fund (SSF), is being discussed since 223rd CPR Meeting. However, it was decided by the 224th CPR Meeting held 23rd October 2017, that the said issue will

also be discussed in the Informal Meeting to be held on 26th November 2016 at the residence of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

18. The Council, as per the amicably resolution of the issue in the Informal Meeting held on 26th November 2017 at the Residence of CPR Chairman and Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, approved the Lists of Events/Meetings/Conferences/Workshops/Seminars and Training Courses to be supported/financed from Special Support Fund (SSF). The Council asked the ECO Secretariat to circulate new Lists after deletion of two events, as mentioned by the Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Iran*.

19. The Council also noted the stance of the Ambassador of the Republic of *Turkey* that though the issue was amicably resolved but intended to put on record the position of *Turkey* that accepting for deletion of two events from the Lists in no way to be construed as watering down of the status of the Observers of this Organization.

Agenda Item No.7

Participation of Turkic Council Secretariat at 28th RPC Meeting on 11-14 December, 2017 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

20. The Secretariat of the Turkic Council vide its Note Verbale No: Note-2017-0554 dated 3rd November 2017, informed the ECO Secretariat that a delegation from the Turkic Council Secretariat would like to participate at the 28th RPC Meeting on 11-14 December, 2017 in Islamabad (Pakistan) in its capacity as ECO observer.

21. The Council considered and approved, in accordance with the ECO Modalities for Granting Observer and Dialogue Partnership Status at ECO, the participation of Turkic Council Secretariat, in its capacity as "Observer" without right to vote in inaugural and closing ceremonies of 28th RPC Meeting scheduled to be held on 11-14 December, 2017 in Islamabad (Pakistan).

22. Furthermore and as the last CPR Meeting before the 28th RPC Meeting, the Council also authorized the participation of Energy Charter, upon its request, in its capacity as "Observer" without right to vote in inaugural and closing ceremonies of 28th RPC Meeting scheduled to be held on 11-14 December, 2017 in Islamabad (Pakistan).

Agenda Item No.8

Administrative Matters

(a) Approval of the ECO Secretariat Budget for 2018

23. The Council was briefed by the former Chief Accountant of the ECO Secretariat on the proposed Budget 2018. He mentioned that the amount of the Budget 2018 has been increased by 2.80% due to the completion of the tenures of certain officials in 2018 i.e. Secretary General, two Deputy Secretaries General and some others officials. As per the Staff Regulations, the ECO Secretariat has to pay some allowances to the outgoing/incoming officials and this is the only reason the increase in the budget.

24. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Pakistan* informed that the Budget Proposal for 2018 has been forwarded to the capital and instructions are still awaited and as soon as these are received would be conveyed to the ECO Secretariat

25. Deputy Secretary General (Admn) further explained that the 22nd COM Meeting did not touch the issue of Scales of Assessment for 2018 but at the same time it mandated the CPR to finalize the new Scales of Assessment and ECO Reforms within the timeframe of 4 months. As the ECO Secretariat feels that both the issues would not be finalized in

this year, therefore, as per practice, extension of current Scales of Assessment for another period of one year (2018) is required.

26. After deliberations, the Council approved the extension of the Scales of Assessment for 2018, on COM behalf, and the Budget Proposal for 2018 pending the approval by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The ECO Secretariat will approach the Member States informing about their shares on the basis of the current "*Scales of Assessment*". Both Budget 2018 and extension of "*Scales of Assessment*" will be formally approved by the next COM Meeting.

(b) Selection Panel

27. The Council was informed that the Selection Panel meeting was held on 7th December 2017 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Imran Haider, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Council, on the recommendations of the Selection Panel, approved the following:

(a) Director for Human Resources & Sustainable Development (Category-I, D2)

Appointment of Mr. Kaan Sayin (*Turkish national*) as Director (Category-I, D2) for a term of three years effective from the date of his joining the Secretariat replacing Mr. Ugur Kilicarslan.

(b) Assistant Director for Administration (Category-I, D1)

Appointment of Mr. Mohammad Hasan MOAZZAMI GOUDARZI (*Iranian national*) as Assistant Director (Category-I, D1) from 01st January 2018 replacing Mr. Hamid Reza Anousheh.

(c) Russian Translator (Category-II, P2)

Appointment of Mr. Boboev Amriyo (*Tajikistan national*) as Russian Translator (Category-II, P-2) for a term of 4 years effective from 12th February 2018.

(d) Librarian (Category II, P1)

Appointment of Ms. Maryam TORABI (*Iranian national*) as Librarian (Category-II, P1) for a term of four years effective from the date of her joining the Secretariat replacing Mr. Saeid TABATABAEI.

28. Moreover, issues of two nominations i.e. (i) Deputy Secretary General from the Islamic Republic of *Iran* and (ii) Director (PERS) from the Republic of *Kazakhstan* were brought to the notice of the Council.

29. ECO Secretary General informed the Council that the Secretariat received two nominations: (i) from the Islamic Republic of Iran for the post of Deputy Secretary General and (ii) from the Republic of Kazakhstan for the post of Director (PERS). He said that in both the nominations the issue is age limit. He said that as per Article 19 - 19.4, the age limit for ECO Staff is 60 years for men and 55 years for women. ECO Secretary General said that communication was made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran who in reply stated that the said article may not be binding for the new nominations, therefore, the issue is here for deliberation by the Council.

30. The Ambassador of the Republic of *Turkey* said that both nominations for the post of Deputy Secretary General and Director have been forwarded to the capital and need some time for evaluation. He said that the issue of '**age limit**' can be discussed and we are not hostage of rules which can be changed but the main aim should be to make the Organization more efficient and productive by utilizing the services of experienced and qualified people. However, the Ambassador said that we should not look into the issue on person-to-person basis, the matter could also be addressed within the Reform Process

which is largely dealing with the personnel issues in the ECO Secretariat. He said if we make a change in the nomination rules we should not limit ourselves in one aspect of the regulation but to look at the whole picture as well.

31. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Iran* taking the floor said that in response to a Note Verbale from Iran, a Note Verbale of 8th October 2018 was received from the ECO Secretariat regarding the Iranian vacant post of Deputy Secretary General. The Iranian Government nominated a candidate for the said post and instead of circulating the Iranian Note Verbale to all Member States; surprisingly a Note Verbale was received from the Secretariat seeking clarification regarding re-employment mentioning the retirement age of 60 years. The Permanent Representative said that in reaction it was informed that it did not agree with the interpretation of the Staff Regulations and asked the Secretariat to circulate the Iranian Note Verbale for attention of all the Member States and also put the same in the Agenda of the 25th CPR Meeting. However, surprisingly the same was neither mentioned in the Agenda of CPR nor it was discussed in the Selection Panel Meeting for further deliberations/discussion by the CPR Meeting.

32. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Iran* further mentioned that the rules mentioned in the Note Verbale of the Secretariat are meant for those which the Secretariat employee but not for those nominated by the countries. He said neither the Deputy Secretary General nor any Director was retired according to the services within the ECO Secretariat. This was the logic and EPG recommendations were also considered for its nomination. The Iranian candidate for the post of Deputy Secretary General was a "*former Deputy Foreign Minister*" and it would be a good opportunity for the Organization to utilize his services. He said that it is not understandable as to why we should go along with the Article which are meant for those staff, employed by the Secretariat and this is not the case of re-employment which is going to be the right of the Secretary General in order to make contract on yearly basis and it was requested for making a decision by the CPR. He stated the candidate for the post of Deputy Secretary General is for a certain period and we should consider the nomination. The Permanent Representative expressed his dissatisfaction for not putting the Iranian nomination of Deputy Secretary General in the Agenda of the CPR. He further informed that every country has its own regulations as far as age of retirement is concerned; the age limit in Iran for retirement is 65 years or 35 years service.

33. ECO Secretary General explained the reason for not circulating the Note Verbale received from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said it was due to certain articles relating to age limit in Staff Regulations and when the Secretariat received further consideration and interpretation of the Iranian side, it was circulated among the Member States. Moreover, the issue of age limit was also discussed in the Informal Meeting where it was decided to bring the issue to the CPR platform for finalization. He categorically stated that as far as the procedural issues are concerned, nothing was done mistakenly.

34. From the legal perspective, the *Legal Adviser* of the ECO Secretariat brought to the notice of the Council the provisions of Article 18 of Staff Regulations in which condition for separation of staff from the Organization are mentioned. Furthermore, Article 19 provides that conditions for separation from the Organization (namely provisions of Article 18 including, inter alia, the retirement age) shall be specified in the Letter of Appointment of all staff members.

35. The Ambassador of the Republic of *Turkey* proposed that the Legal Department of the Secretariat may prepare a "*Brief Paper*" mentioning the rules and regulations with precedents of appointment on some positions above the age limit, which would be

beneficial for taking a decision. He further said we may not be strict on the age limit but on the other hand we should also respect the Rules and Regulations. *He added that according to his understanding the concept of retirement age within the Secretariat cannot be considered solely from a financial prospective, rather it should be seen as the age limit for the staff, as apart from a certain category, most of the staff benefit from the social security system of their country of origin, therefore, for any member of the staff not benefiting from Secretariat's social security contributions would not necessarily mean that this member of staff should not be bound by the retirement age limits in the Staff Regulations.*

36. After protracted deliberations and to develop criteria to resolve the issue, the CPR Chairman proposed holding of an Informal CPR Meeting for discussion and resolution (*age limit*) of both the cases of nominations of candidates by the Islamic Republic of Iran for the post of Deputy Secretary General and the Republic of Kazakhstan for the post of Director in the ECO Secretariat.

37. The Council agreed to the proposal of the CPR Chairman for holding of an Informal CPR Meeting. *The date, time and venue of the Informal CPR Meeting would be conveyed by the Iranian side soon.* Moreover, the Secretariat will also prepare a "*Brief Paper*" including amendments regarding age limit in the Staff Regulations for the Permanent Representatives/Representatives on the issue.

Agenda Item No.9

Any Other Business

38. Under this Agenda item, the Representative of the Islamic Republic of *Iran* proposed an idea to the Council to be discussed in the 28th RPC Meeting in Islamabad that any meeting/workshop/training can be held without achieving the quorum as these are beneficial for the Member States. However, the Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic opposed the idea and said that without achieving the quorum it will be a bilateral meeting/workshop/training rather than an ECO Event.

39. The Ambassador of the Republic of *Turkey* informed the Council regarding organization of two events later in the month of December in Turkish Cypriot State i.e. *(i)* Biodiversity and *(ii)* ECO Tourism and requested the distinguished Council for alerting the respective capitals for participation in the two events.

Agenda Item No.10

Date of the next CPR Meeting

40. The Council decided to convene its next (226th) Meeting on *9th January, 2018 at 1000 hrs* at the ECO Secretariat – Tehran.

41. While concluding the meeting, the Chairman CPR expressed his sincere thanks to the distinguished Permanent Representatives/Representatives of all ECO Member States for their participation and valuable contribution in the Meeting.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:**

- H.E. Dr. Nasser Ahmad Noor, Ambassador
- Mr. Ahmad Haroon Najmpoor, Minister-Counsellor
- Mr. Nader Pajohesh, Second Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

- Mr. Bunyad Huseynov, Ambassador
- Mr. Javid Musayev, Counsellor

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Mr. Majid Bizmark, Permanent Representative/Director General
- Mr. Abulfazl Mohammad Alikhani, Deputy Director General
- Mr. Akbar Khodei, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- H.E. Mr. Baghdad Kultayevich AMREYEV, Ambassador
- Mr. Yerbol Akhmetov, Minister-Counsellor

The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- Mr. Aziz Kurumbaev, Counsellor,

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Ambassador
- Mr. Imran Haider, Deputy Head of Mission
- Mr. Ghulam Hussain, Second Secretary

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- Mr. Firdavs Yusupov, Second Secretary
- Mr. Kabirov Mirzosharif, Third Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey:

- H.E. Mr. Riza Hakan TEKİN, Ambassador
- Ms. Sinem Gokce, Third Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- H.E. Mr. Bakhodir Abdullaev, Ambassador
- Mr. B. Tashmanov, Third Secretary

The ECO Secretariat:

- H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akça, Secretary General
- Mr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Kanan Nazarov, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar, Legal Adviser
- Mr. Muhammad Ayoob Brohi, Steno-Secretary
- Mr. Amjad Saeed Abbasi, Steno-Secretary
- Mr. Nurgul Duissenova, English-Russian Interpreter/Translator
- Mr. Amriyo Boboev, English-Russian Interpreter/Translator
- Mr. Amir Javaheri, English-Persian Interpreter/Translator
