



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

**Report of the 8th Meeting of the Ministers of the Transport and
Communications of the ECO Member States
(Ashgabat, 28-29th June 2011)**

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The 8th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport and Communications of the ECO Member States was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 28-29 June, 2011. The Meeting was attended by delegations from all ECO Member States. Therefore, full quorum was achieved. The ECO Secretariat's delegation as well as delegations from IDB and IRU also attended the Meeting. The list of the participants is placed at Annex-I.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

2. The Meeting was inaugurated with the welcome message of His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, the Honourable President of Turkmenistan, which was read by His Excellency Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan.

3. The inaugural statement of His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Yahya Maroofi, ECO Secretary General who could not arrive at Ashgabat due to complications in a connecting flight, was delivered by Mr. Altaf Asghar, Deputy Secretary General of ECO. The statement highlighted the progress achieved in regional cooperation in the field of transport and communication since the 7th Ministerial Meeting (Antalya, 2008). A copy of the ECO Secretary General's statement is attached as Annex-II.

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

4. Under this Agenda Item, His Excellency Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan was elected as the Chairman of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The draft Agenda proposed by the ECO Secretariat was unanimously adopted. A copy of the Agenda is attached as Annex-III.

Agenda Item No. 4

Appointment of the Drafting Committee

6. As per ECO's practice, the Senior Officials' Meeting was assigned as Drafting Committee for preparing the report of the Ministerial Meeting and the Ashgabat Declaration.

Agenda Item No. 5

Statement of Ministers\Heads of Delegation

7. Under this Agenda Item, the Ministers\Heads of Delegations of the Member States participating in the Meeting made their statements in alphabetic order. Copies of their statements are attached as Annex-IV.

8. Secretary General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also made a statement, a copy of which is attached as Annex-V.

Agenda Item No. 6

Review of the status of implementation of decisions of the previous Ministerial Meetings

9. Under this Agenda Item, the Representative of the ECO Secretariat briefed the Meeting on the status of implementation of decisions of the previous ministerial meetings. A copy of the summary table on the progress with implementation of the decisions of the 7th Ministerial Meeting (Antalya, 2008) is attached as Annex-VI.

10. The Meeting expressed profound satisfaction that most of the activities envisaged by the 7th Ministerial Meeting have been completed, or are ongoing.

Agenda Item No. 7

Review of the implementation of the TTFA

11. Under this Agenda Item, the Meeting reviewed the status of implementation of the TTFA.

A. The recent Meetings of TTCC and its auxiliary bodies

a) Insurance Committee

12. The Meeting expressed satisfaction that the ECO White Card Scheme has been finalized and adopted by the 2nd Meeting of the Insurance Committee of the TTCC (Tehran, 2009), and that the ECO Council of Bureaux has been established.

13. As recommended by the 21st RPC (Tehran, 2011), the Meeting decided that the 3rd Meeting of the Insurance Committee of the TTCC and the 2nd Meeting of the ECO-CB would be convened in September 2011 to finalize all measures needed for issuance of the White Card. If no Member State offers, by 15 August 2011, to host the Meetings, the Secretariat would organize them at its headquarters utilizing funds from ECO/IDB Project or the TTFA Project. The Meeting called on the Member States to nominate high level delegations to the Meetings.

14. The Meeting appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for seconding an officer to the ECO Secretariat to handle the work of the Office for ECO-CB. The Meeting hoped that the permanent Office of the ECO-CB would be established soon.

15. The Meeting requested the Member States, except Iran and Turkey, to provide their comments and views on the Interim Report of the ECO international consultant for the ECO White Card Scheme under the joint ECO/IDB Project on TTFA.

16. The Member States, except Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey were requested to nominate their National Consultants on Insurance components of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on the TTFA. The Member States, (except Pakistan), will convey their Country Report on MTPL insurance based on the reporting format and guidelines provided by the International Consultant.

b) The Railway Committee

17. The Meeting reviewed progress in implementation of activities agreed by the Member States during the 3rd (Astana, 2009) and 4th (Tehran, 2010) Meetings of the Railway Committee of the TTCC.

18. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to expedite preparing the draft ECO rules for use of wagons, and rules and procedures for international rail passenger and freight traffic through

utilizing a legal officer from CIT under the aegis of the ECO/IDB Project on TTFA. The draft rules will be submitted to the next meeting of the Railway Committee of the TTCC.

19. As recommended by the 21st RPC, the Meeting decided to merge the Railway Committee of the TTCC with the Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities as a way to enhance the level of the said committee. If no Member State offers, by the end of August 2011, to host 11th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, the Secretariat will organize the Meeting in November 2011 at its headquarters utilizing funds from the ECO/IDB project on TTFA. The Joint Workshop of ECO, OSJD, UIC, OTIF, CIT, UNECE, and UNESCAP on development of uniform railway rules and regulations for Euro-Asia with particular emphasis on the ECO region would be held back to back with the abovementioned Meeting.

20. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to keep contact with the Member States for their active participation in the next Sessions of the UNECE Working Group on Unified Railway Law.

21. The Meeting expressed satisfaction on the publication of the ECO Railway Transit Routes Map by the Secretariat in January 2011, with generous financial assistance of IDB. The Meeting decided that the Map will be utilized as part of Annex-I of the TTFA. The next Meeting of the TTCC may take further actions in this regard.

22. The Member States were requested to provide regular country reports to the Secretariat on accession to/implementation of the international legal systems enlisted in the railway related provisions of the TTFA, notably those within the framework of UIC, OTIF, and OSZhD.

c) The Road Committee

23. The Meeting reviewed the progress in activities agreed on during the 3rd (Astana, 2009) and 4th (Tehran, 2010) Meetings of the Road Committee of the TTCC.

24. The ECO Meeting expressed satisfaction that the Road Transit Routes Map was published by the Secretariat in May 2011, with generous financial assistance of IDB. The Map will be utilized as part of Annex-I of the TTFA. The next Meeting of the TTCC may take further actions in this regard. The Meeting decided that the Road and Railway Transit Routes Maps would be revised in every three years. However, the Secretariat may have the Maps reprinted whenever the Maps are out of stock.

25. The Meeting expressed profound satisfaction that the ECO Demonstration Silk Road Truck Caravan was launched in 2010 in partnership with IRU. The Meeting requested the Member States to expedite providing their comments and views on the draft report of the Caravan circulated by the Secretariat so that the final report could be published as soon as possible.

26. The Meeting requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to expedite providing the dates and venue of the 1st ECO plus China Seminar on the Silk Road in contact with the concerned authorities of the People's Republic of China.

27. The Meeting also decided that the Meeting of the Road Committee of the TTCC would be elevated to the level of the heads of road transport authorities of the Member States.

28. The issue of preparation of the ECO Transit Roads Directory would be discussed by the next Meeting of the Road Committee of the TTCC. After finalization of the modalities and funding arrangements, Turkey would start preparing the Directory. The Project Proposal and procedures will be prepared by the Secretariat in close contact with the Republic of Turkey and submitted to the next Meeting of the Road Committee of the TTCC.

29. The Meeting requested the Member States to expedite providing information on the status of road transit permit with other ECO countries, taking into account the provisions of the TTFA.

d) The Transit Trade Committee

30. The Meeting reviewed the decisions of the 2nd Meeting of Transit Trade Committee of the TTCC (Astana, November 2009).

31. The ECO Coordination Group was convened on the sidelines of the UNECE's Working Party on customs Questions affecting Transport, WP.30 and the 51st Session of the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, AC.2 (Geneva, February, 2011). The ECO Coordination Group will also be held on the sidelines of the next WP.30 and ACV.2 sessions to be held in 2011.

32. The ECO/IRU/IDB Regional Conference was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 23-24 May 2011. It was attended by delegations from transport ministries, customs administration and national transport associations of eight Member States. The key recommendations of the Conference included: Pledges by Iran, Turkey and IRU to provide technical assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan to expedite the process of launching the TIR system; capacity building projects by IRU to improve the implementation of the TIR convention in the region; development of TIR Parking places in the region; active participation of the ECO Member States in the coordination group of the ECO on the sidelines of the WP30 and AC2 Meetings.

33. The Meeting expressed satisfaction on successful organization of a study tour of senior transport and customs officials of the Member States to Kapikule border to familiarize with successful experiences in modernizing border crossing points. The Meeting appreciated the Turkish TOBB for hosting this study tour.

34. The Meeting requested Afghanistan to expedite implementing the TIR Convention in line with the findings of the ECO/IRU workshop in Kabul (2010) and MoU signed between the Government of Afghanistan and IRU in 2010. It decided that a meeting be held in Heart in 2011 to operationalize the TIR Convention in Afghanistan on test basis with Iran. The Meeting noted, with satisfaction that Iran has already offered to accept two Afghan trucks with TIR Carnet issued by Afghan side. Iran was also appreciated for offering to train Afghan experts in handling the TIR issues in Iran. The Secretariat was asked to keep close contact with Afghanistan, Iran as well as IRU for expeditious implementation of these decisions.

35. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that the process of Pakistan's accession to TIR is getting to final stages, as the decree has already been submitted to the Government for approval. The Meeting decided that a TIR Capacity Building workshop would be convened in Pakistan utilizing the funds from the TTFA Fund. The Secretariat would suggest the dates of the Meeting in consultation with Pakistan and IRU.

36. The Meeting decided that a road transport corridor would be established on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul route. The Islamic Republic of Iran was requested to expedite providing a concept paper on this corridor. The Secretariat was also asked to keep contact with the enroute Member States to launch a caravan of loaded trucks along this corridor in 2011. The CPR may be approached to allocate the balance of the Trucks Caravan 2010 project budget for this corridor activity.

37. The Meeting welcomed the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to establish a road transport corridor between Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. The

Concept paper on this corridor would be prepared by the ECO Secretariat. The CPR may be approached to support this project as well.

38. Further to recommendations of the 21st RPC Meeting, an ECO/UNCTAD joint International Conference will be convened at Bandar Abbas in October 2011 on Development of Transit Trade and Logistics in the ECO region.

The TTCC

39. As the TTCC meeting was not held in 2010, the Meeting approved the Work Programme of the TTFA Fund for 2011 as follows:

- i) Partial coverage of the next regular and extraordinary meetings of the TTCC and its auxiliary bodies, namely Railway Committee, Road Committee, Insurance Committee, and Transit Trade Committee in Pakistan and Kyrgyz Republic.
- ii) The Meeting of the Senior Consular Officials of the Member States on facilitation of visa for drivers and persons involved in transit operations.
- iii) National Capacity Building Workshops in Pakistan regarding accession to, or implementation of, the TIR Convention, COTIF and OSZhD.
- iv) Joint ECO/IDB/UNECE/UNESCAP/OTIF/IRU/CIT/OSZhD Workshop on promotion of Common CIM/SMGS Consignment Note and preparation of the ECO rules and regulations for railway transportation.
- v) Continued payment of allowance to the project officer seconded for the Office of the ECO Council of Bureaux for the White Card Scheme (ECO-CB).

40. The Meeting requested the CPR to replenish the TTFA Fund if the available balance is not adequate to cover the Work Programme for 2011.

41. As recommended by the 21st RPC, the Meeting decided that the 5th Meeting of the TTCC and its auxiliary bodies would be held in 2011 in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, utilizing the TTFA Fund

42. Further to recommendations of the 21st RPC, the Meeting decided to merge the Agenda of the TTCC Meeting with that of the Ministerial Meeting, as a way to elevate the level of the TTCC. Therefore, the Ministerial Meetings will be held on annual basis.

43. The Meeting requested Uzbekistan to sign and ratify the TTFA. Turkmenistan was also requested to ratify the Agreement.

B. ECO/IDB Joint Project on TTFA

44. The Meeting noted that the international consultant of the Project is preparing an interim report on the programme on development of rail, road and maritime corridors in the ECO region with the assistance of the national consultants. This would also partially fulfil the Draft Programme of Action for submission to the 2nd HLEG Meeting on the subject, to be held by the end of October 2011, for final decisions. If no Member State is ready to host the Meeting, the Secretariat would organize it at the Headquarters utilizing funds from the ECO/IDB Project.

45. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to ensure that adequate information and full report is provided to the Member States regarding the structure of the reports and the basis for selection of corridors which have been used by the international consultant.

46. Further to recommendations of the 21st RPC, the Secretariat is in contact with UNCTAD to outsource the study component on the Custom Transit Trade related provisions of the TTFA.

47. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to keep the Member States abreast of the developments in implementing the customs component of the Project with the assistance of UNCTAD, as well as on formulation of the railway related ECO rules and regulations.

48. The Meeting requested the Member States to expedite nominating the remaining national focal points and national consultants, as well as conveying their country reports. Afghanistan may nominate one or two consultants to cover all the project components.

Agenda Item No. 8

Review of the progress in the field of railway

A. Container and Passenger Train on Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty

49. The Meeting requested the Member States to expedite providing their comments and views on the interim report of the ECO International Consultant on Bandar Abbas-Almaty and Istanbul-Almaty Routes, which has been prepared and circulated by the Secretariat under the aegis of the feasibility study approved by the CPR.

50. The Meeting hoped that the Demonstration Run of the Container Train on Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route would be launched by in October 2011 on the sidelines of the ECO\UNCACT Conference on Transit and Logistics in Bandar Abbas. The Secretariat was asked to prepare a detailed action plan for operationalization of these container trains based on the report of the Consultant.

51. The Meeting urged the enroute countries who have not yet nominated their focal points and national consultants for the Feasibility Study to do so at the earliest.

B. The ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Route

52. The Meeting expressed satisfaction on the successful launch of the regular operation of the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Container Train since August 2010 and urged the enroute Member States to actualize the full service capacity of this strategic train and to consider the TOBB initiative for this purpose.

C. Construction of Railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran

53. The Meeting expressed satisfaction on progress made in implementation of the project for construction of railway on Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route, and hoped that the Project would be inaugurated by the end of 2011. The next meeting of the Trilateral Coordination Committee of the enroute countries would be held in September 2011, hosted by Iran.

D. Other regional rail projects

54. The Meeting expressed satisfaction on measures taken to expedite the feasibility study for connecting China to Europe through Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The Meeting appreciated Iran for granting US\$1 million to conduct the feasibility study in the territory of Tajikistan, and called on all parties to consider offering financial support to the study in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, if China was not ready to do so, as proposed during the 1st Meeting of the Ministers of the enroute countries (Dushanbe 2010). Likewise, if China was not ready to hold the next meeting of the enroute countries, the ECO Member States may consider hosting the Meeting.

55. The Meeting called on the Member States who have ongoing railway construction projects in Afghanistan to expedite construction work; and further requested the Member States

to help Afghanistan in implementing the railway projects specified in the feasibility study released by ADB in 2010 on the railway construction on Herat-Mazar-e-Sharif route to Tajikistan.

56. The Meeting stressed on the need to expeditious implementation of the Railway Project on Baku-Kars and Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) Route, and construction of new Baku International Trade Seaport. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to initiate contact with the enroute Member States to expedite this project. Iran stated that 50 percent progress has been achieved in Qazvin-Rasht segment. The feasibility study on Rasht-Astara (Iran) has also been completed. A consortium of the enroute countries has been considered for mobilizing the required funds. The Meeting asked the Secretariat to initiate contacts with the enroute countries for more effective coordination.

57. As recommended by the 21st RPC, the Meeting decided on holding a donors' conference in 2011 regarding the ECO priority infrastructure projects. The dates, venue and funding arrangements of the conference will be suggested by the Secretariat. Other railway and road projects enlisted in the 11th Summit Declaration. Requests for co-funding may also be forwarded for inclusion in the agenda of the donor's conference in 2011.

Agenda item No. 9

Review of the progress in the field of road transport

A. The ECO/IRU Demonstration Truck Caravan 2010

58. The Representative of the ECO Secretariat briefed the Meeting on the results of the ECO/IRU Silk Road Truck Caravan in September-October 2010. The Caravan started its journey on 22nd September 2010 from Tehran and after passing through seven countries (Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey), it reached Istanbul on 24 October 2010 after covering a distance of about 11430 km. Drivers and trucks of eight Member States, and a team of experts from the ECO and IRU participated in the Caravan. Welcome ceremonies and press conferences were organized upon arrival of the Caravan in the capital/major city of each country. The draft report of the caravan was circulated among the Member States.

59. The Meeting expressed profound satisfaction on the successful launch of the Caravan. It requested the Member States to expedite providing their comments and views on the draft report of the Caravan circulated by the Secretariat.

B. Ways for monitoring regular run of trucks and promotion of the TIR Convention in the region

60. The Meeting endorsed the joint project of ECO and IRU for "ECO Monitored Regular Run of Trucks" in 2011. The findings of the project would be circulated to the Member States for comments and views.

C. Discussion on the ECO Common Visa for Drivers

61. The Meeting expressed satisfaction on the formulation, by the Islamic Republic of Iran, of the ECO Common Visa Sticker for Drivers and other persons involved in transit transport, together with its associated rules and procedures, and hoped that the Sticker and the procedure would be finalized by the Senior Consul Officials Meeting scheduled in 2011, utilizing the TTFA Fund. The Meeting would be held in September/October 2011.

Agenda Item No. 10

Ways for expediting the establishment of the ECOLPAF

62. The Meeting requested Iran to expedite conveying the dates and details of hospitality for the next preparatory meeting of ECOLPAF to finalize the process of establishment and to prepare the documents for submission to the next COM.

Agenda Item No. 11

Discussion on ways to enhance maritime cooperation

63. The Meeting noted that the decisions of the 4th HRMO Meeting, the Secretariat is in contact with the relevant international organizations to secure funds for a study in two selected sea ports in ECO transit countries for providing transit facilities to other Member States. The Meeting welcomed the proposal of Turkmenistan to include Turkmenbashi International Seaport in this study.

64. The delegation of Iran mentioned that the work for operationalizing the ECO Zone in Chabahar Economic Area is in progress and will be reported to a meeting of the Ambassadors of the ECO Member States in Tehran. The Land locked Member States were requested to participate in this meeting from their capitals.

65. The Meeting decided to put the maritime issues in the permanent agenda of the Ministerial Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 12

Discussion on ways for enhancing regional cooperation in the field of telecommunications and postal services

A. Postal Activities

66. The Meeting noted, with satisfaction, the efforts made by ECO to establish online money order system between the ECO Member States through Postal Services and appreciated commitment shown by Azerbaijan, Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkey to establish and inaugurate the system within four months, and called on other Member States to consider joining the system in due course.

67. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that the Heads of ECO Member States participating in the 10th (Tehran, 2009) and 11th (Istanbul, 2010) ECO Summits had affixed their signatures on the ECO Stamps prepared respectively by the Iranian and Turkish postal authorities, and hoped that similar ECO common stamps would be issued on other important ECO occasions.

68. The Meeting reiterated the need for further enhancing regional cooperation in the field of post and telecommunications. Kazakhstan was requested to expedite providing the dates and details of hospitality for 6th Meeting of the ECO Postal Authorities in 2011.

B. Telecommunications

69. Iran was requested to expedite providing the dates and details of hospitality of the 14th Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunication Authorities in 2011.

Agenda Item No. 13

Discussion on ways to enhance cooperation in the field of civil aviation

70. The Meeting requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with their proposals to improve Civil Aviation Cooperation in the region, and to consider hosting the next meeting of the heads of Civil Aviation.

71. The Meeting urged the Member States, except Iran and Pakistan, to consider granting 50% discount in airfare to ECO Secretariat staff and participants in ECO events.

Agenda Item No. 14

Preparation of the Ashgabat Declaration

72. Under this item, the Meeting adopted the draft Ashgabat Declaration. A copy of the Declaration is attached as Annex-VII.

Agenda Item No. 15

Any other business

73. Under this Agenda item, no other business was raised by the participating delegations.

Agenda Item No. 16

Date and venue of the next Meeting

74. The Meeting noted, with satisfaction, that the Kyrgyz Republic has offered to host the 9th Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communication in 2012. The exact date and venue of the Meeting will be specified in consultation with the Kyrgyz Republic.

Agenda Item No. 17

Adoption of the Report

75. Under this item, the Meeting adopted the Report of the 8th Meeting of the Ministers for Transport and Communications of the ECO Member States prepared by the Drafting Committee.

Agenda Item No. 18

Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting

76. Under this item, the Heads of delegation expressed their profound gratitude to the Government and the people of the Turkmenistan, particularly, His Excellency Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan and his team for extending traditional warm hospitality to the delegates and their relentless efforts to ensure the success of this important meeting. They also thanked the ECO Secretariat for their valuable assistance and contributions towards the success of this meeting.

77. The Chairman announced the closing of the Meeting

**The 8th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport and Communications of the ECO
Member States**

**Agenda of the Senior Official's Meeting (SOM)
(Ashgabat, 28 June 2011)**

- 1. Inauguration of the Meeting.**
- 2. Election of the Chairman.**
- 3. Adoption of the Agenda.**
- 4. Appointment of the Drafting Committee.**
- 5. Statement of Ministers/Heads of Delegation**
- 6. Review of the status of implementation of decisions of the previous Ministerial Meetings.**
- 7. Review of the implementation of the TTFA.**
 - The recent meetings of TTCC and its auxiliary bodies
 - ECO/IDB Joint Project on TTFA
- 8. Review of the progress in the field of railway:**
 - Container and Passenger Train on Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty
 - The ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Islamabad-Route
 - Construction of Railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran
 - Other regional rail projects
- 9. Review of the progress in the field of road transport:**
 - The ECO/IRU Demonstration Truck Caravan 2010
 - Ways for monitoring regular run of trucks and promotion of the TIR Convention in the region
 - Discussion on the ECO Common Visa for Drivers.
- 10. Ways for expediting the establishment of the ECOLPAF.**
- 11. Discussion on ways to enhance maritime cooperation**
- 12. Discussion on ways for enhancing regional cooperation in the field of telecommunications and postal services.**
- 13. Discussion on ways to enhance cooperation in the field of civil aviation.**
- 14. Preparation of the Ashgabat Declaration.**
- 15. Any other business.**
- 16. Date and venue of the next meeting.**
- 17. Adoption of the Report.**
- 18. Vote of thanks and closing of the meeting.**

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