

**Statement of His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Yahya Maroofi,
ECO Secretary General
for the 8th Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications
of the ECO Member States
(Ashgabat, 29 June 2011)**

**Your Excellency,
Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan,
Honourable Ministers, Heads of Delegations
Distinguished Parliamentarians,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great privilege for me to extend a warm welcome to all of you in this 8th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications. I wish to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the Honorable President of Turkmenistan, and the Government of Turkmenistan, in particular, His Excellency Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan, for the warm welcome and traditional hospitality accorded to us. I thank the Honorable Ministers and delegates of the ECO Member States for their participation.

I also appreciate our friends from the IDB and IRU for attending today's meeting.

I'm sure the distinguished delegates, in the white-marble Ashgabat with its unusual beauty in the month of June, make a perfect setting for a very fruitful meeting and productive deliberations.

Excellencies,

Transport and communications sector is one of the ECO's highest priorities. We have made tangible progress since 7th Ministerial Meeting in Antalya in 2008. Several major projects of regional and international significance have been completed or initiated during these two and half years.

The ECO Container Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Route has started its regular monthly operation since August 2010. Further to decisions of the leaders of the enroute Member States, ambitious investment programmes are being formulated to increase the speed of this train. The operation of the train is monitored by high level working groups of the enroute railway and customs officials. The business communities of the enroute member states are jointly working on commercializing the freight services of this train.

In 2010 the Secretariat commissioned a feasibility study on revitalizing the ECO Container Trains on Istanbul-Almaty route. The study also examined the feasibility of a

container freight service on Almaty-Bandar Abbas Route. I am happy to inform you that the Demonstration Run of this Train has been scheduled for 19 October 2011 in Bandar Abbas on the sidelines of the ECO/UNCTAD international conference on transit transport.

Significant progress has been achieved in the construction of the railway on Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route, which is being monitored by a Trilateral Coordination Committee under the aegis of the ECO. The second meeting of the TCC which was held last week in this beautiful city of Ashgabat took concrete measures to complete the Project by the end of December 2011.

Pursuant to decisions of the 7th Transport Ministerial Meeting and the 10th ECO Summit (Tehran, 2009) the Secretariat intensified contacts with the enroute countries to expedite the construction of railway on Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran route. The pre-feasibility study for Afghanistan has already been completed with support of ADB. The feasibility study in Tajikistan has started with a US\$1 million grant by Iran. Currently finding sources are being expected to start the study in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Excellencies,

During September-October 2010, the ECO Silk Road Demonstration Truck Caravan made 11,400 km demonstration journey across the region. The Caravan was composed of trucks from eight Member States, accompanied by a team of experts from ECO and IRU. It crossed seven ECO member states. This historical project made headway in enhancing regional cooperation in road transport. Inspired by the successful launch of the Demonstration Truck Caravan, the leaders of ECO countries in their 11th Summit in Istanbul instructed the Secretariat to initiate the Regular Monitored Run of Trucks in 2011. Accordingly, we formulated, in partnership with IRU, a monitoring project involving 1,000 real commercial journeys during 6 months. It is a pleasure that the Project will be inaugurated today by the honorable ministers.

Honorable Ministers,

The ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) is the cornerstone of regional cooperation for development of transit transport in the region. Since our meeting in 2007, the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) as the coordinating body of the TTFA, together with its auxiliary technical committees have made regular meetings. The TTFA Fund has been established to support activities approved by the TTCC and its technical Committees. A Joint ECO/IDB Project has been initiated with generous grant received from IDB to prepare a regional programme for implementation of the TTFA.

The ECO White Card for Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability Insurance has been adopted. The common visa Sticker for drivers and its procedures are being finalized. The ECO road and railway transit route maps have been published. The programme on development of transit along the ECO rail and road corridors is under way. Several activities have been implemented or are ongoing to enhance the implementation of

important international conventions enlisted in the TTFA, notably the TIR Convention and COTIF.

It is a pleasure that the reactivation of the TIR Convention in Afghanistan is in its final stages, thanks to close cooperation between the ECO, IRU and the Government of Afghanistan. During the ECO\IRU Conference on TIR Convention held in Istanbul concrete measures were agreed for capacity building of the relevant institutions in Afghanistan to issue and handle TIR Carnets. An ECO\IRU meeting will be held soon in Herat to plan for test run of Afghan trucks under the TIR system

The ECO is also in close contact with IRU and the Government of Pakistan to expedite the process of Pakistan's accession to the TIR Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The statute of the ECO Logistic Provider Associations Federation (ECOLPAF) has been finalized and the Federation will be established in 2011, to enhance public-private partnerships in the development of transport in the ECO region.

The ECO online money order system through Postal Services has also been developed. To this effect, Azerbaijan, Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkey have committed to inaugurate the system within the period of four months. Other member states are considering to join the system in due course.

Excellencies,

Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that we are fully committed to produce results oriented outcomes, especially in civil aviation and communications where progress has been slow of recent, due to some constraints and bottlenecks. To this end, we fully realize that there is ample potential for the prospective growth in these areas. As you may have acknowledged from my today's brief overview of latest developments in the ECO transport sector, much has already been achieved in this field. More is yet to come to fruition, in order to facilitate sustainable economic growth in the region.

At the end, I once again thank the Government of Turkmenistan for arranging this meeting in Ashgabat and I wish you all successful deliberations and a pleasant stay in this beautiful city.

Thank you, Sir.