

**THE 8<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS  
OF THE ECO MEMBER STATES**  
(Ashgabat, 28-29 June, 2011)

**ASHGABAT DECLARATION**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Transport and Communications of the ECO Member States was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on June 29, 2011. The Meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan, and attended by delegations of all ECO Member states, therefore full quorum was achieved. A delegation from the ECO Secretariat, as well as delegations of IDB and IRU also attended the Meeting.

The Ministers/Heads of Delegation during their meeting in Ashgabat discussed important regional issues and reviewed the performance of the ECO and progress made on the programmes and projects in the field of transport and communications since the previous Ministerial Meeting:

**Reaffirming** the strong determination of ECO Member States to accelerate economic and social progress, development and stability in the region,

**Recognizing** the importance of ECO's initiatives, efforts and projects in the fields of transport and communications for the mutual benefit of the Member States, and underlining the significance of infrastructure development through effective implementation of road, railway and communication projects;

**Reiterating** their strong commitments and resolve to achieve the goals and objectives of the ECO in the field of transportation and communications.

- I. Reaffirmed the importance of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) for the economic development and welfare of the ECO Region, and called on effective implementation of the TTFA.
- II. Stressed on early preparation of the new Programme of Action for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications and instructed to discuss this programme in the 2<sup>nd</sup> HLEG Meeting in 2011 on development of rail, road and maritime corridors in the ECO region under the Joint ECO/IDB Project on TTFA.
- III. Acknowledged the realization of the ECO/IRU Silk Road Truck Caravan in September-October 2010 as a major demonstration project in line with the provisions of the TTFA.
- IV. Welcomed the joint project of ECO and IRU for "ECO Monitored Regular Run of Trucks" in 2011.
- V. Expressed satisfaction on the formulation 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 for 2011.
- VI. Stressed on the importance of expeditious implementation of the TIR Convention in Afghanistan, 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; and decided that

- a meeting be held in Herat in 2011 to operationalize the TIR Convention in Afghanistan on test basis with Iran.
- VII. Hoped that the process of Pakistan's accession to TIR Convention would be completed within 2011 to enhance transit transport between Pakistan and other ECO member states.
  - VIII. Called on the member states to participate actively in the meetings of the UNECE's Working Party on customs Questions affecting Transport, WP.30 and the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, AC.2, to highlight the problems and suggestion of ECO Member States.
  - IX. Welcomed the recommendations of the ECO/IRU/IDB Regional Conference (Istanbul, 2011) with regard to ways and means for enhancement of the implementation of the TIR Convention in the ECO Region.
  - X. Hoped that the proposal to establish a road transport corridor on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul route would be actualized at an early date, and welcomed the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to establish a road transport corridor between Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.
  - XI. Appreciated 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.
  - XII. Highlighted the need for setting up regular operation of the ECO Container Trains on Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty, and hoped that the Demonstration Run of the Bandar Abbas- Almaty Route would be launched in October 2011 on the sidelines of the ECO\UNCTAD Conference in Bandar Abbas on Transit and Logistics, based on the consideration of the report of the ECO Consultant and comments and views of the enroute Member States.
  - XIII. Expressed satisfaction on progress made in implementation of the project for construction of railway on Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route, and stressed that the Project would be inaugurated by the end of 2011.
  - XIV. Stressed on the importance and the need to complete the Railway Projects on Baku-Kars and Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan), and construction of new Baku International Trade Seaport.
  - XV. Expressed satisfaction on measures taken to expedite the feasibility study for connecting China to Europe through Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran, 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; and 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 in 2010.
  - XVI. Called on early formulation of the ECO rules and regulations for goods and passengers traffic and for use of wagons, as envisaged in the TTFA, and invited the relevant

international organizations, namely OTIF, CIT and OSJD to help ECO in this regard under the aegis of the ECO/IDB Joint Project on TTFA.

- XVII. Expressed satisfaction on the publication of the ECO Road and Railway Transit Routes Maps by the ECO Secretariat and appreciated the Islamic Development Bank for providing financial assistance to this important activity; and decided that the published ECO Railway and Road Transit Routes Map be utilized as parts of Annex I of the TTFA.
- XVIII. Expressed satisfaction on progress regarding finalization of the statute of the ECO Logistic Provider Associations Federation (ECOLPAF) and hoped that the Federation would be established in 2011 to enhance public-private partnership in development of transport in the ECO region.
- XIX. 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.
- XX. Noted with satisfaction that the Heads of ECO Member States participating in the 10th (Tehran, 2009) and 11<sup>th</sup> (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.
- XXI. Reiterated the need for further enhancing regional cooperation in the field of post and telecommunications, and hoped that the 6th Meeting of the ECO Postal Authorities (Kazakhstan, 2011) and 14th Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunication Authorities (Tehran, 2011) would agree on concrete projects in these important fields.
- XXII. Noted that the progress in regional cooperation in the field of civil aviation is slow, and called on the Member States to participate actively in the 2nd Meeting of the ECO Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines scheduled for 2011.
- XXIII. Expressed its satisfaction on the expansion of the ECO's external relations in the field of transport and communications, and welcomed the recent MoUs signed between the ECO and IDB, UNECE, UNESCAP, CIT, and TRACECA.

The participating Ministers/Heads of Delegation expressed their gratitude and profound appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan, particularly Mr. Serdar Berkeliyev, Minister of Motor Transport of Turkmenistan for the warm welcome and excellent hospitality extended to the participants of the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Transport and Communications. The Meeting also thanked the ECO Secretary General and his staff for their efforts in steering the deliberations to a successful conclusion.

The Meeting appreciated the Kyrgyz Republic for offering to host the 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting in 2012.

---