

## The 7th Ministerial Meeting on Transport & Communications

# Report

(Antalya-Turkey, 15-17 April, 2008)

The 7<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications was held in Antalya (the Republic of Turkey) on April 15-17, 2008. The meeting was attended by the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by Secretary General Khurshid Anwar, delegation of the People's Republic of China and the representatives of international/regional organizations and financial institutions including IDB, IRU, UNCTAD, ECO-CCI, ECO-TDB, and ECOLPAF also attended the meeting. The list of the participants is placed at Annex-I.

### **Agenda Item No. 1**

#### **Inauguration of the Meeting.**

1. His Excellency Mr. Binali YILDIRIM, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Turkey inaugurated the meeting. A copy of his inaugural statement is attached as annex-II.
2. His Excellency Mr. Khurshid Anwar, the ECO Secretary General made a brief inaugural statement. A copy of his statement is attached as annex-III.

### **Agenda Item No. 2**

#### **Election of the Chairman.**

3. As per ECO Rules of Procedures, His Excellency Mr. Binali YILDIRIM, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Turkey, was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Meeting.

### **Agenda Item No. 3**

#### **Adoption of the Agenda.**

4. The draft Agenda proposed by the Secretariat was unanimously adopted. A Copy of the adopted Agenda is attached as Annex-IV.

### **Agenda Item No.4**

#### **Appointment of the Drafting Committee.**

5. As per ECO's practice, the Senior Officials' Meeting was assigned as Drafting Committee for the Ministerial Meeting.

### **Agenda Item No. 5**

#### **Statement by the Ministers/Heads of Delegations:**

6. Under this agenda item, the Ministers/Heads of delegations of the member states delivered statements on the latest developments in the Transport and Communications sector of their respective countries. They also requested their views on enhancing regional cooperation within the ECO framework. In addition, the Head of the delegation of the People's Republic of China made a statement. A copy each of the statements of the Ministers/Heads of Delegations is attached as Annex-V.

#### **Agenda Item No. 6**

##### Review of the implementation of decisions of the previous Ministerial Meetings:

7. The Representative of the ECO Secretariat made a presentation on the existing status of the implementation of decisions/recommendations of the previous ECO Ministerial Meetings on Transport and Communications. A copy of his presentation is attached as Annex-VI.

8. In order to strengthen institutional capacity to follow up the decisions of the ministerial meetings and the ECO's increasing activities and programmes in the field of transport and communications, the meeting encouraged establishment of the ECO units in the ministries of transport and communications of the member states. These units should be manned by qualified staff and provided with appropriate equipment. The Secretariat would attempt to extend technical assistance. The member states would convey to the Secretariat the contact details of the units at the earliest possible.

9. The Meeting welcomed the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC and the CPR Meetings on seconding officers to the Directorate of Transport and Communications at the Secretariat. The member states would nominate, at the earliest possible, qualified officers as candidates.

#### **Agenda Item No.7**

##### Implementation/evaluation of the Program of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007):

#### **a. Review of progress on the implementation of the Program of Action**

10. The representative of the Secretariat briefed the meeting on the latest status of implementation of the Program of Action for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications. He noted that most of the projects envisaged in the program had been implemented.

11. The meeting requested the member states to send their updated country reports on implementation of the Program of Action (1998-2007) to the Secretariat before the end of July 2008. The Country Reports should provide project-wise details including information on each project and its benefits at the regional level, with relevant conclusions/ recommendations to be considered for preparing a new program of action.

#### **b. Consideration of the ways to extend/revise the Program**

12. The Ministers reiterated the decision of their 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting to convene a High Level Expert Group Meeting to evaluate the status of implementation of the projects envisaged in the Program of Action and prepare a new program of action including regional and national projects of regional importance.

13. The Meeting welcomed the decision of the 17<sup>th</sup> COM to extend the Programme of Action until preparation of the new one. The Meeting stressed that the new programme, inter alia, should pay special attention to implementation of the TTFA.

14. The Meeting decided that the Secretariat develop a study for preparation of the next phase of the program of action. The study would involve national and international consultants and the representatives of the donor/funding institutions/countries. The meeting recommended utilization of the ECO Feasibility Study Fund as well as other available sources for that purpose. The Secretariat was asked to prepare, under the said Study, or other frameworks, a clear methodology for preparation and prioritization of the projects of the new Programme.

15. The meeting requested member states to consider hosting the HLEG meeting in 2008. Countries willing to host the meeting would inform the Secretariat within two months. If no countries offered to host it, the Secretariat would consider serving it from the funds of the above mentioned study and host in the Secretariat. The Member States were also requested to actively participate in it. The HLEG Meeting would also consider ways and means to involve funding/donor institutions/countries in implementing projects to be envisaged in the new Programme of Action (2009-2015). In that connection, HLEG would consider organizing consecutive donor conferences for considering projects on a well defined time frame.

16. The meeting urged all Member States to actively participate in the preparation of the new ECO Program of Action for Transport and Communications which would cover the period 2009-2015, coinciding with ECO vision 2015.

17. In addition to seeking cooperation of international/regional organizations/institutions and donor countries, a mechanism should be developed to draw maximum benefit from technical expertise, and financial capacity of the member states in implementing the projects to be envisaged in the new Program of Action. In this connection banks, funding institutions and other relevant bodies of the member states, which had the capacity to contribute to concerned projects might be invited to the donor conferences.

18. The new program of action would provide an opportunity to identify high impact priority areas and give timelines, benchmarks, performance indicators and evaluation mechanism for the programme.

19. The projects to be included in the next phase of the program would have regional/international importance.

20. The representative of IDB, while reiterating the willingness of IDB to support the new programme, stated that the new projects should be defined with adequate technical and financial justification. It was also stated that, taking into account the number and magnitude of the projects, other funding institutions such as the World Bank and ADB, under the aegis of CAREC or other arrangements, should also be involved in the Programme. The IDB representative suggested that the possibility of having bilateral or multilateral funding arrangements with the participation of investment Funds that existed within or outside the region be explored, particularly in line with the experience of IDB for development of a container terminal in Djibouti using this mechanism.

21. The representative of UNCTAD briefed the meeting on the experience of UNCTAD with similar programmes in other regions. Mentioning UNESCAP Decade Programme for development of transport, UNCTAD representative suggested that sharing of experience about that programme would be beneficial for effective planning for the new programme.

22. The member states would introduce their relevant institutions as focal points for the implementation of the program of action and would nominate their representatives to HLEG Meeting within two months. The HLEG would also finalize a project profile format as a pattern for preparation of similar profiles by the member states.

23. The member states were requested to provide the Secretariat with their project proposals as well as views and comments, if any, on the methodology for selection of the projects at national and regional levels.

24. The new program of action should also envisage activities relating to priority areas of regional cooperation in the field of transport and communications.

25. The Meeting requested relevant international organizations and donor institutions including UNESCAP, UNCTAD, IDB, ECO-TDB, WB, ADB to join ECO endeavors in preparation and implementation of the new program of action.

#### **Agenda Item No.8**

##### Implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA)

###### **a. Consideration of decisions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> TTCC Meeting.**

26. The meeting reviewed the decisions made by the TTCC and endorsed the reports of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Meetings of the Transit Transport Coordination Council (Baku, September 2006 and September 2007) and its auxiliary bodies.

27. The meeting, highlighting the importance of the TTFA, requested Uzbekistan to sign and ratify and Turkmenistan to ratify the TTFA at the earliest. The Turkish delegation stated that the Agreement had already been adopted by the Parliament and the instrument of ratification would be sent to the Secretariat shortly.

28. In line with the decisions of the TTCC Meetings, the Meeting requested the Member States to expedite filling in and returning to the Secretariat the questionnaires on railway, road, and marine transport prepared by the Secretariat.

29. The meeting appreciated the technical assistance of the Iranian Meteorological Organization in carrying out the preliminary work for establishment of the GIS system to manage the above information effectively. The transport database and Geographical Information System (GIS) of ECO Secretariat should be further developed and put on the ECO website for the easy access of the Member States. In that connection, the Secretariat might utilize the ECO Feasibility Study Fund and other possible resources to fulfill this important decision.

30. The meeting took note of the legend of the ECO Roads Network Map as well as the legends for the ECO rail and road transit routes map. It requested the Member States to expedite providing the ECO Secretariat with color national road

network maps and the color maps of their road and rail transit routes. The member states would also nominate their focal points for preparation of the Transit Routes Maps and provide the Secretariat with their contact information within two months.

31. The Meeting welcomed the decision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the TTCC regarding rotation of chairmanship and hosting of the meetings of the TTCC and its auxiliary bodies and requested the concerned member states to provide the Secretariat with the exact dates and venue of the meetings to be held in their respective countries. The Meeting also requested the contracting member states to actively participate in Meetings of the TTCC and its auxiliary bodies.

32. The meeting welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to host the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Transit Trade Committee to be held in 2008 and the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the TTCC in 2008 in Tehran. The meeting also urged the member states to consider hosting the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the legal committee.

**b. Consideration of decisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Railway Committee**

33. The Meeting reviewed the decisions of the First Meeting of the Railway Committee held in March 14-15, 2007 in Ankara and welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Railway Committee in 2008.

**c. Consideration of decisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Insurance Committee**

34. The Meeting endorsed the report of the First Meeting of the Insurance Sub-Committee of the TTCC held on 29-30 May 2007 in Tehran.

35. The Meeting welcomed preparation of the draft ECO Interim Motor Vehicle Third Party Liability Insurance Scheme (White Card Scheme) and expressed satisfaction at the hard work done by the Insurance Committee and the Secretariat, and expressed the hope that the Scheme would be approved by the Extraordinary Meeting of the TTCC. The Meeting also decided that the Council of Bureaux would convene its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in the year 2008 after adoption of the White Card Scheme by the Extraordinary Meeting of the TTCC.

36. The meeting welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Insurance Committee and Extraordinary Meeting of the TTCC for finalization and adoption of the White Card Scheme on July 20-21, 2008 in Tehran. The Member States should assign authorized representatives to these meetings enabling them to approve the Scheme.

37. The Meeting requested Kazakhstan to reconfirm hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Insurance Committee of the TTCC.

38. The Member States were requested to provide the Secretariat with their views, if any, on the draft Scheme, not later than 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

**d. Consideration of decisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Road Committee**

39. The meeting emphasized that the TTCC should take necessary measures ensuring that barriers to issuance of multiple entry and transit visas for one year,

limitations and quotas of Road transport permits, and unofficial payments and charges were eliminated according to TTFA provisions.

40. The meeting requested the member states to nominate their respective authorized bodies for issuance of introductory letters for drivers/persons entitled to get visas within the framework of TTFA in three months. The Member states were also requested to nominate their focal point for coordination of issues pertaining to road transport permit not later than three months.

**e. The TTFA Fund**

41. The Meeting welcomed the Decision of TTCC and RPC to establish the ECO Fund for implementation of the TTFA. The Meeting also endorsed the recommendation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> TTCC Meeting (Baku, September 2007) for allocation of, at least, US \$150,000 from the ECO Feasibility Fund to the TTFA Fund to enable it to start functioning. In line with decisions of the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of RPC, the meeting also appreciated the decision of the CPR to transfer US \$ 50,000 from the Feasibility Study Fund to the TTFA Fund and requested that an additional amount of US\$ 100,000 be transferred to the TTFA Fund on the request of the Secretariat.

42. The Meeting, highlighting the significance of TTFA and the urgent need for its implementation, encouraged the member states to make voluntary contributions to the ECO Fund for Implementation of the TTFA. The member states were requested to consider allocation of funds for that purpose in their national budget for the next year.

**f. Establishment of national committees.**

43. The Meeting supported the decision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the TTCC to establish National Inter-Ministerial Committees for implementation of the TTFA at national level. These Committees might be composed of representatives of relevant ministries and institutions as well as the private sector.

44. The Meeting took note of the presentation by the representative of UNCTAD on the positive coordinating role that the National Transit Transport Facilitation Committees (NTTFCs) played in the trade, transport and transit areas. He cited numerous examples of the establishment of such national committees, including those in Pakistan and Afghanistan, both ECO members. The Meeting requested UNCTAD to assist, upon request, those member states who had not yet established such mechanisms. A copy of the UNCTAD representative's presentation is attached as Annex VII.

**g. The Technical Assistance Project.**

45. The meeting appreciated the Secretariat for drawing up and submitting the Technical Assistance (TA) proposal to IDB for preparation of a regional program on implementation of the TTFA, which was approved by the 2<sup>nd</sup> TTCC meeting. The Meeting appreciated the generous contribution of IDB to ECO projects, particularly its approval of a technical assistance project for preparation of the regional program in 2008. The meeting requested ECO Secretariat and IDB to finalize necessary measures for signing the project document on the sidelines of the 10<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit to be held in 2008 in Islamabad.

46. Taking into consideration the importance of transit trade in the ECO region, the Meeting requested the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to positively consider providing ECO with a Technical Assistance Project on Customs/Transit Trade in the year 2009. The draft technical assistance project document had already been sent by the Secretariat to IDB.

### **Agenda Item No.9**

#### **Regional cooperation in the field of railway transport**

##### **a. Missing links in the ECO railway network.**

47. The Meeting supported the decisions of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities (Astana 12-14 June, 2008), to invite IDB, Asian Development Bank, and other donors to consider financing projects to make up the railway missing links in the region i.e. construction of railway around Van Lake in Turkey, rehabilitation of Quetta-Taftan railway in Pakistan and enhancement of the capacity of Sarakhs Station in Iran.

48. The Meeting highlighted the importance of making up the missing link around Van Lake in Turkey which would lead to an uninterrupted international railway route from Eastern China to Western Europe. This important project would also constitute an important part of the Islamabad-Istanbul Railway route to be activated soon.

49. The meeting highlighted the significance of the Quetta-Taftan Railway as an important segment of the southern route of the Trans Asian Railway Network and as a vital railway providing reliable link between South and South-East Asia to Europe through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. It requested Pakistan to expedite implementing that project and approach, through national channels, the IDB and ECO-TDB for financial assistance.

50. The Meeting stressed the need to enhance capacity of the Sarakhs Station and requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to expedite implementing that project and sending official application through national channels to IDB and ECO-TDB for financial contribution. Development of capacity in Sarakhs Station would facilitate railway transportation in the north-south and East–West Corridors and would optimize the capacity of Almaty-Istanbul main line of the Trans-Asian Railway Network.

51. Within that context, the delegation of Afghanistan emphasized the need for linking Afghanistan to the regional/international railway network projects in the ECO region.

52. Contacts between the concerned member states and IDB regarding the above-mentioned projects would be made in close coordination with the ECO Secretariat. The latter would actively follow up issues pertaining to these projects.

53. The delegations of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey stated that official requests for the said projects to IDB were being considered at the appropriate levels. The representatives of IDB and ECO-TDB renewed the interest of their respective institutions

in the projects. It was decided that a donors' conference be organized in September 2008 in the ECO Secretariat with the participation of IDB, ECO-TDB, other financial institutions and countries as well as the three member states involved. The proposed meeting would also consider the Islamabad- Tehran-Istanbul demonstration train.

**b. The ECO Container and Passenger Trains in Almaty-Istanbul Route.**

54. The Meeting supported the decisions of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities (Astana- 13-14 June 2007) and welcomed the finalization of the Transit Timetable of the ECO Container Train on the above route. The Meeting also called for settling the issue of tariffs. It emphasized on the timely organization of the High Level Experts Group of five countries en-route for finalizing the pending issues relating to the trains project.

55. It agreed that the HLEG meeting would consider the extension of Istanbul-Tehran passenger train to Turkmenistan on phase-by-phase-basis.

56. The meeting requested the member states enroute the train to consider hosting the HLEG Meeting.

57. The Meeting supported the initiatives of the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC on utilization of the Feasibility Study Fund for implementation of a regional survey on operationalization of ECO container and passenger trains on Almaty-Istanbul route. The study would be conducted with the participation of national consultants of the concerned Member States as well as competent international consultants. The meeting also agreed to the suggestion made by the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting to launch a fact-finding mission composed of Director of Transport and Communications of the ECO Secretariat and Secretary General of ECO-CCI to find out/solve the existing problems hampering smooth running of ECO Container and Passenger Trains. This mission might also include a consultant on the railway corridor management issues.

58. The Meeting welcomed the participation of the delegation of the People's Republic of China in the ECO's transport related meetings and hoped that this would establish a firm basis for cooperation between ECO and China in the field of transport and Communications. The meeting also requested active involvement of China in the Almaty-Istanbul train projects and revitalization of the China-Middle East- Europe Corridor.

59. The meeting requested the Secretariat to revise the plan of Action for revitalization of China-Middle East-Europe Corridor, and include it in the agenda of the HLEG Meeting on Almaty Istanbul Trains as well as the Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities.

60. The concerned authorities of Uzbekistan were requested to provide the Secretariat with a new timetable of the container train in their territory taking into account the new timetables of Turkey, Iran, and Turkmenistan. The 5 en-route countries were requested to provide the Secretariat with railway tariffs and wagon use rates for Almaty-Istanbul container train within the format circulated by the Secretariat.

**c. Launching an ECO Demonstration Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Route**



61. The meeting highlighted the importance of the Islamabad-Istanbul railway route as the southern corridor of the Trans Asian Railway Network and called for early revitalization of this route. It supported the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting to launch a demonstration train from Islamabad to Istanbul after completion of necessary constructions. The technicalities of this issue would be discussed in a High Level Experts Group Meeting to be established with the participation of the ECO Secretariat, relevant regional/international donors/organizations as well as representatives of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

#### **Agenda Item No.10**

##### Joint ECO/IDB/UNCTAD Project on Multimodal Transport:

62. The Meeting took note of the accomplishment of the Second Phase of “the Joint ECO/IDB/UNCTAD Project on Multimodal Transport in ECO region” and welcomed the agreement between ECO and IDB to finalize the next phase of the project by the end of the year 2008 by organizing one national workshop on Multi-modal transport in each ECO member country.

63. The meeting requested member states to extend necessary assistance to the ECO Secretariat and facilitate organizing those workshops. The member states who had not yet determined their focal point as well as date and venue for holding national workshops, were requested to do so within one month and inform the Secretariat accordingly.

64. The Meeting appreciated the financial contribution of the IDB to the project and requested the Bank to continue its support in that regard. The meeting also appreciated the technical assistance of UNCTAD to the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the project and requested their continued cooperation with ECO in its 2<sup>nd</sup> phase too. The meeting also requested technical assistance of UNESCAP to this project.

65. Pakistan offered to hold the national workshop on Multi Modal Transport in November 11-12, 2008. Azerbaijan would organize the national workshop in September 10-11, 2008. Afghanistan and Iran would organize their national workshop in June/July 2008.

66. In order to expedite implementation of the MMT project, the Secretariat was asked to utilize the services of a locally recruited qualified coordinating officer to be paid from the project budget.

67. The representatives of IDB and UNCTAD stated that their respective organizations would participate in the national workshops.

68. Taking into account the increase in number of national workshops from six to ten to cover all the member states, the meeting requested the Secretariat to utilize Feasibility Study Fund and other sources if the funds contributed by IDB were not sufficient to cover the expenses.

69. The representative of UNCTAD drew attention of the meeting to the need for working out mechanisms for continuation of regional cooperation on MMT after the completion of the national workshops. Possible areas for consideration would be: MMT infrastructure and technology development, security and safety, trade facilitation, legal aspects and market access.

### **Agenda Item No.11**

#### Establishment of the ECO Logistic Provider Associations' Federation (ECOLPAF)

70. The Meeting appreciated the initiative of the Secretariat and decisions of the RPC and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Meetings of the Heads of Reference Marine Organizations of the ECO Member States to establish the ECO Logistic Provider Associations' Federation (ECOLPAF).

71. The representative of the International Freight Forwarders Association of Turkey, as the coordinating body for establishment of ECOLPAF, gave a presentation on the subject. A copy of his presentation is attached as Annex VIII.

72. The meeting supported the decisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory Meeting of the Federation to plan for its establishment with concrete steps to have the Federation operational within a given period and encouraged the national transport/logistic providers associations to keep pace with time frame approved by that meeting.

73. The Meeting welcomed the offer of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Turkey, to host the four successive the meetings of the Federation. The name of the Federation was adopted as "the ECO Logistic Provider Associations' Federation", abbreviated as "ECOLPAF". The Secretariat was requested to follow up the issue and initiate contacts with the concerned authorities of the Member States and the relevant international organizations to ensure timely establishment of the ECOLPAF. The Secretariat was also requested to contact international organizations for their technical/financial assistance to ECOLPAF for development of Public Private Partnership program in the ECO region.

74. The Member States were requested to send the name and contact details of their respective national associations as national focal points for the establishment of the ECOLPAF to the Secretariat within one month. The meeting also appreciated the Turkish Freight Forwarders Association for preparation of the basic documents of ECOLPAF.

### **Agenda Item No.12**

#### Development of maritime cooperation in the region.

#### **a. Review of decisions of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Heads of Reference Marine Organizations (Tehran, 16-19 February, 2008).**

75. The Meeting endorsed the report of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Heads of Reference Marine Organizations (Tehran, 16-19 February, 2008).

76. The meeting adopted the report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory Meeting of the ECO Logistics Providers Associations' Federation (ECOLPAF) convened on the sidelines of the 4<sup>th</sup> HRMO Meeting.

77. The meeting thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for carrying out a regional study on ways and means for implementation of marine related Articles of the TTFA.

78. The meeting thanked the Republic of Turkey for setting up the ECO Marine Website and for the secondment of a fulltime officer for managing this website.

**b. Special needs of landlocked countries and the Almaty Programme of Action.**

79. In line with the decisions of the 4<sup>th</sup> HRMO meeting, the Meeting decided that the coastal member states would provide specific information to landlocked countries through the ECO Secretariat on transit facilities available in their ports.

80. The delegations of Iran and Pakistan informed the meeting that they had already offered concessional conditions in their ports for the landlocked member states. A copy of their statements is attached as Annex IX.

81. The meeting decided that delegations from the landlocked member states would make study tours to the ports of the coastal member states to be familiarized with the existing facilities available in those ports. The first such visit would be to Queshm Island of Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran would inform the Secretariat of the conditions of hospitality and dates of the study tour shortly.

82. The Meeting appreciated Turkey for preparing a questionnaire on the needs of ECO landlocked member states to port and maritime facilities of the transit member states. The Meeting requested the member states to send filled-in questionnaires to the Secretariat.

83. The landlocked member states were requested to provide the meeting with a report on their needs in terms of port infrastructure and services from the transit member states to the Secretariat.

84. The Meeting urged the member states to consider hosting the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the HRMO.

85. The Representative of Turkey stated that they would convey to the Secretariat the conditions of hospitality, syllabus, dates and venue of the Workshop on Regional Cooperation for Maritime Training to be held in 2008.

86. The Kyrgyz delegation informed the Meeting that a special state committee had been established to investigate the possibilities of using Bandar Abbas, Chahbahar and Gwadar ports. The Kyrgyz delegation suggested that the coastal member states should kindly provide this committee with opportunities to visit those ports and inform the landlocked member states about port facilities through the Secretariat.

**Agenda Item No.13**

The MOU on ECO Air Transport Cooperation

87. Under this Agenda Item, the representative of the ECO Secretariat briefed the Meeting on the latest status of ECO activities in the field of civil aviation.

88. The delegation of Pakistan also submitted a presentation on regional cooperation in the field of civil aviation industry. A copy of his presentation is attached as Annex X.

89. The Meeting reviewed the decisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the ECO Civil Aviation Authorities and Heads of National Airlines (Karachi, 12-14 February, 2001) and agreed on formulating an ECO Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Air Transport.

90. Taking note of the slow progress in the field of civil aviation, the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting had requested the Member States to give proposals to improve Civil Aviation Cooperation in the region. In that connection the meeting supported the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> RPC (Islamabad, March 2008) to organize the Second Meeting of the Heads of Civil Aviation Authorities and National Airlines on non-hospitality basis in the ECO Secretariat in September 2008. The Secretariat should utilize the Special Support Fund for covering the air ticket of one participant from each country. The Meeting requested the Member States to actively participate in that meeting.

91. The representative of Iran reiterated their commitment to continue granting 50% discount to the ECO Secretariat's staff and participants in all ECO meetings/events. The Meeting urged other member states to do the same.

#### **Agenda Item No.14**

##### Progress on telecommunications and postal cooperation.

#### **a. Postal cooperation.**

92. The meeting endorsed the report of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Postal Authorities (Baku, October 09-10, 2007) and welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize a workshop on privatization of postal services and cost accounting in 2008 in Tehran and the offer of the Republic of Turkey to set up a specialized committee to work out the technical and operational aspects of establishing linkages between the postal financial services and e-shopping facilities of the member states in 2008.

93. The meeting noted with satisfaction the establishment of ECO Postal Website by the Islamic Republic of Iran and requested the postal authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other member states to update the website, both in terms of design and uploaded information. The Meeting requested Iran to assign a fulltime seconded officer for regular updating and management of the website.

94. The Meeting welcomed the decisions of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting and the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Postal Authorities to organize video conferences among the member states as a means to expand postal training, including long distance training courses, and issuance of a common stamp on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit (2008). The Meeting appreciated the offer of Pakistan to host the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Postal Authorities in November 2008.

95. As per decisions of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Postal Authorities (Baku, October, 2007), Azerbaijan and Turkey provided draft logos for the common stamp to be issued on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> ECO summit. The meeting decided that the ECO joint stamp should be finalized three months before the ECO Summit meeting.

96. The Member States were requested to provide the Secretariat with their views on the draft logo of the common stamp designed by Azerbaijan and Turkey to enable finalization of the draft logo three months before the ECO Summit.

**b. The 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunication Authority (Tehran, May 12-14, 2008)**

97. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunications Authorities and the 5th Meeting of TAEFOS in on 12-14 May, 2008 in Tehran and requested the member states to participate in this meeting at the highest possible level.

98. The meeting decided that the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunication Authority of Member States would, inter-alia, consider the development of ECO program for development of regional cooperation in the field of Communications. This program would be incorporated into the second phase of the Program of Action for ECO Decade of Transport and Communications.

99. The meeting welcomed the idea of inaugurating the 1<sup>st</sup> test video conference during the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Heads of Telecommunication Authorities and requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to assist the Secretariat in successful launching of the conference.

**c. Trans-Asia-Europe Fiber Optical Cable System (TAEFOS).**

100. Considering TAEFOS as the most important project in ECO telecommunication cooperation, the Meeting expressed its desire for the member states who were not yet connected to the network to soon join this important network.

101. The delegation of Afghanistan briefed the Meeting on the latest developments in completion of the fiber optical cable system in their country. A copy of the report is attached as Annex XI.

102. The Meeting also emphasized rationalizing tariff policies, further investment and introduction of the latest equipment and technology in the region.

103. The member states were urged to confirm their participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> Experts Group Meeting on TAEFOS and 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Telecommunication Authorities (Tehran- 12-14 May 2008) at the highest possible level.

**Agenda Item No.15**

Review of the latest developments in cooperation with international organizations.

104. Under this Agenda Item, the ECO representative briefed the Meeting on the latest development in ECO's cooperation with international organizations in the field of transport and communications. The meeting appreciated the endeavors of the Secretariat for development of its external relations in the field of Transport and Communications.

105. The meeting supported the proposal for signing an Agreement between ECO, IDB and UNESCAP, aimed at implementation of the TTFA and development of Trans Asian Railway and Asian Highway Projects of UNESCAP, in the ECO Region. This agreement would be signed on the sidelines of the next ECO Summit to be held in October/November 2008 in Pakistan.

106. The meeting also supported the initiative of the Secretariat to sign MOUs with IRU and IMO.

107. The Meeting welcomed the new Euro-Asian Land Transport Initiative and the UNESCAP Asian Highway Truck Caravan across the ECO region with the involvement of IRU. The ECO member state pledged their support to that initiative, which would connect the region to world markets in Asia, Europe, CIS and the Middle East.

**Agenda Item No.16**

Adoption of the Antalya Declaration.

108. Under this agenda item, the meeting adopted the Antalya Declaration finalized by the SOM. A copy of the Declaration is placed at Annex XII.

**Agenda Item No.17**

Any other business.

109. The Meeting discussed the existing capabilities of the region for production of transport and communication equipment. The Meeting called for greater cooperation among the member states to utilize this potential. The Member States were requested to convey to the Secretariat their comments and proposals in due course.

110. Kazakhstan invited the member states and the relevant international organizations and financial institutions to take part in the international conference of Transport Ministers “TRANSEUROASIA-2008” to be held on 24-25 September, 2008 in Astana. Invitations would be sent by Kazakhstan through official channels in due course. ECO member states, with participation of the Secretariat, might hold an informal meeting on the sidelines of the conference.

**Agenda Item No.18**

Date and venue of the next meeting.

111. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the Kyrgyz Republic to host the 8<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications. The dates and venue of the Meeting would be conveyed to the Secretariat in due course.

**Agenda Item No.19**

Adoption of the Report.

112. Under this Item, the meeting unanimously adopted its Report.

**Agenda Item No.20**

Vote of thanks and closing of the meeting.

113. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations in a smooth and efficient manner, and to the Government of the Republic of Turkey, particularly the Turkish Ministry of Transport and Communications, for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Secretary General and his team to do comprehensive documentation and to assist the hosts to make the 7<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications a complete success.

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