



Economic Cooperation Organization

ECO

**9th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the ECO
Member States**

(Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan 3rd May 2018)

Report

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The 9th Meeting of the ECO Ministers of Transport was held on 3rd May, 2018 in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan. The meeting was attended by high level delegations of all ECO Member States headed by Ministers/Deputy Ministers of Transport. The ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by the Secretary General also attended the meeting along with delegations from United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and International Road Transport Union (IRU). The list of participants is attached as **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item 1 **Inauguration.**

2. His Excellency Mr. Chakyyev Mammethan, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, welcomed the participants to Turkmenbashi for 9th Ministerial Meeting on Transport. Highlighted steps taken by the Government of Turkmenistan for development of transport infrastructure. Especially mentioned the hosting of the International Forum “The Great Silk Road-towards the New Frontiers of Development on 2nd May, 2018 in Turkmenbashi. Emphasized that development of transport and communications is the top priority in the policy of Government of Turkmenistan under the able leadership of H.E. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. Expressed that the geographical situation makes Turkmenistan unique for ECO region. Stated that Turkmenistan is actively implementing fruitful mutual cooperation with specialized UN agencies and mentioned Global Conference on Sustainable Transport held on 26-27 November 2017 in Ashgabat which was conducted under UN. Informed that Turkmenistan is beneficiary in many infrastructure and technical assistance projects under TRACECA. Mentioned the inauguration of railway line between Iran-Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in December 2014, complying with international standards and first test container train between China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan and Iran reducing transportation time as compared to sea transportation. Stated that 1.5 billion US\$ have been invested in newly inaugurated Turkmenbashi Sea Port which would provide favourable conditions to the European Countries. Further stated that being located on the crossroad between Europe and Asia, Turkmenbashi Sea Port will also develop the transport system of Turkmenistan. Stated that a lot of attention is being paid for the capacity building and improving qualification of the relevant officials and legislations are being made in this regard. Stated that improvement of transport infrastructure is essential for the sustainable development of the whole region.

His Excellency Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, Secretary General of ECO, welcomed the participants to the 9th Ministerial Meeting and expressed sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the Honorable President of Turkmenistan, and the Government of Turkmenistan, in particular, His Excellency Mr. Mammethan Chakyyev, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan,

for his personal contribution to the event and for the warm welcome and traditional hospitality accorded to the participants. Appreciated participation of partner organizations i.e. IRU, UNESCAP and UNECE in the meeting. Stated that he ECO Vision 2025 attaches high priority to transport and connectivity as one of the major cooperation areas in the region. Highlighted the activities initiated by the ECO Secretariat under ECO/IDB Joint Project on implementation of TTFA, as mandated by 8th Transport Ministerial Meeting. Informed about the Istanbul-Almaty, Bandar Abbas-Almaty and Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) container trains, widely known ECO's projects to put in the right track container train services and steps being taken towards early operationalization and commercialization of those rail routes. Highlighted the steps being taken for commercialization of KTI railway route i.e. signing of Technical Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with IDB in August 2017 and negotiations on the Memorandum of Agreement between ECO and UNESCAP. Updated on the construction of "Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)- Astara (Azerbaijan) Railway. Informed about agreement between ECO and IRU regarding IRU's Co-sponsorship for the field studies on ITI and KTAI Road Corridors. A copy of the statement is attached as **Annex-II**.

Agenda Item 2

Election of the Chairman.

3. His Excellency Mr. Mammethan Chakyyev, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan was elected as the Chairman of the meeting.

Agenda Item 3:

Adoption of the Agenda

4. The Meeting adopted its Agenda. A copy of the draft Agenda is attached as **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item 4

Statements of the Ministers/Heads of Delegations

5. H.E. Muhammad Hameed Tahmasi, Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan thanked Government of Turkmenistan for hosting the event in the historic and thriving city of Turkmenbashi. Conveyed the warm greetings of H.E. Mr. Muhammad Ashraf Ghani the Hon'able President of Afghanistan for the policies and programmes undertaken by the ECO and its respected members to bring prosperity, economic growth and well-being to the region. Reiterated the statement of H.E. Mr. Muhammad Ashraf Ghani to turn Afghanistan into a regional transport hub. Emphasized that Afghanistan has the potential to connect the region by establishing transport corridors while focusing on reduction of transport related fees and tariffs. Acknowledged ECO efforts in providing opportunities to develop good relations with other ECO member states and highlighted the important projects implemented in Afghanistan. Pointed out benefits of amendments in the transport law i.e. lower transport fees and high-tech facilities. Highlighted the steps being taken to implement TIR in Afghanistan.

6. H.E. Mr. Abbas Ahmad Akhoundi, Minister of Road and Urban Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for

warmest hospitality and hosting the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting and thanked efforts of ECO Secretariat in organizing the event. Stated that Islamic Republic of Iran, in collaboration with the countries of the region, has played a constructive role for enhancing economic development and social welfare. Emphasized that having the appropriate transport infrastructure in different sectors, the Islamic Republic of Iran plays an important role in the growth and development of ECO region trade, especially for the landlocked countries. Highlighted that the inauguration of first phase of Chabahar Port Development Plan has increased the operational capacity of the south and north ports to 200 million tons in Persian Gulf, Oman Sea and Caspian Sea. Emphasized upon the importance of Chabahar Transit Agreement signed by the Presidents of Afghanistan, India and Iran in development of regional transit cooperation. Informed about hosting of the meeting of Ministers of North-South transport corridors in Tehran in September 2018. Expressed hope that commercialization study of KTI rail corridor will be completed soon, supported ECO Secretariat for involving China in KTAI corridor and extended full support to Pakistan in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the rail route in Taftan-Quetta section of ITI rail route. Called for holding international business forum with the participation of international financial institutions and donors for attracting investment for the rail and road projects of ECO.

7. H.E. Zhamshit Kalilov, Minister of Transport and Roads of Kyrgyz Republic, expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan and ECO for organizing the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting. Informed that Kyrgyz Republic is committed to develop multi model transport infrastructure, development of transport corridors within the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA). Highlighted since the majority of the ECO Member States are located on the path of silk route, the transport activity of ECO is implemented under TTFA signed on 9th May 2006. Informed that Kyrgyz Republic has signed bilateral agreements in road transport with all ECO Member States except Afghanistan. Highlighted the importance of Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Corridor for Kyrgyz freight forwarders, creating shortest route to Europe through Iran and Turkey. Stated that out of six corridors included in the CAREC 2020 Programme, five are passing through Kyrgyz Republic which have been implemented 80% within Kyrgyz Republic. Informed that Kyrgyz Republic has active investment plan to improve these corridors according to international standards by 2020. Informed about National Strategy 2018-2020 to control load on roads and road safety to be implemented within five years. Stressed upon the importance of capacity building training programmes for relevant officials. Expressed commitment that Kyrgyz Republic is willing to play its role in the revival of silk route.

8. H.E. Mr Khudoyor Khudoyorzoda, Minister of Transport of Republic of Tajikistan, expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for hosting the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting and congratulated on the opening of Turkmenbashi Sea Port, holding of the International Forum “The Great Silk Road-towards the New Frontiers of Development and exhibition on 2nd May, 2018 in Turkmenbashi. Informed that Tajikistan is an active participant of regional and international initiatives in Transport. Stated that several years ago leaders of the Tajik nation defined strategic objectives for development of the country, development of transit potential being one of the priority objective. Informed about the ongoing cooperation between Tajikistan and the international organizations/financial institutions i.e. SCO, CAREC, ECO, ADB, European Bank, IDB etc. Informed about 44 investment projects implemented with a total allocation of more than 1.4 billion US\$ which includes construction of more than 2000 km of road, 31 km tunnels and galleries, 240 units of bridges, 132 km of rail routes

and 6 new passenger terminals in Dushanbe International Airport etc. Updated about 11 projects aimed at improving road infrastructure with a total estimated amount of more than 534 million US\$. Informed about amendments in the Transport Code.

9. H.E. Mr. Ahmet Arslan, Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs, and Communications of Republic of Turkey, expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for warmest hospitality and hosting the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting. Stated that Turkey is playing an active role in developing relationship with the ECO Member States. Called for implementation of TTFA in its letter and spirit to achieve the planned goals under ECO. Informed that since 2010 Turkey shifted to the system of digital scanning and started to implement procedures of digital scanning system. Stated that Turkey is actively participating in activation of ITI corridor. Turkey has no limitation for the shipments. Informed efforts being made for creation of ECOLPAF. Highlighted the important railway projects i.e. Marmaray and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars. Highlighted the issues impeding the regular traffic on railway routes of Istanbul-Almaty and ITI container trains. Informed about the capacity building programme under which 8 railway officials of Afghanistan received training in Turkey. Called for expanding cooperation in the field of aviation and marine shipments.

10. H.E. Mr. Serdar Berdymuhamedov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan stated that Turkmenistan considers platform of ECO as an important platform for constructive dialogue on economic cooperation between countries. Emphasized that modernization of transport and means of communications is one of the top priority in the government's policy. Stated that Turkmenistan has initiated and with the cooperation of foreign partners implemented a number of major infrastructure projects. Highlighted the importance of Afghanistan in different infrastructure projects and stated that Afghanistan is becoming an active and important partner in the region. Informed that Turkmenistan has been the initiator of resolutions in the field of transport in UN General Assembly, i.e. resolution on Role of transport and transit corridors in ensuring international cooperation for sustainable development adopted by UN General Assembly's 69th session on 19th December 2014 and the resolution on Strengthening the links between all modes of transport in order to achieve Sustainable Development goals approved by UN General Assembly's 72nd session on 22nd December 2017. Stated that these resolutions laid basis of international transport corridors. Further stated that Global Conference on Sustainable Transport held on 26-27 November 2017 in Ashgabat made huge contribution to the process. Expressed commitment to take continued steps for progress of transport sector in cooperation with countries of the region.

11. H.E. Mr. D.Dekhkanov, Head of Agency for Automobile Transport of Republic of Uzbekistan, expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for warmest hospitality and hosting the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting. Stated that Uzbekistan has always been committed towards regional cooperation. Pointed out trade, transport, transit corridors, energy and tourism as top priority areas for cooperation. Informed about the Uzbekistan's Development Strategy for 2017-2021 in five priority areas approved by the President. Highlighted important road corridor connecting Uzbekistan with other Member States. Informed about the railway route connecting China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan, result of several years of negotiations of Uzbek and Kyrgyz leadership, which would provide shortest route from China to Central Asia. Apprised of the launch of "Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman" transport corridor. Stated that the inauguration of Turkmenbashi International Sea Port opens up new opportunities to connect Uzbekistan to the South Caucasus, notably Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway.

12. H.E. Mr. Elmir Velizade, Deputy Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for hosting the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting and warm hospitality extended to the participants. Also congratulated the Turkmen authorities for inauguration of Turkmenbashi Sea Port which will provide a new momentum to future economic and trade cooperation in the region. Stated that Azerbaijan has rational geographic location with high development trends and transport has an important role in economy of the country. Dilated upon the basis of transport policy of Azerbaijan i.e. using innovation, creating conditions for healthy competition, increasing access to different quality services, using international practices etc. Further stated that the transit policy of Azerbaijan is defined and implemented based upon the international conventions and agreements. Stated that Azerbaijan has joined and acceded to several international conventions related to customs and transit issues. Especially mentioned railway project with Georgia, Turkey and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars inaugurated on 30 October, 2017. Also informed about the development activities on Rasht-Astara-Astara rail route. Informed about the cargo terminals aimed at speeding up shipments between countries. Stated that new international trade port is being constructed, first stage of which will be completed this month and after completion the capacity of the port will be upto 15 million tons per year. Further informed about he plans to create logistics centre on the port and stated that this port will play important role in transit and transport of goods. Informed that Azerbaijan has modernized and updated its rail road infrastructure in compliance with international standards. Informed that in order to expand multi model transportation Azerbaijan has purchased and already commissioned 8 modern tankers with 13000 tons and about 52 to 54 rail road wagons. Informed about reconstruction of automobile roads with the length about 4000 km, out of which 1300 km is inside Azerbaijan through corridors of Europe Caucus Asia and North South. Further informed that currently Azerbaijan is constructing fast speed roads on the direction of Iran which would be 38 km shorter than existing route. Informed that the visa system is being improved through Single Window System for better transportation.

13. H.E. Mr. Roman Sklyar, First Vice-Minister of Investment and Development of Republic of Kazakhstan, expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for warmest hospitality and hosting the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting. Stated that during last 10 years Kazakhstan has invested about US\$30 bln. in transport sector, constructed about 2,500 km of railway lines, reconstructed about 6000 km of roads, increased port capacities up to 26 mln.tons, reconstructed 15 airports. Further informed that «West Europe-West China» international road transit corridor is one of breakthrough projects of Kazakhstan enabling to deliver goods within 10-12 days. Informed about completion of establishment «Khorogos-Eastern Gates» FEZ at border China including industrial and logistic zones and «Khorogos» International Center for Cross-Border Cooperation established to process export-import freight traffic and facilitate trade formalities. Stated that since 2015 the volumes of containers transitting via Kazakhstan has tendency for steady increase up to 60%, while the volumes of containers «China-Europe-China» have been recorded as double increase (47,4 thous. 20-foot containers in 2015, 104,6 thous. in 2016 and 201 thous. in 2017). Informed that Kazakhstan acceded in 2018 to the Agreement on International Transport Corridor between the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sultanat of Oman, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan.

14. Mr. Khial Zad Gul, Joint Secretary (Admin), Ministry of Communications of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan delivered a statement on behalf of H.E. Dr. Hafiz Abdul Kareem, Federal Minister for Communications. Expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to participants of the meeting. Congratulated government of Turkmenistan for the opening of Turkmenbashi International Sea Port and hosting the 9th ECO Transport Ministers meeting. Stated that it is the earnest desire of the Pakistan government to further strengthen cooperation among ECO Member States in various fields including road, rail and ports. Hoped that the meeting would indeed provide an opportunity to exchange views and evolve common understanding towards successful realization of goals envisioned under ECO Charter. Informed that Pakistan is endeavoring to upgrade its road infrastructure through construction of high speed network of highways and motorways. Pakistan's Transport Corridors in rail and road have been integrated with ECO Network, Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL), Asian Highways & Rail Networks under UNESCAP and CAREC International Transport Corridors, thus providing efficient transport connectivity with Pakistan's deep sea ports at Karachi and Gwadar. Further stated that regional connectivity has been identified as one of the seven pillars of "Pakistan's Vision 2025". Informed that CPEC envisioned as part of One Belt One Road/Maritime Silk Route initiatives would serve as bridge for the new Maritime Silk Route linking 3 billion people in Asia, Africa and Europe.

15. Mr. Dmitry Cheltsov, General Delegate to the IRU Permanent Delegation to Eurasia, expressed sincere gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for excellent arrangements of the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting. Stated that IRU appreciates the progress made by the ECO member states in the field of transport infrastructure, international transportation and especially mentioned inauguration of Turkmenbashi International Sea Port in this regard. Stated that IRU appreciates the progress of the ECO Member States in multi model transportation and digitization of transport and mentioned about the multi model shipment of containers from Slovenia through Turkey and further to Iranian port Bandar Abbas by using procedures of international road transportation. Appreciated the result of joint e-TIR project between Turkey and Iran. Appreciated the progress made ECO Member States in accession to the additional protocols to Convention of International Shipment of goods. Further appreciated that Turkey and Iran are already using E-CMR.

16. Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Deputy Executive Secretary, of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) expressed gratitude to the ECO Secretariat for invitation for participation in the 9th Transport Ministerial meeting. He dilated upon the activities of UNESCAP in the field of transport. Informed that meeting of Transport Ministers held two years ago was given mandate to focus on regional action programmes in order to enhance transport connectivity via intra model means. Informed about recently signed trilateral agreement on Transport between China-Magnolia and Russia. Stated that among all the corridors Central Asia and South Asia route is most beneficial and has highest economic return. Emphasized upon the importance of ICT in improving the transport connectivity. Expressed readiness to support UNECE and ECO on three fronts i.e. inter-governmental agreements to facilitate transport movements, transport facilitation etc. Stated that UNESCAP is ready to provide research and study in the specific areas, capacity building on various issues of transport. Informed about the upcoming events of UNESCAP i.e. Workshop on Dry Ports in Almaty, Kazakhstan from May 31-June 1, 2018 and a Workshop to be held in Dushanbe on railway connectivity

and railway operationalization. Informed that a UNESCAP would nominate a specialist in transport to contribute to the future ECO meetings.

17. Mr. Andrey Vasilyev, Deputy Executive Secretary of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) expressed sincere thanks to the ECO Secretariat for invitation to participate in the 9th Ministerial Meeting on Transport and appreciated warm hospitality extended by Turkmenistan government and congratulated the Turkmen authorities on inauguration of Turkmenbashi Sea Port. Stated that cooperation between UNECE and ECO is very successful and long-lasting. Briefed about the two memorandum of understanding signed between UNECE and ECO in 2003 and 2011 respectively. Informed that ECO, UNECE and IDB are working together on the development of the East-West and North-South corridors connecting Asia and Europe. Further stated currently three organizations are working together on the project “Enhancing regional connectivity through geographical information system (GIS). Informed that during last one year UNECE began to implement the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, with transport and mobility firmly rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

18. Statements of Heads of Delegations are attached as **Annex- IV.**

Agenda item 5

Adoption of the Report of the Meeting

19. H.E. Mr. Akmammedov Mammet, the Deputy Minister of the Railway Transport of Turkmenistan and Chair of SOM, held on 1st May, 2018 informed the meeting about exhaustive work done during preparation of SOM report and Turkmenbashi declaration. The meeting considered and adopted the report as drafted by the SOM meeting. The Meeting also adopted the Turkmenbashi Declaration. The Meeting mandated the ECO Secretary General to assure effective implementation of the decisions of the Ministerial Meeting as reflected in the Turkmenbashi Declaration and the Report of the Meetings. A copy of the SOM report and the Turkmenbashi Declaration are attached as **Annex-V & Annex-VI**, respectively.

Agenda item 6

Any Other Business.

20. No issue was discussed under this agenda item.

Agenda item 7

Date and Venue of the Next Meeting.

21. The meeting requested the ECO Secretariat to liaise with the Member States through diplomatic channels to ascertain date and venue of the 10th Meeting of ECO Ministers of Transport.

Agenda item 8

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting.

22. Under this item, the Heads of delegation expressed their profound gratitude to the Government and the people of the Turkmenistan, particularly, His Excellency Mr. Mammethan Chakyyev, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers 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.

23. The Chairman announced the closing of the Meeting
