

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

Turkmenbashi Declaration

(Turkmenbashi-Turkmenistan, 3rd May 2018)

The 9th Meeting of Ministers of Transport of the ECO Member States was held on May 3rd 2018 in Turkmenbashi (Turkmenistan) and attended by the Ministers/Deputy Ministers of Transport, Railway and Road Authorities of all ECO Member States;

The international organizations, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and International Road Transport Union (IRU) attended the Meeting;

Constructive deliberations were held during the Senior Officials Meeting on 1st May 2018, which preceded the 9th Meeting of Ministers of Transport of the ECO Member States on the 3rd May 2018, for adopting the actionable decisions to strengthen Connectivity, Mobility and Accessibility in the ECO regional transit and transport network;

We the Ministers/Heads of delegations

Keeping in mind that economic growth in the ECO region will benefit from the strengthened multilateral cooperation of the ECO Member States on rail, road, maritime, and civil aviation through implementing projects on the construction, rehabilitation, upgradation, and servicing the ECO rail and road corridors and facilitating maritime and civil aviation links, across the region;

Realizing the importance of further strengthened coordination in line with the principles and objectives set forth in "ECO Vision 2025", which focuses on the socio-

economic development of the region, to achieve prosperity of peoples and steady improvement of their lives;

Noting the progress made, over the past, in transit transport infrastructure development in the region, by the Member States, and appreciating the constructive role of the international organizations;

Recalling the obligation of the Member States to provide the ECO landlocked countries with an access to transport infrastructure with the aim of transiting to sea outlets;

Have decided to:

1. **Speed up** implementation process of the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) in the ECO rail and road networks, to facilitate cross-border and transit transport and, in line with relevant international frameworks on transport, remove non-physical barriers entailing from excessive administrative formalities and hurdles arising in transit transportation in the region.
2. **Make** efforts towards reduction of transport related charges and redouble the efforts on cargo mobilization in the five ECO rail and two road corridors by facilitating cross border time consuming procedures.
3. **Mandate** the Secretariat to finalize in close collaboration with relevant railway authorities of the Member States the Study on identifying the immediate required actions to be undertaken by the Member States towards early operationalization and commercialization of those rail routes already in place.
4. **Call upon** en-route Member States to speed up process of rehabilitation of the existing rail segments of the main ECO rail corridors and routes crossing through their territories, and in this context, these countries will come up with needs-based financial and technical assessment enabling the Secretariat, Current Chair of the ECO Council of Ministers and the country concerned to approach the international financial institutions and relevant development partners for seeking financial support to implement the projects.
5. **Call upon** the Member States concerned to complete at the earliest the missing links along the existing ECO rail and road routes. And in this context, **Urge** the Secretariat to conduct a Study aiming at establishing financial instrument, which would be submitted to the 14th ECO Summit for consideration of the ECO Heads of State/Government in order to financially support the execution and implementation of the missing link projects.
6. **Urge** the Secretariat to expedite preparing an overall Assessment Report for the ECO Rail and Road Projects through utilizing the existing resources of the

Organization, including TTFA Fund, and to outreach the relevant regional and international financial institutions for co-funding of the above mentioned studies.

7. **Call for** improvement in logistics performance and resilience of rolling stock, adjustment of tracking and gauging systems at interchange stations and border crossings to enable smooth transport and traffic along the operationalized routes in the ECO Member States (which paragraph 2 refers).
8. **Emphasize on** continuation and expansion on the effective capacity building on transport & communications at all levels by initiating systematic staff working in transport sector (especially railway) exchange programs, field visits to border crossings and interchange stations, in particular to pursue a 5-year Plan of Action on Modernization of Customs Crossing Borders of ECO Member States.
9. **Emphasize** the importance of linking the existing regional sea ports in the ECO Region with ECO landlocked and transit countries' dry ports, improve port facilities and services for massive transit of goods, modernize the existing terminals in the region, and in this context, **Mandate** the TTCC to explore the ways and means for this purpose within the ECO Frameworks.
10. **Underscore** the significance of initiating the mutually complementary networking amongst the ECO Regional Ports and **Mandate** the 5th Meeting of Maritime Reference Organizations of ECO Member States to deliberate and come up with future roadmap in this regard.
11. **Harmonize** the ECO's key inland transit transport routes and road corridors with non-ECO regional transport corridors, *inter alia* Belt and Road Initiative, Middle Corridor (Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway), China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), West Branch of INSTC Corridor (Iran-Azerbaijan-Russia-Belarus), the new South-West Corridor (Iran-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Ukraine-Poland), Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman, Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China, railway corridor between Turkmenistan- Afghanistan-Tajikistan, Lapis Lazuli Transit Trade and Transport Route And in this regard, **Mandate** the Secretariat with the collaboration of the Chairman of the ECO Council of Ministers to establish the institutional dialogue with relevant neighboring ECO Countries, including China.

We, express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan for the warm hospitality and the excellent organization of the Meeting.