

Report

9th Meeting of the Road Committee of TTCC (Islamabad, 13th February, 2018)

The 9th Meeting of the Road Committee of TTCC was held on 13th February 2018 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The meeting was attended by representatives of ECO Member States namely Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey. Representative of IRU and delegation from ECO Secretariat also attended the Meeting. List of participants is attached at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No.1

Inauguration of the Meeting

2. The meeting started with the recitation of verses of Holy Quran.

3. H.E. Mr. Furqan Bahadur Khan, Federal Secretary Ministry of Communications, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, inaugurated the event. At the outset Mr. Furqan welcomed the honourable participants to Islamabad and wished a comfortable stay in Islamabad. He expressed that the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan highly values the brotherly relations among ECO Member States. Pakistan desires to extend cooperation in different fields of connectivity e.g. road, rail etc. He anticipated that TTCC events would provide an opportunity to exchange views and evolve a common understanding for successful implementation of TTFA. He further emphasized that Pakistan is committed to turn around its economy and develop Pakistan in to a stable country. Pakistan has launched several infrastructure development programmes to enhance regional connectivity. He dilated upon the vision of the government to provide safe, reliable and modern means of communications. He informed that Pakistan is endeavouring to improve road infrastructure through construction of motorways. He further stated that Pakistan believes that strong regional connectivity in terms of transport can bring harmony and peace in the entire ECO region. He emphasized that regional connectivity has been identified as one of the several pillars of the Vision 2025 of the Government of Pakistan. He highlighted the importance of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a 3218 kilometers long corridor expected to be completed by 2030. He expressed that Pakistan realizes the importance of the international conventions for smooth flow of transit traffic. He explained steps taken by the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to implement TIR and accession to ADR and CMR conventions. Expressed gratitude to IRU for continued assistance and cooperation for smooth implementation of TIR. In the end, expressed hope that meeting will come up with concrete recommendations to bring close the ECO Member States through implementation of TTFA. A copy of his statement is attached at **Annex-II**.

4. Mr. Ahmad Saffari, Director (Transport & Communications) of the ECO Secretariat welcomed the delegates to Pakistan and thanked the Ministry of Communications in general and H.E. Mr. Furqan Bahadur Khan, Federal Secretary in particular for hosting the TTCC events. He also thanked IRU for expressing readiness to support ECO events and continue collaborating and sharing its valuable institutional expertise. He also mentioned projects completed in collaboration with the IRU. He dilated upon the functions of Road Committee and other technical committees (Railway, Customs Transit and Insurance). He highlighted the findings of “ECO Regular

Monitoring of Trucks”. He termed the study under “ECO/IDB Joint project on customs provisions of TTFA and modernization of border crossing points” (2016) as another step towards examining the current status of implementation of customs provisions of TTFA and capacities of border crossing points (BCP) for trucks carrying the goods. He also updated the meeting on the latest status of the project being realized under umbrella of ECO in co-sponsorship of IRU to help running road corridors, i.e. Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI). In the end he appreciated the Government of Pakistan for tireless job since July 2015 (accession to TIR Convention) to finalize required actions to enable starting TIR operations. He expressed hope for fruitful discussion during the course of meeting. A copy of his statement is attached at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

5. The Meeting elected Mr. Altaf Asghar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Communications of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as the Chairman of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Meeting adopted Agenda as proposed by the ECO Secretariat with minor amendments i.e. deletion of agenda item No. 9. A copy of the agenda is attached at **Annex-IV**.

Agenda Item No. 4

Appointment of the Drafting Committee

7. An open-ended Drafting Committee was established to prepare the Report of the Meeting. The drafting committee consisted of ECO, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Turkey.

Agenda Item No.5

Review of implementation of decisions of the 8th Meeting of the Road Committee (ECO Secretariat, 14 November 2016)

8. The Director (Transport and Communication) of the ECO Secretariat updated the Meeting on the progress made by the ECO Secretariat since 8th Meeting of the Road Committee. He informed the meeting that a proficient International Consultant i.e. Ms. Yelena has been hired for conducting Feasibility Study on ITI and KTAI road corridors. The first meeting of national consultants of ECO member states with the International Consultant was held on 27 September, 2017. In the meeting the International Consultant presented 'Inception Report' of the project incorporating the valuable inputs received from the National Consultants. The meeting also decided on the timetable for field visits of border crossing pints of ITI and KTAI road corridors. He further informed the meeting that these field visits concluded in October-December, 2017. He also appreciated the measures taken by Pakistan to implement TIR, conveyed to the Secretariat through an official communication.

Agenda Item No.6

Review of implementation of road related provisions of the TTFA

(i) Exemption of traffic in transit by motor vehicles from customs duties, taxes and other levies and charges (Article 5)

9. Islamic Republic of Iran proposed that in order to resolve the outstanding issues and to create the cost- effective road transportation in the ECO Region under this particular agenda item, bilateral or trilateral meetings should be held with the participation of representative of ECO Secretariat. He further proposed that in the upcoming meeting of ECO Ministers of Transport an agenda item should be included to create “regional cost effective road transportation” in order to reduce the cost of business.

10. The Meeting appreciated the proposal of Iran and agreed that collective efforts are required to reduce the cost of transportation among ECO Member States. He further proposed that this job can be performed by the national consultants of the Member States.

11. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan proposed that it would not be prudent to directly approach the Ministers of Transport of ECO Member States rather it would be advisable to analyze the information at the level of National Consultants. After the analysis of National Consultants the matter can be placed before CPR and if deemed appropriate by CPR the same can be presented before the Ministers of Transport for final endorsement.

12. The representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan proposed that all countries should provide details of charges to the ECO Secretariat and the Secretariat may evaluate the charges and come up with suggestions.

13. The Meeting requested all the Member States to provide the ECO Secretariat with details regarding expenses of road transit transportation in two months time and Secretariat will consolidate it and will place it on the website for utilization of this information by the Transport companies/businessmen in the ECO Member States. The consolidated information may be presented before the upcoming ECO Transport Ministerial Meeting for their instruction aiming at creating cost- effective road transportation in the ECO Region.

(ii) Issuance of annual multiple entry and transit visa for drivers and transport operators (Article 12)

14. The Director (Transport & Communications) of the ECO Secretariat briefed the meeting that “First ECO Senior Consular Officials Meeting on Facilitation of Visa for Drivers” was held on 4th October 2016 at the ECO Secretariat where the Member States were presented the principles of proposed workable scheme. Based on the deliberations and comments of the delegates the ECO Secretariat prepared the modified version of the “ECO Visa Exemption Sticker Scheme” and an explanatory note reflecting responses provided by the Secretariat to all the queries raised in the course of the meeting and requested the Member States to provide comments and views. However, the Secretariat received response from only Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Afghanistan rejected the proposal, whereas the response of Tajikistan was general. He further informed that ECO visa exemption sticker scheme is a mechanism that covers all areas of concerns of ECO Member States including security. He requested the participants to review the documents shared by the ECO Secretariat and inform the Secretariat about definite view point on the issue.

15. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that under bilateral arrangement between Iran-Kazakhstan and Iran-Kyrgyzstan, a multiple visa facility is extended to Iranian drivers. Kazakhstan issues one year multiple entry visa to Iranian drivers whereas Kyrgyz Republic issues three months multiple entry visa. However the cost of visa is high. He further informed the meeting that the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan has increased the visa fee for six months multiple visa upto 160\$ without any prior notification. He

requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan to notify such developments well in advance for sharing the same with the international road transport companies. He further informed that Iran charges 90US\$ as visa fee. He requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to reduce the visa fee.

16. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan while acknowledging the importance of visa for cross border transportation informed the meeting that Pakistani transporters have complained delay in visa issuance and in some cases it takes up to three months which is not good for perishable consignments. He requested the member states to expedite visa process. As regards the increase in visa fee, he informed that Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not in loop on this issue and the relevant Missions would be consulted and the outcome would be shared with the Iranian side.

17. The meeting requested Pakistan to take up the issue with the relevant authorities and suggested to give pre-notice before imposing extra fee to all the member states.

18. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed the meeting that Iran and Pakistan issue visa to Afghan drivers in an expeditious manner. However, he requested Central Asian Member States. i.e. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to streamline visa process in order to expedite visa issuance for Afghan drivers.

19. The representative of Tajikistan informed the meeting that Tajikistan has recently established electronic visa system which would facilitate issuance of visa for any applicant. He further informed that Tajikistan is facing some difficulties regarding issuance of visa for drivers with neighboring countries like Uzbekistan and expressed hope that these issues would be resolved through mutual cooperation. He informed that newly elected President of Uzbekistan has recently assumed the office and hoped that under his support Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would be able to overcome and resolve all outstanding issues.

20. The meeting requested the ECO Member States to provide ECO Secretariat with a clear position on the ECO visa exemption sticker scheme.

(iii) Issuance of road permit without any quotas/limitation (Article 15)

21. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting Iran has a smooth arrangement with Republic of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic regarding number of permits.

22. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the meeting that Pakistan has no quota limitation with Iran. As regards Kyrgyz Republic and Republic of Kazakhstan, Pakistan has agreed on certain number of vehicles/permits per year. He informed that Ministry of Communications regularly prints permits and as per agreed quota mechanism distributes among ECO Member States for utilization.

23. The meeting requested the ECO Member States to inform the Secretariat about issues through official channels and make efforts to resolve the issues bilaterally.

24. The representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed the meeting that from Nimroz province the transporters have complained of restrictions to enter Sistan-Balochistan province because of certain quota defined by the relevant authorities. He requested to remove the quota limitation.

25. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that any such quota

limitation does not exist on Sistan-Balochistan border and Afghan trucks can enter Sistan-Balochistan easily.

26. The meeting requested Iran and Afghanistan to resolve the issue in a bilateral meeting.

(iv) Technical requirements for roads and vehicles (Article 18, Annex IV)

27. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting Iran would be revising Technical requirements for roads and vehicles and shortly will be approved internally by Iranian concerned authorities and approximately in two months time would be conveyed to the ECO Secretariat for sharing the same with the Member States.

28. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the meeting that Pakistan has also provided all the technical requirements, load requirements with specification to the ECO Secretariat which have not been reflected on the ECO site. He also shared a copy of permissible gross weight limits which is placed at **Annex-V**. He also informed that Pakistan is going through revision of vehicle standards within Pakistan for which the matter is under consideration of the legislation committee of the Cabinet for approval. The revised version will be shared with the ECO Secretariat in two months time for further sharing the same with the ECO Member States.

29. The representative of ECO Secretariat informed that any new information received will be accordingly revised and placed on the ECO website.

(v) Mutual recognition of driver licenses and certificates of road worthiness (Articles 20-21)

30. No issue was discussed under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No.7

Review of progress on accession/implementation of the following international conventions:

- i. Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) of 1956**
- ii. European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) of 1957**

31. The ECO representative informed the meeting that all ECO Member States except Afghanistan and Pakistan are contracting parties to CMR. He acknowledged steps being taken by Pakistan towards accession to CMR. As regards ADR, it was informed that only four Member States i.e. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey are party to the convention. It was also informed that Turkey in collaboration with IRU and TOBB organized an ECO workshop on ADR during TTCC events in 2015 held in Ankara, Turkey. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was encouraged to take urgent actions toward accession to conventions on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals.

32. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan updated the meeting on steps taken towards accession to CMR and ADR. He informed that the government of Afghanistan has finalized internal procedures and has shared the necessary documents with the legal department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for further communication with UNECE. He also thanked Iran and IRU for kind support in this regard.

33. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed that as regards ADR the draft bill has been submitted to the Cabinet Ministers and after approval will be handed over to the Parliament for final approval. E-CMR instruments have already been submitted to the UN Headquarters. Formalities regarding accession to ATP (Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs) and ADR will be finalized in one year time.
34. The Afghan delegate informed the meeting that since re-activation of TIR in 2013, Afghanistan issued 25 carnets. He termed that visa issues being faced by Afghanistan with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is one of the main hurdles in TIR implementation in Afghanistan.
35. The Representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed the meeting that Pakistan has already acceded to UN conventions on road signs and signals. He also informed that Pakistan has completed post accession formalities and is all set now to implement TIR system. He reiterated the statement of Federal Secretary that CMR has been submitted to Federal Cabinet for approval and is in its final stages and the ECO Secretariat will be updated in this regard. As regards ADR, it is being consulted with federal and provincial stakeholders. He requested the ECO Secretariat to conduct capacity building workshops for Pakistani officials on ADR and CMR.
36. The representative of IRU appreciated efforts of Pakistan with regard to CMR. He stated that reactivation of TIR by Afghanistan in 2013 and Pakistan joining TIR in 2016 is a positive trend. He further informed that in January 2018 Turkey acceded to e-CMR. He recommended that those Member States who have not yet joined CMR and e-CMR may do it simultaneously. He elaborated upon the difference between CMR and TIR. He requested Turkey to share expertise with Afghanistan and Pakistan.
37. The representative of Republic of Kazakhstan informed the meeting Kazakhstan has joined both TIR and ADR and is making efforts to join e-CMR by 2020.
38. The representative of Kyrgyz Republic informed the meeting it is preparing necessary documents to join ADR.
39. The representative of Tajikistan informed the meeting that in January 2018 it signed agreement to join TIR-EPD. It will be utilizing e-TIR in near future.
40. The representative of IRU encouraged the Member States to join e-TIR. He further stated that e-TIR can be utilized in KTAI, ITI and North South corridors. He called for expansion of e-TIR in the ECO region.
41. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that Iran is practicing TIR-EPD with Republic of Kazakhstan.
42. The representative of Republic of Turkey expressed readiness to share expertise with the other ECO Member States in terms of ATP, especially with Iran.

Agenda Item No.8

Review of progress on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Corridors and briefing on the outcome of the meeting of “international and national consultants to review and finalize filled-in questionnaires/tables”, 27th September 2017, at the ECO Secretariat

43. ECO representative briefed the Meeting that the meeting of “international and national consultants to review and finalize filled-in questionnaires/tables” was held on 27th September

2017 at the ECO Secretariat. After detailed deliberations the meeting came up with recommendations and determined time for the field visits of the international consultant of the enroute member states. The representative of the ECO Secretariat delivered a brief presentation on the outcomes/findings of field visits. A copy of the presentation is attached at **Annex-VI**.

44. The meeting appreciated the presentation made by the ECO Secretariat and hoped that the findings would prove beneficial for the Member States to improve their infrastructure. The Chair requested updates from delegates.

45. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed the meeting regarding progress on Kaisar-Laman route which is a part of Ring Road of Afghanistan, part of KTAI and containing of five segments. He informed that the project will be completed within next two and a half year.

46. The representative of Tajikistan informed the meeting about some difficulties in road repairing. Jirgetel is the bilateral border point between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. During the meeting of the Presidents of Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic the question of raising the status to an international level was also discussed among other issues. A free trade zone has been established in Nizhny Pyanj which is ready to be operative. The Ministry of Transport is continuing to work towards setting up more logistical centers all over the country including in Jirgetal.

47. The representative of Kyrgyz Republic informed the meeting Karamyk is a bilateral point between Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. He stated that this particular point has strategic importance and changing the status to international level required to be discussed bilaterally.

48. The representative of Republic of Azerbaijan informed the meeting that bilateral meeting between the State Customs Committee and IRU Secretariat was held in 2017 in Baku in order to implement TIR-EPD.

49. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran while appreciating the presentation delivered by ECO Secretariat requested for sharing the report of field visits.

50. The representative of the ECO Secretariat informed the meeting that the interim report will be shared within two months period.

51. The representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that route from Taftan to Islamabad passes through different cities. The route is in fairly maintained and good condition except 143 kilometers between Noshki-Dalbandin which is going to be upgraded. He appreciated the efforts made by the ECO Secretariat in operationlization of TTFA through identification of various transport corridors ITI and KTAI being part of these corridors. He suggested the Secretariat to immediately activate already identified transport corridors and finalize the time frame with consensus of the member states so as Member States could reap benefits from this initiative. He further suggested ECO Secretariat to arrange trilateral meeting in Tehran to decide matters related to regular transportation on ITI road corridor.

52. The representative of Republic of Turkey agreed with the suggestion of Pakistan and stated that after implementation of TIR in Pakistan a truck caravan will be initiated.

Agenda Item No.9

Any other business

53. The representative of Islamic Republic of Iran informed the meeting that Sarakhs (Iran)-Sarakhs (Turkmenistan) second Automobile Bridge has been constructed between Iran and Turkmenistan and it will be inaugurated in one and a half month time. He further informed the meeting that during last ten months approximately eight million tons of cargo crossed (transited)

Iranian territory by road.

54. The representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed the meeting that Afghanistan is willing to initiate Kabul-Tehran-Istanbul multimodal transport corridor. A trilateral meeting may be convened in one of the enroute Member States to agree on the mechanism for required follow up actions to operationalize this corridor.

55. The representative of Turkey suggested including ATP agreement in the agenda of next TTCC events. He also informed that Turkey will be arranging capacity building workshop for Pakistani officials on ADR in April 2018 and the definite date will be communicated after consultation with Pakistani authorities.

56. The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan asked Turkish side to organize a workshop on ADR.

57. The meeting suggested that ECO may consult with UNECE to help the ECO Member States who are not UNECE members to find ways to accede AETR (European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport).

Agenda Item No.10

Date and venue of the Next Meeting

58. The representative of Ministry of Commerce and Industries of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan volunteered to host the 10th Meeting of the Road Committee in 2019, date for which will be communicated through official channels. The Meeting appreciated the Offer.

Agenda Item No.11

Adoption of the Report

59. The Meeting considered and unanimously adopted its Report.

Agenda Item No.12

Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting

60. The participating delegations offered a vote of thanks to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the event and also expressed their appreciation to the Chairman and the ECO Secretariat for conducting the Meeting.

61. The Chairman of the Meeting announced the closing of the Meeting.
