

## FAREWELL SPEECH

**H.E Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca**

**Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)**

**Tehran, 6th August, 2018**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to you all for attending this ceremony. I have been so touched by all the good-wishes I have received over the past few weeks. However, this evening it is my turn to thank you.

When Turkey mandated me to come to ECO, I knew it was going to be a challenging and exciting task. ECO is an international organization encompassing the region with more than 470 million inhabitants and over 8 million square kilometers laying from Russia to Indian Ocean and China to Europe. The overall objective of the Organization is to increase the life standard of the people in the region through the economic development.

As we all know, the region has more economic and social potential to be explored. In the leadership of the member states, this is exactly what my colleagues and I in the ECO Secretariat have tried to do throughout my tenure.

**Excellencies,**

I am happy that recently we have realized a successful Summit, regular COMs and important Sectoral Ministerial meetings in addition to the regular work, which have contributed to the visibility of ECO.

The second important accomplishment was adaption of the ECO Vision 2025 that brought the Member States politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen together to focus on ECOs future. The Vision has set the priorities of the Organization in the light of regional emerging needs and realities with the ultimate goal of further upgrading the standards of living of the people in the Region. The Vision has determined the path that ECO will follow in the coming 10 years.

The third achievement is worth mentioning today, the increasing ownership for the Organization and expanding network by the member states. I have witnessed that recently the interest and the expectation of the stakeholders have further increased.

### **Distinguished guests,**

The ECO Region has many strengths and great potentials to be explored; such as its strategic location, natural and human resources. I believe that the future of the region will be better and the ECO will be a suitable platform to benefit from.

Briefly, I would like to share with you two of my views which may contribute to future activities.

First, the trade potential and transportation opportunities are getting better in the region. It has the potential to link the countries of the region through railways, roads, ports and energy pipelines, not only among themselves but also to important external markets. "One belt, One road" project will have tremendous impact on the economic development of the region. Linking the ECO countries through these projects is also particularly important to enable the landlocked members of the region to access open seas.

The second, since the advancing in knowledge and technology are making the networking among the people easier, less costly and available. The People of this region, who are historically and culturally close to each other, will be the beneficiary of new developments. In this sense, ECO institutions can play significant role by developing cooperation among them on culture, science, education and other social issues.

### **Excellencies,**

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our next Secretary General, His Excellency Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, for this highly challenging job. I believe that during his tenure ECO will realize further achievements.

Once again, I would like to thank the head of the Member States, the members of the COM, the members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the representatives of the institutions for their generous supports throughout my tenure. I would like to appreciate the ECO Secretariat staff; the Directing Staff, Programme Officers, Secretaries, Stenos, Translators, IT and Technicians, Drivers and all other colleagues whose efforts substantially eased my worked in these three years. Specifically I want to thank the Iranian Government, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who made my life in Tehran easier and more comfortable. I would like to thank Representatives of International Organizations in Tehran who always supported me. And a specific thanks to the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E. Mr. Salah Zawawi, Ambassador of Palestine, who has always been with me as a wise man.

I also want to thank my friends and my family members who have always been with me during my tenure. And for those who worked hard to make this evening a happy and memorable one for me, a special thank.

**Good evening.**