

**Statement by: Mr. Ayhan Baran,
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for the Implementation of the Regional Program for Food Security
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**Honourable Secretary General,
Distinguished Representative of ECO Member States and ECO Institutions,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honor for me to participate to the 29th Regional Planning Council Meeting. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat for their great efforts and generous hospitality in organizing this meeting.

Esteemed Representatives, I would like to begin my words with some statistics for the ECO Region. As it's also in your knowledge, ECO member countries host a total of over 470 million people representing around 6% of the total world population. These countries differ from each other in their agricultural productivity and also in terms of demographic and economic structures. And as in the other parts of the world, the ECO Region also faces the problem of food insecurity. The number of undernourished people in ECO Region is about 54 million people. This number changes from country to country. And there are large variations in ECO member countries in terms of food security. Although, in many countries of the ECO, food security targets of the Millennium Development Goals to halve the population of chronic undernourishment have been achieved, about 11 percent of the population in the ECO countries suffers from chronic food insecurity.

The agriculture sector is for sure the backbone of the food security and the productivity of this sector can be an important factor in ensuring adequate availability of food. Agriculture sector are expected to lift agricultural productivity thereby improving food production.

The Regional Programme for Food Security has been prepared in order to support or initiate national programmes for food security and improve agricultural productivity. In this way, it is expected to facilitate the identification, prioritization and addressing the main impediments to food security at national and regional levels in the ECO Region.

Hereby, I would like to provide brief information about the activities of the ECO Regional Coordination Centre for the implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security since the last Regional Planning Council;

- First of all I would like to indicate that we have finalized the work plan for the first phase of ECO-RCC which organizes the actions of ECO-RCC with time and action. To achieve these missions' technical meetings were held between ECO-RCC and FAO Lead Technical Officer for food security. And it was decided to extend the first phase of the project until June 2019 in order to finalise the work plan.
- For the third Steering Committee Meeting, for obtaining more concrete outputs, it is postponed to the year 2019. And it was decided to hold it on 13-14th March 2019 in Antalya. We will organize a two day meeting; first day for the Steering Committee and the second day for the workshop and the launch of the study about the food security analyses in the ECO Region. on this occasion, I would like to call and encourage all Member States and Observers to attend the third Steering Committee Meeting.
- Moreover, for capacity building of ECO-RCC staff, Russian language courses have been held regularly.
- Agricultural country profiles and food security analyses of the ECO countries are in the progress. As I indicated before these studies are planned to be launched at the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting.
- And, the web portal for the RCC was updated with a new interface. And this new web site is providing access to key documents on the most recent activities of ECO-RCC including meeting minutes, work plans, progress reports and actively bulletins. The web site is available in three languages namely; Turkish, English, Russian. And also the web site is planned to serve as an information centre for the ECO countries on food security. We will be pleased to hear the additions especially to the country profiles part and also the general comments of the ECO countries.
- Furthermore, technical level meetings of ECO-RCC and FAO Lead Technical Officer were organized on a regular basis.

I would like to finish my words with emphasizing the importance of funding as in the previous year. In order to meet the needs of the beneficiary countries, we request the financial support of the member countries and international donors to commence and implement the projects under RPFS in a successful manner. And I would like to invite each Member State to participate the third steering committee meeting and reiterate my gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Secretariat for their great efforts and kind hospitality.

Thank you for your attention.