



24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)

Report

*November 9, 2019
Antalya, Republic of Turkey*

Report of COM

The 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held on November 9, 2019 in the Antalya city of the Republic of Turkey. The delegations of the Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyz Republic**, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, Republic of **Turkey** (host), **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** attended the meeting. The delegates of ECO Observers including Turkish Cypriot State and Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States also participated in the Meeting. The Heads/Representatives of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, and Affiliated Bodies as well as the ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by the Secretary General also attended the Meeting. *List of participants attached as Annex-I.*

SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

2. The agenda and relevant documents of the 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers were finalized by Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) preceded by COM on November 8, 2019.

3. During the Senior Officials' Meeting, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, ECO Secretary General extended his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 24th COM's Meeting and its preceding SOM in the beautiful city of Antalya as well as making excellent arrangements to convene these meetings. While welcoming the delegates from the Member States, he overviewed the preparations made for the meeting (s) and activities of the Organization ever since the 23rd Meeting of the COM (April 17, 2018, Dushanbe). Dr. Soleimanpour brought to the attention of the SOM the significant progress in the activities of the organization, including inter alia the approach adopted for evolving the organization to be more project-oriented one, measures taken for the implementation of ECO Vision 2025, the major steps taken for fulfillment of the objectives of the organization in the areas of trade, transit-transport, energy, tourism and organizational reforms (*Annex-II*).

4. H.E. Ambassador Faruk Kaymakci, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey, while taking the chair to lead the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), warmly welcomed and greeted the participants, wishing them a pleasant and wonderful stay in Antalya. He emphasized on the need for close regional cooperation among ECO Member States with a view to enhancing economic integration, connectivity, trade activities, energy security and sustainability as well as synergy in cultural and tourism spheres within the context of ECO Vision 2025. He noted that the underlined activities would lead the region towards economic prosperity, socio-economic and sustainable development in the region's largest interest.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING (COM)

Agenda Item No.1

Inauguration

5. The First Deputy Minister, on behalf of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Khusrav Noziri, called the meeting to order. In his welcome statement, he felicitated the Republic of Turkey to assume the COM's Chairmanship. He highlighted some of the significant developments made during Tajikistan's Chairmanship of the ECO to implement the organization's overall objectives in consonance with ECO Vision 2025, the emerging regional and global targets as well as other international developmental goals. Assuring Tajikistan's continued support to ECO's overall agenda, he stressed on the accelerated intra-regional trade and economic activities through joint and consistent policies, programmes and activities in various fields of cooperation among the ECO Member States for regional integration and socio-economic development. In the given context, he emphasized on implementation of ECOTA, transport corridors etc. (*Annex-III*). Later on, he invited H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour Secretary General of ECO to deliver his statement.

6. H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, ECO Secretary General welcomed the delegates and expressed his profound gratitude as well as appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the 24th Council of Ministers and Senior Officials Meetings in Antalya. He acknowledged with thanks the warm hospitality extended by Turkey to facilitate the visiting guests, expressing optimism that Turkey's leadership would certainly help and contribute to further flourishing the Organization as well as bringing prosperity and development in the entire ECO region. The ECO Secretary General also acknowledged the contribution of the Republic of Tajikistan, underlining some significant achievements made during their ECO's chairmanship.

7. Moreover, ECO Secretary General briefed on ECO's overall policies, programmes and activities carried out in the post-23rd COM's period that remained focused particularly on the (i) implementation of ECO Vision 2025, (ii) making the ECO a project-oriented organization, and (iii) fueling the spirit of ownership, partnership, and commitment to the mutual obligations by progressing towards implementation of the organizational and institutional reforms. He underlined the organization's activities having focus on six priority areas as per ECO Vision that include trade, transit-transport, tourism, energy, sustainable growth and social welfare (*Annex-IV*).

Agenda Item No.2

Election of the Chairman and Statement by the Chairman

8. H.E. Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey was unanimously elected as new Chairman of ECO Council of Ministers.

9. After the national anthem of the Republic of Turkey, the new Chairman extended his gratitude to the Council of Ministers for reposing confidence in him. He assured Turkey's consistent support to ECO and country's proactive role to realize and execute the organization's agenda for implementation of the ECO Vision 2025 in close coordination and cooperation of the Member States. He hoped that the ECO Projects would bring enhanced trade, regional integration through transport corridors, energy, tourism and cultural activities (*Annex-V*).

Agenda Item No.3

Adoption of the Agenda

10. The Council adopted the following agenda of its meeting, as proposed by the Senior Officials Meeting (*Antalya, November 8, 2019*):

Agenda

1. Inauguration
 - Welcoming Statement by the Chairman of the 23rd COM
 - Statement by the Secretary General
2. Election of the Chairman and Statement by the Chairman
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Statements by:
 - Ministers/Heads of Delegation
 - ECO Observers
 - Heads of Regional/International Organizations
 - Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies & Regional Institutions
5. Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General
6. Implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)
7. ECO Regional Projects (2019-2020)
8. ECO Vision 2025 Implementation: Progress and Assessment
9. ECO Reforms
10. ECO Scale of Assessments 2019; Scale of Assessments 2020-2025
11. Review and approval of ECO Activities:
 - Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings (229-243 CPR Reports)
 - Report of the 29th RPC Meeting: (Annual Calendar of Events 2019: Work Programme 2019)
 - Reports of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings
 - The ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2019 and 2020
 - Audit Reports 2017 and 2018
 - Appointments

12. Annual Reports of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/ Affiliated Bodies
13. Treaty Event
14. Antalya Communiqué
15. Any other business
16. Date and venue of the next meeting
17. Adoption of Report of the 24th Meeting of Council of Ministers
18. Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

Agenda Item No.4

Statements by:

- Ministers/Heads of Delegation

11. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs/Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States made their statements. They highlighted policies, action plans/programmes and activities within the frameworks of ECO being undertaken in their respective countries to increase cooperation in the region (*Annex-VI*).

- ECO Observers

12. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Cypriot State and Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic Speaking States also delivered statements as Observers (*Annex-VII*).

13. The Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions, including ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF), ECO Educational Institute (ECO-EI), ECO Trade and Development Bank, ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) and ECO Regional Coordination Center for the Implementation of Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RCC), the delivered brief statements and highlighting the overview of their undertaken activities and future plans (*Annex-VIII*).

Agenda Item No.5

Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General

14. The Council commended the Secretary General for his comprehensive report on activities of ECO made in the post-23rd COM period, emphasizing on the following:

- Follow-up of the decisions of 23rd COM Meeting

15. The Council reviewed the progress made since the 23rd COM and called on the Member States for continued cooperation to implement the decisions of the COM Meetings, in collaboration with their relevant entities as well as the ECO Secretariat.

- ECO Agreements/Treaties concluded among Member States

16. The Council considered the report on the latest status of agreements concluded amongst the Member States. In this context the Council while requesting the signatory Member States to expedite ratification of those Agreements to which they are signatory, the non-signatory Member States to consider joining the agreements. The Council also took note that following agreements would come into force by deposition of one or two instruments of ratification with the depositary: the Statute of the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM), the Statute of the ECO Regional Center of Anti Corruption Agencies Ombudsmen (RCCACO) and The Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI).

- Implementation of ECO Projects and Programmes

17. The Council reviewed and took into account the ECO projects and programmes included in the Secretary General's Report and desired the Secretariat and Member States to accelerate the implementation process on these projects.

- Financial Matters

18. The Council attached importance on timely meeting of the financial commitments made by the Member States. In this regard the Council encouraged Member State (s) to ensure timely payment of their budgetary shares to Organization in order to avoid hampering smooth discharge of the functioning of the Organization.

- ECO relations with International Agencies

19. The Council commended the endeavours of the ECO to promote and enhance cooperative linkage with regional and international organizations. It also assigned the Secretariat to further strengthen the existing relations with such organizations following the ECO Vision 2025 as well as recommendations of the various sectoral Meetings to increase the cooperative scope and visibility of the Organization.

Agenda Item No.6

Implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)

20. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECOTA Cooperation Council for the implementation of ECOTA, especially the endeavours made at its 8th Meeting to find a way forward. In this context, the Council urged contracting parties to convene the meetings of the Cooperation Council as provided for in the agreement, at least two times per year and instruct the Secretariat to take necessary measures to this end.

21. The Council urged ECOTA Cooperation Council to evaluate and find ways and means available to them to operationalize ECOTA.
22. The Council attached importance on convening the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of Economy/Development in 2020 as provided for to be held in Tajikistan which is expected to evaluate the economic status of the ECO region as well as operationalization of ECOTA by removing impediments coming in the way of its implementation.
23. The Council, while calling upon the non-signatory Member States to accede ECOTA, encouraged them to attend the meetings of ECOTA Cooperation Council.
24. The Council noted that some Member States including Iran, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Turkey considered that the operationalization of ECOTA could not still take place despite a lapse of considerable time. They also observed that only five Member States signed the agreement, seeking the remaining countries to also join ECOTA. It was also opined that in the aftermath of new developments, this agreement needs to be revisited for updating the contents in line with the emerging scenario.
25. The Council decided to convene a High-Level Expert Group Meeting to critically evaluate the ECO intra-trade situation and propose recommendations for a way forward.
26. The Council appreciated the Secretariat's document "Leveraging economic potential of ECO Region" and mandated the ECO CCI to make in depth research and analysis regarding the role of private sector in operationalization of ECOTA.

Agenda Item No. 7

ECO Regional Projects (2019-2020)

27. The Council acknowledged the initiative of the Secretariat for priority projects developed through the Sectoral Meetings to meet the objectives of ECO Vision 2025 and make the organization more project-oriented. Taking into account that ECO Vision Fund has not been yet established, the Council authorized CPR to double the existing ceiling of US\$ 50,000.00 under the Feasibility & General Purpose Fund (FGPF) for the implementation of the projects and utilize fund under the General Reserve Fund (GRF), for smooth implementation of projects.
28. The Council with the aim of development of maximum ten (10) bankable projects per year approved the expenditure of required amount to be

incurred from General Reserve Fund (GRF) for the recruitment of specialist by the Secretary General, entailing no extra financial implication for the Member States. It also noted that such recruitment under each project may be made only for a three months' non-renewable term within the limit of US\$ 10,000.

Agenda Item No.8

ECO Vision 2025 Implementation: Progress and Assessment

29. While appreciating the report on "Implementation Progress on ECO Vision 2025", the Council assigned the Secretariat to use available resources and approach the regional and international financial institutions for obtaining technical and financial support in order to execute programmes and projects in various sectors as enshrined in the ECO Vision 2025.

30. Taking into account the views and proposals made by the Member States to be given on the report, the Council encouraged the Member States to coordinate and extend full support to the Secretariat for ensuring the implementation of the ECO Vision 2025.

Agenda Item No. 9

ECO Reforms

31. The Council acknowledged the importance of steps taken under reform process aimed at increasing the sense of ownership among all Member States and enhancement of efficiency of the organization. In this regard, the Council appreciated the efforts made by the Council of Permanent Representatives as well as Secretariat to resolve the matter related to non-represented Member States i.e. Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

32. The Council appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic Republic of Pakistan to release two of their positions, each, to be reallocated to non-represented Member States as well as their gesture to relinquish one more post each for accommodating the under-represented Member States.

33. The Council made the following decision with regard to under-represented Member State-Afghanistan:

- The post of Programme Officer for Project & Economic Research and Statistics at P2 level released by the Islamic Republic of Iran will be upgraded to D1 level, as Head of Section of Judicial and Parliamentary Coordination & ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan. This upgraded post along with a post of Programme Officer at P2 level replacing the current post of Afghanistan at P1 level Steno-Secretary will be offered to Afghanistan upon materialization of two percent (2%) share of Afghanistan's contribution to ECO based on the scale of assessments 2020-2025;

34. In order to have a mechanism to adjust the unpaid contribution of Kazakhstan from 2014 to the end of 2018 to the ECO Budget and have more engagement from Kazakhstan to the ECO activities the Council approved the following:

- 1) The rate of contribution of Kazakhstan will be increased to 18% under the scale of assessments of Organization
- 2) The number and combination of posts of Kazakhstan under the new scale of assessments would be as follows:
 - 1 post of Deputy Secretary General is established to be offered to Kazakhstan;
 - 1 post of Head of Section (D1 level) is created by abolishment of the current post of Director of PERS at D2 level;
 - 1 post of Programme Officer at the Directorate of trade and investment (P2 level) (this post is created by retitling of the post of Assistant Accountant)
 - 1 post of Programme Officer at the Directorate of Energy, Minerals and Environment (P2 level): this post will be created by retitling of the current post of Translator of Kazakhstan;
 - 1 Post of Programme Officer at the Directorate of Transport and Communications (P1 level);
 - 1 post of Programme Officer at the Directorate of Agriculture and Industry (P3) or Interpreter (P3) depending on the needs of the Secretariat upon completion of the term of the service of the incumbent Kazakh interpreter.
- 3) With the implementation of this mechanism under the durations of new scale of assessments the adjustment of unpaid contributions of Kazakhstan to the ECO Budget will be settled.
- 4) Kazakhstan may voluntarily organize ECO events and to provide assistance to implement ECO projects.

35. While approving the ECO Secretariat's revised organizational chart, it mandated the Secretary General to develop job descriptions of the newly established posts and make the changes, if required, in work areas of these posts subject to approval of the CPR. (*Annex-IX*).

Agenda Item No.10

ECO Scale of Assessments 2019; Scale of Assessment 2020-2025

36. While taking note of the ECO Scale of Assessments for 2019 adopted by 233rd Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), the Council approved the Scale of Assessments for 2019 as follows based on the consultations held during the meeting:

No	Country	Percentage
1	Afghanistan	1.28
2	Azerbaijan	3.21
3	Iran	22
4	Kazakhstan	18
5	Kyrgyz R.	0.66
6	Pakistan	22
7	Tajikistan	1
8	Turkey	22
9	Turkmenistan	3.21
10	Uzbekistan	4
Total		97.36
Deficit		2.64

37. The Council also authorized the Secretary General to cover the deficit of 2.64% from General Reserve Fund (GFR), based on Article 10.1 under the Financial Regulation of the ECO.

38. The Council also considered the Secretariat's report on the ECO Scale of Assessments for the years 2020-2025 and approved the Scale of Assessments for 2020-2025 as follows:

No	Country	Percentage
1	Afghanistan	2
2	Azerbaijan	4*
3	Iran	22
4	Kazakhstan	18
5	Kyrgyz R.	1 **
6	Pakistan	22
7	Tajikistan	1
8	Turkey	22
9	Turkmenistan	4***

10	Uzbekistan	4
Total		100
Deficit		00

**The Republic of Azerbaijan noted that after completion of respective internal procedures, the share of Azerbaijan would be increased from 3.21% to 4%.*

***The Kyrgyz Republic noted that the share of contribution of Kyrgyz Republic remains at the rate of 0.66%, whereas possible increase would be further discussed after 2022.*

****Turkmenistan noted that the share of contribution of Turkmenistan remains at the rate of 3.21% for the financial year 2020.*

39. The Council, taking into account the aforesaid positions which resulted in a deficit amounting to 1.92% in the scale of assessments for the years 2020-2025, authorized the Secretary General to cover the deficit from General Reserve Fund (GRF).

Agenda Item No.11

Review and Approval of ECO Activities:

- Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings

40. The Council adopted the Reports of (229th to 243rd) Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR).

- Report of 29th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) along with (i) Annual Calendar of Events 2019 and (ii) Work Programme 2019

41. The Council considered and adopted the Report of the 29th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC), held on December 17-20, 2018 in Tehran along with ECO Work Programme 2019 and ECO Calendar of Events-2019, as endorsed by the 236th CPR Meeting (February 4, 2019).

- Reports of the Sectoral Ministerial Meetings

42. The Council considered and approved the Report (s) and Declaration (s) of the 9th Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the ECO Member States, held on May 3, 2018 in Turkmenbashi, as well as ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism held in Khujand on October 4, 2019. The Council urged the Member States to implement the decisions of these Meetings.

- ECO Secretariat's Budget for the Year 2019 and 2020

43. The Council approved ECO Secretariat's Budget for the Year 2019 and 2020 as endorsed/considered by 235th and 242nd Meetings of the CPR respectively. The Council urged the Member States to make timely payments

of their budgetary shares, enabling the organization to work in an efficient and effective manner.

- Audit Report 2017 and 2018

44. The Council examined and approved Audit Reports for the year 2017 and 2018, as recommended by 233rd and 242nd Meetings of the CPRs respectively.

45. The Council took note of the position of Republic of Uzbekistan with regard to Para-12 of the Audit Report for 2018 reflected in the report of 242nd CPR's meeting. The Council further decided to write off the arrears of Uzbekistan for the financial year of 2018 in line with the relevant decision made at 23rd COM meeting.

46. The Council also urged the Secretariat to fully implement the recommendations reflected in the Audit Reports.

- Appointments

47. The Council, as recommended by the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) CPR, approved the appointment of Mr. Sarvar Bakhti Mehmonovich (Tajikistan National) against the post of President of ECI for the term of three years as of the joining date. The Council further approved the extension of the tenure of the incumbent President of ECI, Dr. Mohammad Mehdi Mazaheri until the assumption of duties by the new President.

48. The Council approved the appointment of Dr. Seyed Komail Tayebi (Iranian National) nominated by the Islamic Republic of Iran against the post of President of ECO Science Foundation, as per the decision of the 4th Meeting of BoT of ECO Science Foundation, held on July 9, 2019 in Isfahan. However, the Council emphasized that the next nominee to the post of President of ECO Science Foundation should be a scientist.

49. The Council also appreciated the efforts of Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, the outgoing President of ECO Science Foundation and Dr. Mohammad Mehdi Mazaheri, the outgoing President of ECO Cultural Institute, for their excellent contributions to the development of these ECO bodies.

Agenda Item No.12

Annual Reports of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies

50. While considering the Annual Reports of the ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies, the Council commended

the activities of these institutions made to shoulder the economic growth and development in the ECO region. The Council further encouraged them for acceleration of such engagements with a view to securing the intended aims and objectives in line with ECO Vision 2025.

(i) ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)

51. The Council commended the ECO Science Foundation for its endeavours to promote the ECO agenda regarding regional development in the field of science and technology. The Council urged the Member States for provision of necessary financial support to help the ECOSF to meet its budgetary obligations, as well as participate in the activities of the institute. It also encouraged the remaining Member States to expedite their ratification process as regards Charter of Institute.

(ii) ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI)

52. While praising the accelerated engagements of the ECO Educational Institute, the Council encouraged the Member States to participate in the activities and programmes carried out by the Institute. The Council also desired the remaining Member States for early signing/ratification of the Charter of the Educational.

(iii) ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECO-TDB)

53. The Council acknowledged the contributory role of ECOTDB towards the medium and long-term financing with a view to helping and promoting sustainable development and integration in both the public and private sectors in the ECO Region. The Council also encouraged the TDB to develop appropriate modalities to finance and support the implementation of ECO regional projects.

54. The Council further desired the Member States for their continued support to the Bank with a view to strengthening its role. The Council also encouraged the Board of Governors of the Bank to consider implementation of regional projects for development of the ECO Region. It also called upon the Member States to consider the Membership of the Bank to expand the scope and network of the ECO Financing Institution.

(iv) ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI)

55. The Council appreciated the boosted efforts and enhanced activities of the ECO-CCI which are aimed to assist the expansion of regional trade activities and encouraged the Chamber to continue such endeavours to help execute the projects and programmes.

56. The Council also took note that Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted the 25th executive committee ECO-CCI event in Tashkent on December 18, 2018. In this context, the Secretary General of ECO-CCI thanked the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev for organizing this event.

(v) ECO Regional Coordination Center for the Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RCC)

57. While commending the engagements of the ECO Regional Coordination Center for Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security, the Council encouraged the Member States to participate in the activities and programmes carried out by the Center.

(vi) ECO Regional Center for Risk Management for Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM)

58. The Council while appreciating the activities of the ECO-RCRM encouraged the Member States to expedite the finalization of the statute of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management for Natural Disasters.

Agenda Item No.13

Treaty Events

59. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed the Statute of ECO Veterinary Commission.

Agenda Item No. 14

Adoption of Draft Antalya Communiqué

60. The Council unanimously adopted the Antalya Communiqué.

Agenda Item No. 15

Any other business

61. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 16

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

62. The Council tasked the Secretariat to ascertain willingness of the Member State (s) to host the 25th COM's Meeting through diplomatic channels.

Agenda Item No. 17

Adoption of Draft Report of the 24th COM Meeting

63. The Council unanimously adopted the Report of the 24th COM.

Agenda Item No. 18

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

64. The Meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to H.E. Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and Chairman of the 24rd COM for conducting the deliberations in an efficient manner. The Council also expressed sincere appreciation and extended gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for extension of warm hospitality to the delegations as well as making excellent arrangements for the 24th COM Meeting. It further commended outstanding SOM's chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Faruk Kaymakci, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey.

65. The Council also acknowledged the efforts of the ECO Secretary General and his team for their brilliant job to prepare comprehensive documents and assistance provided to enable the host country for successful holding of the 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers.
