

SG Statement for 30th RPC's opening Ceremony

**Your Excellency**

**Mr. Gholam Reza Ansari,**

**Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran,  
Excellencies,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Allow me to warmly welcome you to the ECO Headquarters and to the 30th Regional Planning Council (RPC) meeting here this morning. I am pleased to be with distinguished delegates and thank for their valuable participation in this event. Your presence here shows the commitment of your respective governments to the goals and objectives of the ECO. I would also like to thank the MFA of the IRI and the Missions of the Member States in Tehran for their contribution to convening this meeting and assistance extended to the participating delegates.

The RPC is a planning forum of our organization. It has the duty and capacity to review the past work programmes and evolve new projects and programmes to make the ECO an effective organization. The past year has been productive in many areas. Now, let me brief on our activities in different fields of cooperation, touching the prominent ones.

**Dear Participants,**

The Organization has made significant progress in implementing the ECO Vision 2025 over the course of the year 2019. First and foremost, the organizational reforms were approved by 24th COM to be implemented for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization, having more specialized managers as well as compatible organizational structure according to the priorities specified by the ECO Vision. Directorates such as tourism and posts such as Project Management Section and Economic Advisor were created to better follow and enforce RPC's decisions at both micro and macro levels.



Secondly, the proposed approach to transform ECO into a result and project-oriented organization was also approved by the honorable Ministers during their 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting. The Ministers, on one hand, considered the Secretariat's list of proposed projects for the year 2020, and on the other hand, taking into account the ECO Vision Fund has not been yet established, authorized the CPR to double the existing ceiling of 50,000 US dollars under the Feasibility and General Purpose Fund for the implementation of the proposed projects. The Council, with the aim of developing maximum 10 bankable projects per year, approved the expenditure of the required amount to be incurred from the General Reserve Fund over the recruitment of specialists by the Secretary General with the limit of US \$ 10000 each. This year, for the first time, the Secretariat prepared a booklet containing some project proposals in the ECO priority areas to be considered by the relevant sectoral committees. Such measures are important to make the organization more efficient and effective.

#### **Distinguished Colleagues,**

Having the Republic of Turkey as ECO's chair, the RPC may seize the opportunity of dedication, political will and the capacity of the first economy of the Region to fortify the regional economic integration and boost the organization's performance, growth and visibility. Thus, RPC is expected to introduce at least four major feasible projects for implementation in 2020. By implementing these projects, the visibility of the Organization may be increased according to ECO Vision and in the larger interest of the Region, making the organization more operational one. Furthermore, sectoral committees are expected to develop a kind of Calendar of Events containing (i) Coordination and Rule Making Meetings, such as sectoral ministerial events (ii) Meetings on the follow-up of projects' implementation as well as developing new project proposals (iii) Events related to Capacity Development. By this approach, the organization would be able to focus on the intended areas of work, avoiding unnecessary wastage of labour, money and time.



## **Excellencies,**

In 2018, the cumulative world trade of the ECO countries reached US\$ 806 billion. The ECO region is a net importer with deficit of US\$16 billion. In the same year, intra-ECO trade accounts for 8.1 percent of the total trade of its members, significantly modest amount compared to other economic blocks. These figures show that the current level of intra-ECO trade is still below its potential. According to the findings of a recent ECO study, there is a potential to increase the trade among the member states by ten-fold.

The main instrument to increase the trade among ECO member states is ECOTA. It is worth highlighting that we have taken a significant step up in 8th Meeting of ECOTA Cooperation Council in August this year. The Parties, as a way out, agreed to consider Secretariat's proposal of sectoral approach on ECOTA and convey their comments in three months for consideration by the 9th ECOTA Cooperation Council Meeting.

ECOTA remained on top of the agenda of the 24th COM. The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECOTA Cooperation Council for the implementation of ECOTA and attached importance on convening the 5th Ministerial Meeting of Economy/Development in 2020 scheduled to be held in Tajikistan, which is expected to evaluate the operationalization of the agreement, among others, by removing impediments in the way of its implementation. The relevant sectoral committee is also expected to mull over the possibility of developing a result-oriented approach to facilitate and enhance intra-trade activities in the region.

Efforts are under way to expand the membership of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), which is functioning progressively and professionally, and enhance contributions/capital from the Member States to play greater role in the economic development of the region. Taking this opportunity, I would request the remaining Member States to join the bank to expand its membership. The Secretariat, in consultation with the Bank, is



attempting to develop regional projects for prosperity and high dividends in the Member States.

Our efforts, in improving the region's financial-banking system, are not limited to ECOTDB. The Secretariat is also endeavoring to start another initiative, the "ECO Clearing Union" on the lines of Asian Clearing Union. In this regard, we are working for convenience of the member states in all areas particularly trade and investment in the region. The draft Agreement has been circulated and will be discussed in the forthcoming Experts Group meeting and thereafter Meeting of the Heads of the Central Banks expected to be held this year.

**Dear Colleagues,**

In transportation, TTFA provides the main framework for cooperation. With its support, in the regional railway transit, the Secretariat concentrated its efforts in realizing recommendations of the Turkmenbashi Declaration adopted by the 9th Ministerial Meeting on Transport of ECO on May 1-3 2018, Turkmenistan. Under the mandate given by the Ministers on early operationalization of the existing railway routes, the Secretariat brought the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities together on 20-21 June 2019 in Dushanbe where they discussed the relevant issues. To develop practical steps, the Secretariat then organized 10th High-Level Working Group Meeting on the ITI Container Train (20-21 August 2019, Ankara), which took concrete actions to start the ITI Train from October 2019 onwards.

Furthermore, early operationalization of another railway route, notably, Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran, (KTI) is imminent, as scheduled by the joint ESCAP-ECO Study Project.

To implement another task envisaged in Turkmenbashi Declaration, the Secretariat organized, on 6 May 2019, in Tehran, the 5th Meeting of Heads of Reference Maritime Organizations of the ECO Member States. The Meeting approved newly initiated project proposal on Sea Ports-to-Dry Ports aiming at the establishment of complementary networking between ECO's coastal countries, Sea Ports with ECO's landlocked countries' Dry Ports.



The concrete follow up actions have been taken on the field study on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Corridors since recruitment of the international consultant in July 2017. Besides, there have been made some revisions on the statistics by incorporating trading statistics between corridor en route countries for 2018 and a draft Action Plan has been also prepared. It was finalized by 5th meeting of HLWG on ITI and 4th meeting of HLWG on KTAI held on 25-26 November 2019 in Tehran.

**Dear Colleagues,**

We have also made progress in the energy sector. The Secretariat has begun implementing the energy sector relevant plans and objectives of the Vision by focusing on non-fossil fuels. Over the past year, two projects, to create ECO Joint Electricity Market (ECO-REM) and the establishment of the ECO Clean Energy Center have been in the agenda of the ECO. ECO-REM project in collaboration with Energy Charter, will soon be implemented by hiring an international consultant.

The ECO Clean Energy Center (ECO-CEC) project is being implemented in partnership with UNIDO and the Austrian Government by employing a Canadian consultant to be hopefully come to fruition in February 2020. The ultimate objective of the Center is to create ECO Clean Energy Corridors. These energy corridors will be considered along with the ECO Energy Plan of Action (POA) which will be revised for approval at the 2021 ECO Ministerial Meeting of Energy in Baku. Creating a gas pipeline ring between members to facilitate gas trade and transit in the region are part of this POA. Progress in this field and the enhancement of cooperation in the energy sector more than any other area require the support of Member States. The Secretariat is also ready to cooperate with members in conducting market studies and establishing mechanisms for cooperation in trilateral or multilateral energy projects among some member states.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**



The 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Baku on 4 December 2019 provided an important platform for approving the implementation of ECO-VECO projects for an effective prevention mechanism against TADs and promoting the intra-trade of animal and animal products in the region as well as the “FTPP-II Multi-country Project Proposal on Seed Sector Development Priority Area” as a step for harmonization of the seed sector in the ECO Region. The project proposals titled “ECO Regional Agricultural Research and Innovations Network (ECO-RARIN) and “Support for Development of Organic Production, Certification and Market Integration in the ECO region” will soon be implemented to increase cooperation and efficiency in Agriculture in the ECO region.

On the other hand, we have also come to a conclusion to establish an information exchange mechanism among the member states to facilitate installing a comprehensive early warning system over ECO region in the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Heads of Meteorological Organizations meeting on 12-13 November 2019 in Tehran.

On industry, as you are well aware, the 6th Meeting of ECO Heads of Privatization Administrations, preceded by the 5th HLWG Meeting on Privatization and Private Sector Development was held on 25-26 October 2018 in Baku, the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Meetings were so fruitful and during the Meetings three new projects on Privatization were proposed by the Secretariat, and the 29th RPC Meeting welcomed the offer of new Projects on Privatization. I would like to appreciate those MSs who conveyed their views on draft project proposals and latest developments on Privatization in their countries.

2019 proved to be a fruitful year for ECO Tourism. The 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism was held on 3-4 October 2009, in Khujand, Tajikistan. I appreciate the Republic of Tajikistan for hosting these fruitful Meetings. The Ministerial meeting adopted the ECO Regional Action Plan, ECO Principles



for Sustainable Tourism Development and also three new projects on tourism. All Member States are requested to actively contribute in the process of implementing the said projects.

**Dear Colleagues,**

ECO Region has been undergoing natural hazards, such as earthquakes, floods, drought and landslides. The draft ECO Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, developed in 2017 and finalized in 2018 to reduce economic and humanitarian losses and expected to complement the implementation of Sendai Framework, and endorsed by the 28th RPC, now awaits for consideration and approval of the 8th Ministerial Conference on DRR which is due to be hosted by Turkey.

**Dear Colleagues,**

As ECO, we must support and facilitate the social and economic development of Afghanistan, deeply affected by conflicts. In line with ECO's earlier and fresh commitments, the ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (EAPA) was adopted by the 23rd COM in April 2018. Under the adopted EAPA, the modalities for the operation of the ECO Fund for Afghanistan were developed to shoulder the country's efforts for reconstruction and development. In the given backdrop, the ECO Secretariat remains ever-willing and receptive to support the processes and interactions aimed at securing peace, stability, development and economic growth in Afghanistan.

**Dear participants and guests,**

Before I conclude, I wish all of you happy and memorable stay in Tehran known for its beauty and long traditions of warm hospitality.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by the Secretary General at the Closing Ceremony  
of 30<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting**

It is a matter of great gratification for me to express once again my sincere thanks and gratitude to all ECO member states, particularly I.R. of Iran as the headquarter host, for their support to hold the 30th RPC Meeting. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Delegates who have come all the way from their respective countries to participate in this meeting and enrich our discussions. I would also like to thank to the Heads of Sectoral Committees as well as ECO Directorates, Heads of Sections and program officers who participated in the sectoral meetings and prepared the necessary documents, for their hard work and diligent efforts that they have put into completing them.

I am deeply indebted to the Drafting Committee, stenos, translators and other colleagues from ECO Secretariat whose efforts substantially contributed to the quality of the meeting. Thank you for making the meeting a success.

**Excellencies,**

In the last three days, eight Committees in different areas from trade, transport, energy, agriculture, international relations, judicial and parliamentary coordination, tourism and sustainable development had intensive and fruitful meetings. The Committees



put a great deal of efforts to transform the organisation into project and result oriented one by endorsing the "Calendar of Events" which to large extent includes events connected in one way or another to the implementation of a project that are the results of the decisions of the sectoral Ministerial Meetings and/or hard work by the Secretariat.

**Dear Colleagues,**

The year 2020 will be a busy year for the Secretariat as you have already deliberated in your respective Committee meetings. During the course of the year, there will be eight Ministerial Meetings on Economy, Trade, Transport, Energy, DRR, Agriculture, Tourism and industry which we need to make huge amount of preparations to make these meetings a success.

We will have a Summit, the last one of which happened to be on March 2017 in Islamabad, Pakistan, which is the most important event of ECO. And for this Summit the Organs of the ECO should take tangible results out of their works to present to our leaders there.

**Dear Participants,**

As we all see, this RPC considered some new initiatives in place. These initiatives include the further involvement of the ECO



Specialised Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated bodies as well as increasing the coordination mechanisms among them to better serve the needs of the peoples of the ECO region. The increasing involvement of the private sector in the ECO works is another initiative we attribute importance as in the case of Involvement of ECO Commerce recently. Increasing involvement of think and tanks and bodies related to innovation, science and technology will be among our agenda in the coming future.

Regarding the new initiatives on the meetings that will increase the visibility of the organisation we can make reference to the events on tourism, sports, media and flagship project, among others which are already in the Calendar of Events.

Regarding the trade, I believe that in the year ahead of us presents ample opportunities to reach the long awaited agreement in this area. We will have two ECOTA Cooperation Council Meeting and the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade. I am sure that, if we can make use of opportunities these Meetings present us, a significant way forward will be opened up in Trade.

### **Excellencies,**

This heavy programme before us would not mean anything accept we can implement it properly. In this regard, we have



agreed with Turkey, the present Chair of the Organisation, for the first time in the ECO to have a mid-term Review of RPC to be hosted by the Chair of the Organisation to evaluate the progress in the specified areas in this RPC in this year.

**Excellencies,**

I assure you that we at Secretariat will try our best to achieve all the targets and goals identified by our delegates during the review Committee meetings in efficient and diligent manner. At the end, I once again thank all the member states, delegates and staff of the Secretariat for making this meeting a success and wish safe journey back for the delegates.

Thank you for your attention



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Gholamreza Ansari,  
Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Head of Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
In the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council  
January 14, 2020, Tehran**

**Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset I would like to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to all the participants at the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization and wish you all a pleasant and memorable stay in Tehran

I would also like to express my appreciation to **H.E. Mr. Hadi Soleimanpour**, ECO Secretary General and his colleagues in the Secretariat for making arrangements for the successful conduct of this event.

**Distinguished guests,**

More than thirty years ago we founded ECO to provide a platform to discuss ways to improve sustainable economic development of its Member States and the Region as a whole and promote trade and investment opportunities. We have come a long way to achieve this goal and we have a long way to go. It has taken years to achieve the position we are now in but given the potential of the Member States, expectations are much higher. With a population of about half a billion people, incredible supply of energy, abundance of mineral resources, and a vast market, geographical, historical and cultural affinity, the Economic Cooperation Organization promises a bright future for all our nations. These assets as a valuable

heritage put increasing responsibility on all ECO Region States and ECO helps us to fulfill our duty in a wider framework and share burden of responsibility to promote sustainable socioeconomic development for the people of the Region.

**Distinguished delegates,**

According to ECO Vision 2025, as ECO's roadmap for the next decade, Main areas of cooperation include transportation, Energy, trade, and tourism. Corridor development and corridor management activities are considered as an institutional priority in the transport sector. Our policy is in line with this priority and to functionalize corridors we have invested huge amounts to develop the missing links. However, there are major projects awaiting implementation by the Member States, particularly Transit, Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA).

To help Member States, including landlocked countries, to reach to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean our ports particularly, Chabahar strategic port provide facilities for traders and merchants from public and private sectors to develop trade relations with the outside world.

"ECO Vision 2025" stipulates the enhancement of energy security and sustainability through wider energy access and trade as one of ECO's strategic objectives. While enjoying huge reserves of oil and gas, Islamic republic of Iran plays an important role in securing energy not only in the region but throughout the world. At the same time we support any development of renewable and energy efficiency policies in the region. We also welcome further streamlining solutions and mechanisms for regional cooperation on sustainable energy development. Taking into account all the potentials in the energy sector, we need collective action plan to reach a common framework of cooperation which the Organization lacks.

**Distinguished delegates,**



Based on statistics provided by the Secretariat the total trade of the ten ECO countries amounted to US\$ 804 billion in 2018. Intra-Regional trade is US\$ 65 billion which accounts for 8 percent of the total trade of the ECO Member States in 2018. The share of the ECO region in the world trade is 2.1 % as against its population of 6.2% of the world population. These figures reflect the need for development and integration of ECO region with the world economy and within the region.

We do believe that, the intra-regional trade requires special consideration of all Member States. In order to increase total trade of the ECO Member States which is far below our expectations, bilateral and multilateral procedures for simplification and harmonization of regional trade is considered necessary to help make trade in the region faster, and cheaper and more predictable. Carrying out financial transactions with national currencies, bartering, cutting costs and reducing delays and speeding up customs clearance are some approaches which need to be strengthened. To help promote and facilitate commercial and business transaction we have available mechanisms particularly ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), ECO Trade agreement (ECOTA) and Agreement on promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) which require political will of all Member States to come in to force efficiently.

In the area of tourism development it is also worth reminding that, a significant potential in the region for tourism cooperation, requires the ECO Region a coherent program. As it was emphasized at the 3<sup>rd</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, held on early October 2019 in Khujand, Republic of Tajikistan, we welcome any programs which strengthen networking of all tourism stakeholders, establishing an e-based platform using new technologies and sharing knowledge and best practices to organize co-creation based activities.

## **Excellencies,**

I would also like to draw your attention to an important issue of ECO Reform Process which was partially concluded in the recent COM meeting in Antalya. ECO Reform Process has been initiated 5 years ago aiming at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness and also giving the opportunity to all Member States to feel sense of ownership. The Islamic Republic of Iran has fully supported the process and shown maximum flexibility to accommodate the other Member States. We appreciate the Secretariat's efforts made in this regard and request all Member States to focus on the main objective of the Process which is creating a more efficient and effective ECO.

It is expected, the Member States to demonstrate serious interest in ECO affairs and attach it the level of priority it deserves. Without their active and serious involvement, realization of the goals set out would remain elusive. We are all expected to honor, in good faith, their commitments by serious implementation of decisions taken at the Summit, COM, RPC and CPR levels.

I am confident that our organization can achieve its goals provided that all Member States play an active role in their capacity. The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to continue its full support and advocacy policy towards the ECO to accomplish its valuable goals and programs.

At the end I hope the meeting will be valuable forum for in-depth discussions which will lead to realistic and tangible outcomes.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**



**Opening Statement by H.E. Hayri MARAŞLIOĞLU,  
Vice President of the Strategy and Budget of the  
Presidency of the Republic of Turkey  
30th Meeting of the  
Regional Planning Council (RPC)  
14<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

**Opening Statement by H.E. Hayri MARAŞLIOĞLU,  
Vice President of the Strategy and Budget of the  
Presidency of the Republic of Turkey,  
30th Meeting of the ECO-Regional Planning Council (RPC)  
14th January 2020**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

H.E. Gulamreza Ansari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic  
diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

H.E. Hadi Soleimanpour, ECO Secretary General

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatuh

Excellencies,

It is a great pleasure for me and my delegation to be with you here in  
this beautiful city of Tehran on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Regional Planning Council (RPC).

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Islamic Republic of  
Iran for meticulous arrangements and generous hospitality and to the  
ECO Secretariat for excellent preparations for the success of this  
Meeting. I hope discussions and deliberations during the meeting will  
further enhance our cooperation in the ECO region.

Distinguished Delegates,

We are passing through difficult times in our geography both in terms  
of political and economic issues and dimensions. With 8 million  
square kilometers of land area and with a population of nearly half a  
billion people, we have a huge potential to contribute to the solution  
of these issues and problems. However, we were unable to fully utilize  
the potential.



Within this context, as ECO member countries, we should enhance mutual understanding, dialogue, cooperation and solidarity among us. We also need more ownership, more enthusiasm and focus in our cooperation efforts.

Distinguished colleagues,

Unfortunately, so far, Organization's ambitious trade targets have been far from being achieved. The current level of intra-ECO trade, which is about 8%, is far below its potential. This requires some urgent measures to be taken for enhancing intra regional trade.

As we are well aware that free trade and regional trade arrangements are indispensable components of successful regional cooperation and integration. Where as, ECO is still one of the few regional cooperation initiatives that could not yet operationalize its main and flagship trade agreement, ECOTA. Therefore, the most important and urgent task for us is the operationalization of ECOTA at the earliest.

As the financial arm of our cooperation in terms of its membership, resources and outreach, we give utmost importance to the ECO Bank as one of the founding members as well as one of the largest shareholders. We are aware that ECO Bank is doing successful trade and project financing operations. We are confident that Bank's performance will be improved further with the participation of new members. A robust trade finance programme under ECO Bank will also contribute to enhancing our intra-regional trade enormously as it is envisaged by ECO Vision 2025. We should keep in mind that close cooperation between the ECO Bank members is critical for increasing the operational effectiveness of the Bank.

Esteemed Participants,

The strategic location of the ECO Region necessitates more focus on regional transportation. Promoting internal and external trade, economic use of natural resources, mobility of skilled labor-force and



diversification of markets directly require a well-functioning transport industry, large transport investments, effective transport coordination among the ECO member countries. In this respect, effective implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and smooth and efficient functioning of the ECO road and railway projects especially ITI Road Corridor, ITI and Istanbul-Almaty Railway Projects are extremely crucial for the ECO Region.

As Turkey, we attach utmost importance to the transport cooperation among the ECO Member Countries. Baku-Tbilisi and Kars (BTK) Railway Project, Istanbul Airport, Marmaray Project are some of the most important projects successfully completed which directly contribute to the development of regional transport. Furthermore, we recorded several achievements for facilitating transportation in the ECO Region. Since the last RPC Meeting several important developments were achieved with respect to the ECO ITI Container Train. First, the Gebze-Halkalı Railway connection of the Marmaray Project has been successfully completed. Second, the construction of the two fast high-capacity ferries for transportation on Van Lake for the Tatvan-Van segment has been successfully completed. Third, the passenger trains on the Tabriz-Van segment have been launched.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The agricultural sector provides significant contributions to our economies as well as generates an important source of employment for our people. As it is well known, ECO has initiated several programs and institutions in this critical sector. We attach particular importance to the effective functioning of these initiatives.

In this respect, the ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC) can play a significant role in terms of enhancing cooperation among our countries towards ensuring food security and developing agricultural sector in our region. We believe that ECO-RCC is an important asset for our member countries for the realization of the



concrete projects in this realm. Therefore, we would like to invite our member countries to benefit from the facilities of this Center.

Distinguished Delegates,

In the last part of my statement, I would like to touch upon a few issues which I deem critically important for the future of ECO.

Even since the ECO's enlargement towards a 10 member country organization in 1992, 28 years have passed. ECO has come a long way. The critical question is as follows: What have we been able to produce for our people in the span of these long years? In fact, as ECO family, we have accumulated a good deal of experience and a good stock of achievements as well as failures and shortcomings on regional cooperation.

First of all, as a setback to our cooperation, we have inserted too many diverse issues and subjects on our agenda and we have burdened our basket too much. With this heavy burden, we have lost our focus in our cooperation endeavors.

As a case point, now there are a lot of meetings in our basket waiting for a host country for several consecutive years and there are a lot of postponed events due to lack of interest from Member Countries. This does not seem manageable.

In the Working Papers of ECO Directorates and Units this year, there are so many calls to Member countries for hosting events. Some of these calls are being repeated for several years.

We have to clean our table. We have a simple proposal to that end. If there is no volunteering host country for a specific activity for 2 or 3 consecutive years, we can put these meetings aside until there is a renewed interest from the member countries.

If there is a host country but the meeting could not be held due to lack of quorum for several years, then if the offering country wishes to



continue inviting MC's to this meeting it is most welcome but if not we can also release them of their offers after let's say 3-4 years. We can also make exceptions to some limited strategic events.

I would like to propose that the Secretariat may work on a formula for insertion into our report if the august house agrees.

Esteemed delegates

As the Republic of Turkey, as the current chair of ECO, we are eager to take all required steps for a more efficient ECO cooperation.

In this respect, we attach great importance to the ECO Vision 2025, which was approved by 13th ECO Summit Meeting in 2017 in Islamabad. The Vision is a framework of our cooperation which will guide our cooperation efforts and bring focus and attention to the ECO activities in the upcoming years.

For the effective implementation of the Vision, we have to act in a focused and result-oriented manner.

The ongoing reform process provides an important opportunity for us to improve our work. In this vein, we attach particular importance to the proposals of the Eminent Persons Group which are very precious inputs to be utilized in this process. We believe that this process would be completed expeditiously with the contributions of our esteemed member countries.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Before concluding my remarks, I want to express that this meeting has special importance for my own self as well, as this is my last trip to Tehran as a government officer since I will be retiring next week.

I wish all success for the 30th RPC Meeting and hope our deliberations will further enhance our cooperation efforts.

Thank you very much.

Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatuh.





**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**  
**Ministry of Economy**

**Statement by Afghan Head of Delegation at the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning  
Council**

**January 14 – 16 2020**

**Tehran – Iran**

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Your Excellency Dr. Suleimanpour Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization,  
Honorable Head of Delegations, ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, let me to express my gratitude and feeling of honor to represent the Islamic Republic  
of Afghanistan at 30<sup>th</sup> ECO RPC Meeting in ECO Secretariat.

Today as key policy makers of our countries we are here to review the annual performance of  
29<sup>th</sup> RPC and set agendas for 30<sup>th</sup> ECO Working Program for in 2020 in order to have the  
economic stability and prosperity for our present and futures generations, it is our key duty to  
leave well-built countries for our upcoming generations in the region through ECO framework.

I deeply appreciate the His Excellency Dr. Suleimanpour and his Colleagues in ECO Secretariat  
for them afford made to make this meeting happens and request all member states delegations to

success the 30<sup>th</sup> RPC meeting with close cooperation and sharing of constructive comments and ideas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ECO has been playing crucial roles to enhance and utilizing the economic opportunities in region to benefit Afghanistan and other member states, but still there is huge gap and shortage for further cooperation and collaboration among the ECO organization and other member states

Afghanistan as an active member of ECO organization committed and dedicated on implementation of ECO Agendas.

Afghanistan was mandated by over a hundred follow up activities in the area of Trade, Investment, Transport, Communication, Energy, Environment, Agriculture, Industries, Tourism, Human Resource, Sustainable Development, Judicial and Parliamentary and ECO International Relation in 29<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council in 17- 20 December 2018 in Tehran Iran.

Afghanistan made some signs of progress on some sections of the following up activities of 29<sup>th</sup> RPC, some are highlighted as:

Recently has been some improvement on ECO Trust Fund for Afghanistan which include the transfer of the bank account from London to Kabul branch bank, as well the establishment of an internal technical committee.

The procurement process of the first phase of KATI projects (43 km) is completed, contract is awarded to a company. survey and design of second phase (44 km) completed and the construction work might be started in the first quarter of 2020. We are grateful to the Republic of Uzbekistan is willingness to finance some part of this project within Afghanistan with the amount of 500 Million USD.

Afghanistan is working closely with ECO Secretariat and other its friend member states to implement and accomplish the RPCs follow up activities, goals, agreements and projects. These measures have been taken with consistency of the ECO Vision for 2025.

Afghanistan with its unique location is able to act as linking ring among central, south and middle east countries and play an extraordinary roles regional and economy and stability.



consequently, we fully encourage all member states to find appropriate solutions for adoption of the ECO Trade agreement (ECOTA).

Afghanistan as an active member of the ECO organization tries and wishes the best for success and constructive dialog for RPC 30<sup>th</sup>.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is other good news from Afghanistan, we will never accept more delay and pause on ECO Afghanistan Trust Fund, it will be resumed again and it is targeted to spend most of the stacked amount of this account. We kindly require the support of all member states, specially the ECO Secretariat.

At the end I reiterate Afghanistan is fully support and remains committed to the principle and objectives of the ECO as productive regional platform and appreciate the ECO Secretariat for esteemed cooperation and continues support for Afghanistan.

H.E Mr. Ismail Rahimi Deputy Minister of Economy the head of Afghan delegations and other technical expertise were planned to participate in 30<sup>th</sup> ECO RPC meeting, because limited and inadequate flights to Tehran, it wasn't happened.

Let me conclude by first of all thanking the ECO Secretariat for organizing this magnificent gathering.

I believe this meeting will improve the relations among the member states and will develop the cooperation in the region.

Active participation of us will contribute in achieving our common and individual goals and objectives and with the help of Almighty Allah we shall succeed.

**Thank You So Much for Kind Attention**

**STATEMENT**  
**by H.E. Ambassador Bunyad Huseynov**  
**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Economic Cooperation**  
**Organization (ECO),**  
**30th ECO Regional Planning Council meeting**

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

Let me on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to express my greetings to all participants of the 30th ECO Regional Planning Council meeting and express my appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for the efforts in organizing this event.

The recent developments in and around our region proved once more the importance of developing closer regional cooperation among our nations and the role of ECO in this context is important. Azerbaijan as one of the member-states of the ECO has always supported the main goals and objectives of the Organization and made a significant contribution in the form of specific actions in enhancement of regional synergy and various partnership framework, in the areas of transport, energy, agriculture and trade.

It is important to highlight the development of transport and connectivity issues among priority areas, as an essential component for the regional trade development. Azerbaijan strives to use its transit and trade potential, by transforming the transportation system and services into one of the key points of its economy. With this in mind, by developing its transit potential, Azerbaijan strives to diversify and modernize its transport infrastructure, which will serve the interconnection of the Trans-European and Trans-Asian railway networks. Along with this, the New International Sea Trade Port and its International Logistic Centre has significantly increased the competitiveness of the international transport corridors and transit capacity of the countries of the region.

We do believe that, one of the priorities of the ECO agenda should be taking actions on the interconnection of ECO rail networks and the development of unified railway infrastructure of the region. I would like to inform you that 90% of total works on "Qazvin-Rasht" railway project is completed. "Astara (Iran)–Astara (Azerbaijan)" railway has already been launched. This project is an important step towards completion of North-South Transport Corridor. We are convinced that an early completion of this project will give new impetus to economic growth, expand transport opportunities for concerned countries as well as the ECO region.

It's my pleasure to inform you that 6<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture was successfully held on December 3-4, 2019, in Baku. The meeting, beyond any doubts, took the participants to a great advantage to address the comprehensive regional strategy for sustainable development of agriculture in the region. The Baku Declaration on cooperation in agriculture and food security in the region has been adopted by the Ministers.

It also should be mentioned that the "ECO Regional Agriculture Research and Innovation Network (ECO-RARIN) Concept Paper" has been sent to the Secretariat in November 2019.

**Distinguished participants,**

Our Organization with its 10 member states, covering a large geography, connecting two big continents and gathering millions of people, have an incomparable space for cooperation in a



different fields. That is why, we should double our efforts, develop present economic cooperation and to find new fields for the future cooperation. Our rich culture, ancient history, priceless monuments and architecture, amazing nature, marvelous music, delicious food etc. can become a new page for our future cooperation. With this in mind, we propose to ECO Secretariat and the member states to strengthen potential of cooperation in the field of tourism.

We expect that current reform process within ECO will help to boost the Organization's role as an important regional player. In this regard, we support initiatives to consolidate the work of all related bodies and remove the existing shortcomings.

In order to improve the efficiency of ECO, non-economic activities should be limited. Instead of organizing numerous meetings, we consider it more important to hold those meetings which contribute to the preparation, implementation and coordination of economic projects beneficial for the region, and which attract financial resources. Azerbaijan is planning to continue hosting important ECO events in future for achieving key objectives of the Organization.

The New ECO Vision for 2016-2025 which is currently under preparation needs to reflect the interests of all Member States and define the development agenda for the region and set the strategic direction of the Organization for the coming decade. Azerbaijan supports this reforming process that via joint efforts can enhance efficiency of current institutions and provide a possibility for elaboration of actions for further development of the ECO.

In conclusion, I would like to wish you success during panel meeting of the regional planning and meetings of review committees and thank once again the ECO Secretariat for organizing this event.

Thank you for attention!

Remarks of H.E. Askhat Orazbay,  
Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Iran,  
Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to ECO  
at the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council  
(January 14, 2020)

**Your Excellency, the Secretary General,  
Your Excellency, the Chairman,  
Dear Colleagues!**

First of all, I extend my profound gratitude to the Secretary General and to Mr. Chairman for all efforts you made prior to this meeting and we are looking forward to a productive discussions under your guidance.

I also praise the ECO Secretariat for the excellent preparatory work.

The role of RPC is very important as it provides a good opportunity to review past programs by evaluating their success and shortcomings as well as to consider and approve proposed new programs and events.

As we all know, last year the ECO reform process was successfully completed and now our Organization is hoped to step on the path of implementation of real projects which will benefit the whole ECO region under the wise Turkish Chairmanship.

I therefore highlight the importance of this particular RPC meeting in turning ECO into a project-oriented organization.

In this regard, I wish all of us fruitful discussions during various sectoral meetings with concrete outcomes thus providing future course of action for 2020.



## **Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Kazakhstan attaches a great importance to its membership in ECO. A prerequisite for that is the huge potential of our region for multilateral cooperation.

Having increased our annual contribution from 16 to 18 percent and being granted a permanent post of Deputy Secretary General, we will put our efforts in making our common Organization as effective as possible.

In this context, I join my other colleagues who spoke before me that it is very important to increase the outcomes of cooperation within the ECO, which directly depends on the practical content, meaningful agenda and the availability of promising projects.

That is why I call upon the Secretariat and the Regional Planning Council to focus on implementation of real economy projects for the sake of our people and our countries.

The quality of ECO planning has to be improved. It is necessary to adhere to the mechanism that does not allow the inclusion in the ECO calendar of activities that do not gain sufficient quorum and do not generate any cost effective results.

Cost optimization of activities of the ECO Secretariat should be also the top priority.

Once again I wish this RPC meeting successful work and mutually beneficial achievements.

**Thank you for your kind attention!**



## SPEECH

Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic  
at the 30th Regional Planning Council Meeting of the  
Organization for Economic Cooperation (ECO)  
(Teheran, January 14-16, 2020)

---

**Honorable Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies, Heads of Delegates,  
Distinguished Secretary General,  
Dear guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

On behalf of the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic, allow me welcome all the participants at the 30th ECO Regional Planning Council Meeting and thank the ECO Secretariat for the excellent arrangements of the 30th RPC and for the conditions arranged for the work of the participants in our meeting.

**Dear Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,**

Today's RPC provides us with an important opportunity to summarize the main results of our cooperation over the past period and discuss the prospects of the common potential of our countries for the development of regional cooperation in the framework of the ECO.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that the Kyrgyz Republic has always been committed to the principles of mutually beneficial regional economic integration with the member countries of the Organization.

The ECO region possesses all the necessary potential, including large human and scientific resources, huge natural resources, an extensive network of communications. Therefore, we expect ECO to be able to truly become an effective



instrument for regional integration in modern conditions for the benefit of the prosperity of all member countries of the Organization.

### **Distinguished participants,**

In order to realize expanded regional cooperation and economic growth and development of our region, we must be determined to develop and implement strategies in such priority areas of our economies as Trade, Transport and Communications, Energy, Tourism, Economic Growth, Social Welfare and the Environment. Considerable attention should also be paid to continuation of cooperation in the fields of agriculture, customs cooperation, science and health.

The Kyrgyz Republic considers these priority areas of cooperation as integral components of strengthening the national economies of our countries.

Taking into account the dynamics of political, socio-economic and scientific-technological developments at the regional and global levels, and also considering the capacities of our Organization, ECO member states should make an active effort to further integration of our economic systems by facilitating free trade through enhanced collaboration.

In order to resolve economic issues, the priority should be given for creation and development of a regional infrastructure, including a single extensive transport network, telecommunications, pipelines and energy systems, since the development of regional infrastructure is a prerequisite for effective intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation in all other areas of interaction.

The ECO Secretariat is implementing a number of important projects in the field of food security and sustainable agricultural development in the region. This direction should be even more developed and strengthened.

Cooperation between countries in the field of tourism is becoming more active. The countries of our region have significant tourist and recreational potential and have great opportunities for the development of international tourism. The Kyrgyz Republic will assist the further development of cooperation in the field of tourism, which is promising for all of us.

**Dear Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Distinguished guests and participants of the Meeting,**

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the ECO member states having all the relevant potential, and being the center of the Eurasian continent, are able to fulfill and realize their goals and objectives. The goals of our Organization are to make our region one of the worthy and important player in the global economic system, with the good will of all our member states.

Let me once again thank the ECO Secretariat for the excellent organization of the 30th ECO RPC, and also wish everyone peace and prosperity.

Thank you for attention.



**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Nasar Iqbal,  
Chief, International Trade & Finance Section  
Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives  
Head of Delegation of Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

**on  
30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO-Regional Planning Council (RPC)  
14-16 January, 2020**

\*\*\*\*\*

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim  
His Excellency Mr. Chairman,  
H.E. Hadi Soleimanpour, ECO Secretary General  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatuh

**Excellencies,**

It is a great pleasure for me and my delegation to be with you here in this beautiful city of Tehran on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC). I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for meticulous arrangements and generous hospitality and to the ECO Secretariat for excellent preparations for the success of this Meeting. I hope discussions and deliberations during the meeting will further enhance our cooperation in the ECO region.

**Mr. Chairman,** I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the meeting. I am sure your guidance will help us in taking appropriate decisions for the mutual benefits of all the people living in the Member States.

Availing this opportunity, I would also like to congratulate the **ECO Secretary General** and his team for convening 30<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting. We acknowledge his valuable contribution towards regional cooperation and economic integration.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen!**

As one of the founding member, Pakistan attaches great importance to the efficacious functioning of ECO for enhancing economic, social, cultural and political cooperation among the member states. Regional connectivity and economic integration are key pillars of Pakistan's policy to accelerate economic growth, create job opportunities, expand trade, improve competitiveness and usher prosperity in the region. There is a need for world-class logistic support and shortest links to the neighboring countries for the speedy movement of goods and people at reduced cost that would stimulate investment and growth. China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major initiative in this regard. The increase in trade, investment and financial flows would also bring peace and prosperity to the whole region.

### **Dear Colleagues,**

As a result of the expansion of the activities of the Organization in the recent years, the number of events/meetings included in the ECO Calendar of Events has been drastically increased which I believe is beyond the available resources of the Organization. Therefore, I would like to suggest that this RPC meeting take initiatives to include in the Calendar of Events only the events with substantial items in their agenda and more possible tangible results. In other words, the ECO work program should rather take a project and action oriented approach than a meeting oriented one. I am confident that this RPC Meeting would hold focused and constructive deliberations in this regard.

### **Esteemed Participants,**

ECO member countries are located between some of the economically most productive regions of the world. We can strengthen the role of our region as an



indispensable transit route in the world through facilitating trade and investing in our infrastructure and modernizing our customs and simplifying procedures.

**Ladies & Gentlemen,**

First and foremost, we should increase intra-ECO trade and as a critical step towards that end we should resolve all the issues arising in this regard. As we are all aware, regional trade arrangements and free trade are indispensable components of regional cooperation and integration. But unfortunately, ECO is one of the few regional cooperation initiatives that could not yet Operationalize its main and flagship trade agreement ECOTA.

We should also strengthen ECO Bank, as the financial arm of our cooperation in terms of its membership, resources and outreach. We are aware that ECO Bank is doing successful trade financing operations. But as envisaged by ECO Vision 2025, a robust trade finance programme under ECO Bank will contribute to enhancing our trade enormously.

**Dear Colleagues,**

ECO region is rich in terms of energy resources not only in oil and gas but also in renewable energy like wind and solar energy as well as in hydropower in some of our member countries. We all have considerable experiences in renewable energy resources. We have to share our experiences, conduct joint projects and joint investments.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

We strongly believe that the private sector should be involved in all areas of cooperation such as trade, investment, industry, agriculture, social interactions and tourism. We need to encourage the private sector to participate appropriately in

economic and commercial activities of the Organization. The private sector can play a central role in advancing innovation, creating wealth, income and jobs mobilizing domestic resources and these are activities that can lead, among others, to poverty reduction.

I would also like to emphasize that ECO needs a sharper focus in its cooperation endeavors. As planners, we are the best suited people to give that sharper focus. Several incomplete half projects do not add up to the value of our Organization rather they deteriorate its image. We have to boost the performance of our Organization through focusing on achieving our main objectives and flagship projects, strengthen our existing institutions and introduce new ideas only after thorough discussions and detailed studies.

In this respect, ECO vision document is a well-studied document adopted at the level of ECO Summit. Our task is to pave the way for efficient implementation of ECO vision.

**Ladies & Gentlemen,**

Pakistan attaches foremost importance to risks arising due to climate change. The Prime Minister of Pakistan also raised his voice at the platform of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on this issue calling it one of the “most urgent problems the world must address”. From super floods to heat-waves to glacial lake outburst floods, we are facing this reality in Pakistan. Pakistan has taken one step forward with the Billion Tree Tsunami project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Under the project, 60% of the billion trees were grown as a result of protecting natural forests, while 40% came from new plantations by local communities with the help of the local forest department. Similarly, promotion of Tourism especially religious and cultural tourism is also one of the focused areas of Pakistan’s Government.



All the above mentioned areas are very much in line with the ECO priority areas like Transport and Communication, Trade and Investment, Human Resource Development, Sustainable Development, Agriculture, Industry and Tourism, Energy, Minerals and Environment along with Judicial and Parliamentary Affairs etc.

However, ECO initiatives demand commitment and tangible actions for achieving desired goals. Being a founding member of the organization, Pakistan is committed to ECO objectives like collective desire for regional integration. Pakistan has the location, political stability, and evolving physical infrastructure to achieve the common vision for making ECO a powerful economic bloc and an engine of growth. Time has come for ECO to make momentous advances for practical realization.

The unique geo-strategic location of the region put the ECO in an ideal position and it should play its effective role in building future economies; the ECO could grow as a platform of regional cooperation that would ultimately prosper the people. However, only desire for making ECO a success is not enough. There is a need to create necessary institutions to translate the goals into reality. Only institutions have the capacity to continue to pursue the tasks assigned.

**Ladies & Gentlemen,**

I would like to conclude my statement with wishing this very important gathering, a safe journey back to home and a more meaningful cooperation in future where vision serves promotion of ECO region in all possible aspects and I think you can make it.

**Thank you very much.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Speech of the Head of delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan.  
Mr. Nemat Farrukhzoda, Head of the Department, Ministry of  
Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan.**

**Distinguished Secretary General!**

**Honorable Mr. Chairperson,  
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I am very pleased to address at today's meeting of the Council, which provides an opportunity to exchange views on the status of our cooperation in the ECO region.

I sincerely would like to congratulate the Republic of Turkey on assumption of the Presidency of the Council. I am sure that the results of this meeting will bring ECO member states to a new level of cooperation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Tajikistan considers ECO as a multilateral platform for the development of cooperation in trade, economy, transit, energy and other fields, which contribute to the stability of our region.

I would like to note that in August 2019, during the meeting with the Secretary General of the ECO, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan supported the proposal to convene a meeting of the Ministers of Economies of the ECO countries in 2020 in Tajikistan. We do hope that the scheduled Ministerial meeting on Economy of the ECO Member States in early 2020 in Tajikistan will give a great impetus to enhance economic relations between the ECO member states.

Dear colleagues, it should be noted that ECO member states have a great potential for the development of regional tourism. Enhancing cooperation in this area is one of the priorities of the Organization, which is considered as an important goal for the ECO in the ECO Vision 2025.

In this regard, the Republic of Tajikistan proposed to host the 3rd Ministerial meeting on the ECO Tourism and the 5th High Level Expert Group meeting on 3-4 October 2019 in Khujand, Tajikistan, which played a significant role, paving new ways for the further development of tourism in the ECO region.

Highly appreciating the selection of Dushanbe as the Tourist Capital of the ECO for 2020-2021, we are in the process of developing



an Action Plan in this regard, and we encourage the Secretariat to participate in this process.

In recent years, relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the ECO have a prominent place in foreign policy and have successfully developed cooperation in various fields, including trade and investment, transport and communications, energy and environment, industry and technology, agriculture and tourism. Work in this direction is being successfully and actively continued.

It should be noted that at this stage, these sectors are considered important for the development of the national economy and the Government of Tajikistan is now taking all necessary measures for their further development.

Dear colleagues, as you know, in November 2019, the Republic of Tajikistan devolved the chairmanship to Turkey. The chairmanship of our country in the Organization coincided with a very important period, and we are satisfied with the reform process in the ECO. One of our first proposals during the chairmanship was the issue of reviewing the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA). As you know, 20 years have passed since the Agreement was signed, and in our opinion this document should be revised taking into account the current realities and new goals of the Organization.

During the Chairmanship of Tajikistan, a number of ECO events were held at various levels and efforts were made to conduct other high-level events, including the ECO Tourism Ministerial Meeting (October 3-4, 2019, Khujand).

The Republic of Tajikistan is now considering the establishment of an integrated transport and transit network, simplification of trade procedures, expanding border trade, sustainable water and energy resources management, establishment a unified energy system and the free movement of goods and labor within the most important areas of cooperation of the Organization. The 14th Heads of Railway meeting and the 8th meeting of the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) were held in Dushanbe. In this regard, we welcome the initiative of the Iranian side to allocate land to ECO member states in the Chabahar Port.

The use of minerals and the expansion of export cooperation among ECO member states are of great importance for the economy and well-being of the region. In this regard, the development of infrastructure, consumer goods, mechanical equipment, construction materials, construction of industrial facilities and the capacity building are the necessary prerequisites of today. In this regard, we do hope that ECO member states will make a valuable contribution to the implementation of various projects in the region.



The development of the energy sector, which is one of the strategic issues for Tajikistan, requires an effective management of existing opportunities and the exchange of experience among ECO experts. The measures on sustainable energy and energy security adopted in Tajikistan are of regional importance, since these are aimed at meeting the constantly increasing demand for electricity in our Republic. In this regard, we are planning to host a second Expert Group Meeting on establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market.

ECO member states have a great potential for the development of Regional Tourism. Given the existing potential, it is necessary to take appropriate measures to create favorable conditions for effective activities in the field of regional tourism. Tajikistan pays a special attention to development of tourism at the governmental level. In this regard, 2018 has been announced the Year of Development of Tourism and Crafts, and 2019-2021 the development of Rural Areas, Tourism and Crafts, which contribute to strengthening of our ties in these fields. Regional cooperation is important for establishing peace, stability and security, as well as for creating favorable conditions for the economic and social development of Afghanistan. In this regard, ECO countries need to focus on the development of regional trade with the more active participation of Afghanistan in regional projects.

We hope that ECO will continue to support regional programs aimed at developing Afghanistan.

We strive to strengthen cooperation in interregional economy, trade, transport and communication fields and implement important regional projects. The practical implementation of these programs will contribute to sustainable economy and social cross-border cooperation.

Distinguished colleagues, we do hope that ECO will continue fruitful cooperation in the implementation of the above-mentioned projects aimed at the development of ECO member states.

The Republic of Tajikistan supports measures to increase the overall effectiveness of the Organization. Tajikistan will continue to actively participate in the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization and to increase the level of multilateral cooperation within its framework. We have always been and will continue to advocate for the regional cooperation of the Organization for the benefit of the peoples of its member countries.

**Thank you for attention.**



**Statement by Ataev Atajan, Head of Strategic and Sustainable  
Development Department of the Ministry of Finance and Economy  
of Turkmenistan.**

**Distinguished Secretary General!**

**Honorable Mr. Chairperson,  
Dear delegates and members of the Council.**

Allow me on behalf of the delegation of Turkmenistan to welcome and express my gratitude for the invitation to take part in the Regional Planning Council, and thank the ECO Secretariat and the Iranian side for the organizing this meeting, for the warm welcome and hospitality.

Being a member of the ECO, Turkmenistan attaches a great importance to the development of cooperation in various fields. ECO member countries have a great potential for the development of humanitarian and economic cooperation.

The economic policy of Turkmenistan being pursued under the leadership of the President, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, is aimed at further expanding foreign economic relations, developing international cooperation, multi-vector integration into the global economic space and sustainable development of the national economy.

As a result of an effective government policy, economic growth stability and qualitative shifts in the dynamics of the country's socio-economic development are observed. The expected GDP growth rate in 2019 will be 106.3%. The comprehensive implementation of measures in line with the Presidential Program for Social and Economic Development for 2019-2025 will lead to an increase in GDP in 2025 upto 108.2%.

Turkmenistan has successfully implemented large-scale national projects designed to make a sustainable development economy. These include the Avaza National Tourist Zone, Transnational Gas Pipelines, the North-South Transnational Railway, International Airports in Ashgabat, Turkmenbashi, Turkmenabad, the Garlyk Potassium Plant, Carbamide Plants, a Gas Chemical Complex for the production of



polypropylene and polyethylene, a glass factory. The international seaport in Turkmenbashi, the world's first plant for the production of gasoline from natural gas.

Our country continues to successfully implement the strategy for expanded cooperation with all interested states of the world, actively developing a constructive political dialogue, fruitful trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian ties.

Turkmenistan also put forward a number of initiatives in the field of establishment of transport and transit corridors for transcontinental projects, in particular, the construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline, which began in 2015. It is noteworthy that the power line in the direction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) is also one of the initiatives.

The Project on Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman International Transport Corridor, the Agreement on which signed in Ashgabat, and the Agreement on the establishment of Afghanistan-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey transit, trade and transport corridor, so-called Lapis Lazuli also open real prospects for creating a balanced transport infrastructure within the ECO framework.

The development of the digital economy is becoming an urgent task for our country. In this context, in November 2018, the Concept for the Development of the Digital Economy of Turkmenistan for 2019-2025 was approved, and recently, the composition of the interagency commission for the implementation of the development of the digital economy was approved.

Dear participants, in conclusion I would like to express the hope that this meeting will be another important step towards effective realization of the multifaceted potential of our countries for the well-being and prosperity of peoples, for peace and progress.

I would also like to wish you successful and fruitful work at this meeting.

**Thank you for attention.**



**SPEECH of the Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to  
Iran/Permanent Representative to the ECO, H.E. Mr. Bakhodir Abdullaev  
at the 30th meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)  
(Teheran, January 14-16, 2020)**

**Honorable Mr. Chairman!**

**Distinguished Secretary General!**

**Dear heads of delegations!**

**Ladies and Gentlemen!**

At the beginning of my speech, allow me, first of all express my gratitude to the Secretary General, His Excellency Mr. Hadi Soleimanpur for his active work and efforts to enhance the ECO activities.

**Dear participants,**

Uzbekistan advocates for the consistent enhancement of regional cooperation, the achievement of economic prosperity through mutual cooperation and, based on the goals and principles of the ECO, makes appropriate efforts to expand mutual cooperation within the Organization in order to achieve the common development and prosperity of our member states.

In this regard, we consider the ECO RPC meeting as an another opportunity to discuss issues of interaction between the countries of our region and, first of all, current issues of regional economic cooperation and outline future plans for our interaction and cooperation.

Speaking about the prospects of our cooperation in the ECO framework, in our opinion, the development of transport and transit communications are should be identified as the most urgent tasks for the countries of the Organization.

Uzbekistan attaches paramount importance to the development of transit and transport capacities of the region and supports the efforts of the ECO to form a modern and developed communication system. In this context, I would like to briefly to dwell on very promising areas which are opened up before our countries in using the communication potential of our region, taking into account modern realities.



We are talking about the largest regional projects, such as the International Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor, which runs through the territory of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Iran and further to the seaports of the Persian Gulf, the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman transport corridor and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway Corridor. These projects can open up enormous opportunities for our countries to access the world market and are of strategic importance for the entire region as a whole.

We hope that steps taken by the ECO to strengthen and develop transport communications and integrate them into international transport corridors will give an additional impetus to the further development of regional economic cooperation and the strengthening of stability.

We are confident that these projects can open up enormous opportunities for our countries to enter the world market, significantly reduce the cost and time of transportation of goods, and will give an additional impetus to the further development of economic cooperation and strengthening the stability of the region. Uzbekistan is ready to fully make all necessary efforts together with the countries of the region in the practical implementation of these projects.

We share opinions and suggestions on the need for the development of mutual trade in the ECO region, comprehensive promotion and building up mutual exchanges in this area and removing unnecessary barriers.

Today, Uzbekistan with sufficient industrial potential, exporting a large range of highly competitive domestic products to many countries of the world, and can offer its close neighbors a wide range of high-quality goods, such as automobile and agricultural machinery, electrical products, mineral fertilizers, petrochemicals, cotton fiber and textiles, fresh and processed fruits and other products.

According to the results of January-December 2019, Uzbekistan's foreign trade turnover amounted to \$ 42.2 billion and increased by \$ 8.7 billion, or 26.2%, compared to the corresponding period in 2018.

ECO member countries, in particular, Kazakhstan (3.3 billion), Turkey (2.5 billion dollars), Kyrgyzstan (829 million dollars), and Afghanistan (618 million dollars) are among the leading trade partners of Uzbekistan.

In this context, I would like to say that Uzbekistan is also interested in increasing and developing trade and economic cooperation with other ECO member countries.

The cooperation in the field of investment is one of the priority areas for Uzbekistan within the framework of the ECO.



Currently, Uzbekistan is making active efforts to expand investment cooperation with neighboring countries, implement joint projects of various scales in promising and sought-after sectors, and in this regard, we propose establishing cooperation in this direction within the framework of the ECO, which will undoubtedly stimulate our overall economic development.

**Dear participants,**

The ECO region possesses tremendous tourism potential which allows Member States, including Uzbekistan to derive its own benefit.

ECO region with a population of more than 460 million people and a territory of more than 8 million square kilometers extends from Central to South and Southwest Asia and is well known for the diversity of its historical and cultural heritage. The Great Silk Road passes through the territories of the ECO member countries.

Given Uzbekistan's great potential, the presence of ancient, world-famous and attracting millions of people from different continents of cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, Tashkent, Shakhrisabz, Kokand, as well as the many shrines of the Muslim world, which are the heritage of the entire Islamic world and included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, enhancing cooperation in this area within the framework of the ECO will open new horizons and opportunities for the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

**Dear participants,**

I would like to note that in recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has significantly intensified its interaction with the Organization for Economic Cooperation.

The ECO high authorities' historical visits to Uzbekistan took place during 2018-2019. These visits and events have given a tangible impetus to the development of relations between Uzbekistan and the ECO.

**Dear participants,**

At the end of my speech, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to H.E. the distinguished Secretary General of the ECO, H. Soleimanpur, thank him for the organization of our meeting at a high level and do hope that the sectoral meetings will also be fruitful in terms of the long-term planning of our joint activities.

Thank you for attention.



**Statement**  
**by the Project Director of the Turkic Council Mr. Farrukh Jumayev**  
**at the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC)**

*14 January 2020, Tehran*

**Dear Mr. Chairman,  
Secretary General,  
Excellences, Distinguished delegates,**

Taking the opportunity, on behalf of Turkic Council I would like to express my gratitude to the ECO Secretariat and the Government of Iran for invitation to the 30th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) and for giving me the floor to address as the representative of Turkic Council, observer to ECO.

I would like to elaborate a little about developments within Turkic Council which took place during last years.

Since 6<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Turkic Council held in Cholpon-Ata on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018, the organisation has seen its most intense and productive period in terms of widening and deepening of cooperation among the Member States.

Turkic Council has established itself as a full-fledged international organization with an effective mechanism for the development of cooperation in various fields and proved itself as a successful and effective instrument to uphold the common interests of the Member States.

Last year has witnessed the first enlargement in the history of the Turkic Council with the accession of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This remarkable development will add significant momentum to the activities of the Turkic Council and ever-increasing cooperation among the Turkic Speaking countries and peoples.

Another crucial development is the opening of the European Office of the Turkic World in Budapest in September 2018.

Deepening the economic cooperation among the Member States is one of the main priorities of the Turkic Council. The Secretariat seeking new mechanisms to tap the real potential of intra-trade among member countries, which represent only a small fraction (approximately %7) of total trade turnover of the member countries.

In this regards, we established the Joint Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) of the Turkic Council, which will make significant contributions to economic and trade relations among our member countries. In 2019 two large Business



Forums were organized in Tashkent and Baku, accordingly, with the participation of over 500 businessmen from our Member States.

Currently the Secretariat of Turkic Council working on another significant initiative in economic sphere is the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund. This Fund will serve as a new financing mechanism for supporting our SMEs in implementing joint or multilateral projects.

The 7th Summit of the Turkic Council took place in 2019 in Baku was dedicated to the "Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises" (SMEs) and we are planning to explore more opportunities to use the potentials for cooperation in trade and investment areas where our countries have strength and advantages.

At the same time we are working on creating favourable conditions in the field of transport and customs to render the Trans-Caspian Corridor a profitable and competitive transport corridor in East-West trade. Therefore, there is a necessity to decrease logistic costs while accelerating the speed of the transport and customs operations along the corridor.

#### **Distinguished delegates,**

Turkic Council and ECO share common goals and objectives and there are many spheres in which both organisations may complement each other. Turkic Council highly values its partnership with the ECO to achieve these shared goals in the region.

As you aware, last year the delegation of the Turkic Council headed by the Secretary General, Baghdad Amreyev, paid a working visit to the Secretariat of the ECO in Tehran. This visit was conducted to seek avenues for collaboration and revitalize the scope of cooperation enshrined in the Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed between ECO and the Turkic Council in 2014.

During the meeting, both Parties shared information and experience on their respective activities in key areas such as trade and investment, customs and transport, tourism, agriculture, education and energy, as well as adopted the Work Program for the period of 2019-2020 in the mentioned fields of cooperation that are beneficial to both organizations. This year we are planning to realize the activities within the framework of the said Working Plan.

In conclusion, I would like once again to extend my thanks to the ECO Secretariat for their kind invitation and hospitality and wish all the success to the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO RPC.

Thank you for your attention

**Statement by H.E. Sarvar Bakhti**  
**President, ECO Cultural Institute**

**The 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council**  
**(14-16 January 2020)**

**Honorable Chair,**  
**Excellency ECO Secretary General,**  
**Distinguished Delegates,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a matter of great honor that my first official function as President of ECO Cultural Institute is to speak at this august forum.

I have the honor to be the 11<sup>th</sup> President of this Institute; I avail myself of this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all of the former presidents of the ECO Cultural Institute, those honorable men who made valuable contributions to this Institute by their outstanding performance. Also, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the esteemed member states of the Institute for their support and trust in me to lead such important international body.

**Dear Colleagues,**

In view of the principles visualized in the Treaty of Izmir, as the basic document of the Economic Cooperation Organization, the ancient historical and cultural ties existing among the peoples of the region clearly suggest the role of culture to provide fundamental ground for peace and stability in promoting more rapid economic growth and increasing success of the nations of the region.

Fortunately, it is the notion of culture, art and literature as well as the rich common heritage of the countries of the region on which, in the age of globalization, the members can most rely to strengthen their identity and sense of belonging.



Utilization of this enormous social and historical asset requires extensive and comprehensive cooperation of countries and relevant cultural organizations at the regional level.

The fact that ECO Cultural Institute has longer history of activities than any other ECO affiliated body stems from the same common and unifying background.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

During the past 25 years, the Institute has endeavored to foster and promote closer cooperation among the people of the Region and has managed to have significant impact on the enhancement of cultural relations among the peoples of the region particularly the scholars, artists and intellectuals through organizing diverse cultural programs, events and activities.

In this regard, the success of some of the cultural initiatives undertaken such as the meeting of Heads of ECO National Libraries are subject to their continuity on regular basis so that the relevant authorities and organizations of the Member States benefit their efforts appropriately.

The participation of the Member States is the main supporting element for ECI to hold such programs on regular basis which is in accordance with our Charter in which the Institute has been mandated to function as an initiating, coordinating and monitoring agency.

We are cognizant of the importance of equal representation of the ECO member states in our activities. It is vital for the survival of our Institute that all the ten members of ECO countries play their role, without which the Institute may not be able to achieve the goals envisaged in its charter. It requires our joint efforts together to make the existing commonalties recognizable internationally. Therefore, through this distinguished Forum, I seize the opportunity to invite the ECO countries to accede and become full members of ECI in near future.

In a spirit of full cooperation with all the esteemed ECO member states, we intend to further increase our interaction in planning our future

cultural activities to bring a genuine sense of ownership for the Institute.

**Excellencies,**

In my capacity as the new President of the Cultural Institute and on behalf of my team, I assure that we will make every effort for advancement of our activities and further expansion of our regional outreach.

In future programming, we will give priority to the programs which attract our youth. Through youth participation, we will ensure fresh ideas, strength, vitality and energy for the organization.

Also, as a key objective envisaged in our charter, ECI will attach importance to promotion of the sports which in turn will improve our regional cooperation.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

We strongly believe in enhancing our collaboration with the other ECO specialized agencies. we warmly welcome any joint efforts for initiating projects which foster closer association among the people of the Region,

We are also willing to develop partnership with all relevant authorities and organization of all the members, the host country in particular.

Thank you for providing me with this opportunity and I hope to see all of you in our future programs.





**30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)**  
January 14-16, 2020, Tehran - Iran

**Statement by the President ECO Science Foundation**  
**Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro**

Excellency the Chairman of 30<sup>th</sup> RPC,  
Excellency the Secretary General of ECO,  
Excellencies the Ambassadors and Delegates from ECO Member States,  
The Observers, Heads of Specialized Agencies and Institutions,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Assalam-O-Alaikum and a Very Good Morning to you all!**

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me to address the august Forum of 30<sup>th</sup> RPC meeting through this Statement as I could not travel in person, only due to financial constraints!

Excellencies, on behalf of ECO Science Foundation and on my personal behalf, I express my deep gratitude to all the Member States and ECO Secretariat for their cooperation extended to the Foundation and the patronage and budget contribution of the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan is especially acknowledged and much appreciated.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ECO Science Foundation continues to pursue the promotion of scientific and technological research and related activities with an end goal to raise socio-economic standing of its member states. However, Excellencies, we must realize that the Foundation CAN NOT pursue its intended goals and function even at its minimum acceptable level, without adequate budgetary support from the Member States.

Over the last two years, the Foundation has been facing serious financial crisis; so much so that the Foundation had to cut down its core activities and is not able to even pay the full salaries and benefits to the staff! At the moment, we only receive the full mandatory budgetary contribution from the Government of Pakistan, and that too in local currency at conversion rate much less than the market! Nevertheless, the Foundation greatly appreciates the support of Pakistan in keeping the organization alive.

However, Excellencies, the contribution from just one Member State could not sustain the Foundation for long! This is rather a discouraging trend and negatively affects the motivation and morale of scientific community of the region and the small team of ECOSF; who have been working very diligently. **Member States are therefore urged to pull the Foundation out of serious financial challenge on immediate basis by paying their outstanding budgetary contributions. That is the only way forward to allow the Foundation to continue its functions.**

It is important to mention here Ladies and Gentlemen, that in spite of budgetary difficulties, the Foundation undertook numerous important scientific activities during the year 2019 and the comprehensive report has been circulated. The Foundation appreciates the Government of Pakistan for paying their full annual mandatory budget contributions



since its inception in the year 2012. We are also grateful to Islamic Republic of Iran for supporting some of ECOSF activities in Iran during 2019; we look forward to their due mandatory support. It is very much hoped that Iran and Pakistan will soon sort out the money transfer mechanism so that Iran can pay their remaining share of budget contribution for the last few years. We also call upon the remaining three ratifying member states- Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to kindly make their mandatory contributions to strengthen the Foundation. The Member States who have not yet ratified the ECOSF Charter and its Additional Protocol, are urged to kindly do so at their earliest so as to benefit from Foundation's programs and let it function at the fullest.

Excellencies, despite numerous difficulties, the Foundation has achieved many significant milestones but due to paucity of time, those could not be highlighted. ECOSF has established strong collaboration and partnership with leading STI international and regional organizations across the globe as provided in the detail report. Nevertheless, I would like to share that ECOSF held its 4<sup>th</sup> BoT Meeting recently; wherein, its progress and initiatives were thoroughly reviewed and greatly appreciated by the Board.

The Foundation is pleased to report that the Capacity Building Program in IBSE which was launched in Nur-Sultan-Kazakhstan in 2015; is continuing nicely in Iran and Pakistan. We are trying to get Azerbaijan and Tajikistan onboard who through the National Academies of Sciences have shown their interest.

Dear Delegates, the Foundation has been working very closely with China Association of Science and Technology- CAST. Under this collaboration, ECOSF is focal organization for STI and science education in ECO region for One Belt One Road (OBOR) programmes. So far, ECOSF has facilitated the participation of 163 young students and teachers/coordinator/ officials from Member Countries in the Belt and Road Teenager Maker Camps, Teacher Workshops and contests held in China. In addition, ECOSF is contributing towards the development; "Fusion of OBOR Civilization" school curriculum in collaboration with IAP-SEP and China Association of Science and Technology (CAST) under the mega initiative of China- One Belt One Road. The curriculum is focused to promote global peace and harmony through education and technology.

Finally, I would like to say that the Foundation is making all possible efforts to promote science, technology, innovation and scientific education activities in the region with the collaboration and support of International Organizations.; however, the greatest difficulty we are facing is the non-payment of mandatory budgetary contribution by the member states. I assure you that if the mandatory budget is provided; the Foundation could do much better. I hope the Member States will consider our requests positively in the interest of promoting connectivity and knowledge based socio-economic development in the region.

I express my sincere thanks ECO Secretariat for their efforts in convening and organizing the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of RPC. I thank you Excellencies!



(Prof. Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro)

President ECOSF



**Statement of the President of the ECO Educational Institute**  
**Prof. M. Akif KIRECCI**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council**

**14 January 2020,**  
**Tehran-I.R. Iran**

Mr. Chairman,  
His Excellency Secretary General,  
His Excellencies, Heads of Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I salute the ECO family here as a whole and present my sincere thanks to the ECO Secretariat for its kind hospitality. I am sure that the results of this meeting will bring the ECO member states to a new level of cooperation.

On behalf of the Educational Institute, it is a pleasure for me to share some information here with you about the Institute's latest achievements and activities in the area of education since the last RPC meeting.

I am honored to say that ECO Educational Institute has been committed to make all its academic events to be truly multilateral with participation from several ECO Member States. First of these activities, "**Language Teaching and Learning Workshop**" was held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018 in Ankara. The Educational Institute is now working on publishing a policy recommendation paper incorporating the discussions and findings of this workshop.

In September 2019, we organized another truly multilateral ECO event, this time a two-day International Symposium on **Common History, Culture, Education and Civilization** on 27-28 September 2019 in Ankara. The symposium aimed at exploring the ways in which the fates of the neighboring peoples of ECO Member States have been linked throughout history. More than 300 abstracts have been submitted to the symposium and 80 papers from 15 different countries were chosen to be presented. The symposium was composed of 18 thematic panels in fields ranging from Philosophy, Science, Education, Religion, Literature, History and Language to Politics, International Relations, Economics, Urbanism and Museology. ECO Educational Institute currently works on the editing process of these papers, and will publish a volume updating Member States with the outputs.



To promote effective publication and dissemination of scientific knowledge produced in ECO Member States, ECOEI has organized a workshop on **“How to Write and Publish Articles for International Journals”** in cooperation with Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Education, Education Institute, Directorate of PhD. Programs in Baku on 3 May 2019. The main purpose of the workshop was to improve the academic writing skills of graduate students who pursue a PhD degree in Azerbaijani universities and introduce ways of submission, evaluation and publication procedures of scholarly journals to them. Around 40 PhD students benefited from the workshop. We are much honored to receive an invitation from Isfahan University to conduct a similar workshop there, which is to take place in late February 2020. This time, we will supplement this workshop with another event and invite Turkish scholars in the field of education and partner them with their counterparts at Isfahan University to discuss teaching competence and excellency among university professors.

ECOEI also places high emphasis on cooperation with other international organizations to increase its outreach. I was at the UNESCO General Conference in November as part of Turkey’s UNESCO Committee and used this opportunity to contact UNESCO Capacity Development for Education (CAPED) Program on behalf of ECOEI. UNESCO currently conducts a project on education in Afghanistan and has ample resources at their disposal. We are currently working on a scheme to harmonize our activities about Afghanistan with UNESCO CAPED so that we may benefit from UNESCO’s know-how, data and access. This collaboration will also add to ECO’s ongoing commitment to Afghanistan’s development and is an important step in achieving 29th RPC recommendation to ECOEI about maintaining the nexus with the UNESCO for cooperation/collaboration on SDG-4 Quality Education in the ECO Region.

I have also met with representatives at the Turkic Council and shared detailed information on our projects and talked about their ongoing exchange programs for students and academics such as Orkhun Process. We may benefit from their network in organizing our own exchange programs.

Let me highlight this once more: ECO Educational Institute is determined to make all its academic events to be truly multilateral in nature, with participation from several ECO Member States. We have managed to uphold this principle in the previous years. I would like to thank all those who took an active interest in ECOEI’s activities and invite others to engage. This engagement is crucial to achieve the ECO Vision 2025, which highlights the central place of education in the attainment of ECO goals: “ECO will pave the way to a territory of integrated and sustainable



economies as well as free trade area achieved by *highly educated* societies and improved governance through enhanced cooperation.” ECOEI is ready to take on this task and establish regional networks on higher education, regional exchange and scholarship programs/mechanisms, but it heavily depends on the ownership of the member states.

But, one may ask, what specific actions can be taken by Member States to display ownership?

In its 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting, ECO RPC recommended that the ECO Secretariat and ECOEI, in collaboration, shall initiate a draft **Plan of Action for Education** on specific activities and outputs of ECO Vision 2025.

So, I suggest, the first display of ownership by Member States would be to consider the aforementioned Plan of Action for Education and provide their input for the review of the next BoT. I have convened consultation meetings with Education Attaches of ECO Member States in Ankara and urged them to convey their needs in the field of education to ECOEI to facilitate the development of an initial draft outline for the aforementioned Plan of Action. However, the most important step to be taken would be to establish consistent and **institutionalized channels**. Therefore, we call Member States to nominate their **focal points** in an urgent manner. The focal points may ideally be officials at the respective Ministries of Education of Member States.

ECOEI is expecting further expansion of collaboration and seeking for a collective offer of insight from ECO Secretariat and Member States into this initiative. For example, previous RPC recommended to discuss extension of academic scholarships in health and other areas of relevance to benefit each other's skills and knowledge. ECO Secretariat also inquired about ECOEI's possible contribution to advancement of ECO College of Insurance. Again, there have been requests from member states to work on improvement of early childhood education in ECO region. ECOEI proposes to organize an international workshop to facilitate the development of a research project on early childhood education in April 2020 to discuss the achievements and challenges in Member States. Finally, as per suggestion of the ECO Secretariat, ECOEI proposes to organize, depending on the budgetary availability, a High Level University Representatives Forum in September 2020 to discuss opportunities and challenges regarding regional cooperation on higher education.

Another step would be for ECOEI to form a Scientific Committee to prepare a series of “State of Education” reports (in selected layers of education or fields) in Member

States, provided that member states make relevant funds available for the use of such projects. The project may produce policy papers —one for each country on a six-months' time frame. I believe such series of reports would be tremendously helpful in laying the groundwork for the Plan of Action for Education by highlighting the strengths —as well as weaknesses—in the field of education in Member States.

Let me remind you that your continuous support through financial and technical instruments is crucial for all planned activities to come real. ECOEI still lacks a significant portion of its approved budget, including the mandatory payments of the Member States, which constitutes an overwhelming impediment to perform its activities. ECOEI appreciates the Government of Turkey for its continued financial support and urge other Members to make mandatory budgetary contributions at their earliest.

Educational Institute is currently operating in a flat rented by its own means i.e. from its operational budget. ECOEI respectfully urges the Turkish Government to allocate a separate location to the Educational Institute to continue its operations in its own location.

Last but not least please remember that economic cooperation would be meaningful when and if supported by cooperation in education. As I repeat in ECO meetings: Every dollar invested in education can contribute fifteen-fold in economy.

Thank you.



Statement by the Head of the ETDB Tehran Representative Office (Ms. Nooshin Keihan)  
30th ECO Regional Planning Council Meeting  
Tehran-I.R of IRAN (14-16 January 2020)

Mr. Chairman  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Honourable Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to attend the 30th ECO Regional Planning Council Meeting. On the behalf of the ETDB, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the organizers for the kindness, hospitality and excellent arrangements made for this distinguished meeting.

It is a great honor for me to be here today and to have this opportunity to make this brief statement.

Excellencies,

The ETDB is growing steadily as a prominent international financial institution and has been providing well focused development assistance and solutions. We have been offering necessary products and services for enhancing trade, development of Micro and Small and medium enterprises, meeting the financing and technical assistance needs of corporates and projects. In this respect, over 1,500 SMEs and 65,000 micro-entrepreneurs benefitted from our funds. Recently, our involvement in realizations of various projects in the areas of wind power, transport, infrastructure and energy efficiency have been remarkable.

Specially, we have a dedicated trade finance programme to foster the growth of intra-regional trade. Let me underline that about 60 percent of our disbursed funds are extended for financing trade, making the Bank's involvement in the region's trade more inclusive.

Meanwhile, we also recognize the importance of strengthening Bank's capacity to deliver on technical cooperation and capacity building. In this respect, we have sponsored several ECO events and we are awaiting technical details from the ECO Secretariat to decide on proposal of hiring a professional consultant from one of the Member States to conduct a research/study on forming an ECO Vision Fund.

Excellencies,

Since 2008, when the Bank started its operations, the total amount of loans disbursed to various operations in the member states reached to USD 1.7 billion as end of November 2019. Notably, the quality of our well-diversified portfolio remains high.

We have been concluding co-financing arrangements with other Multilateral Development Banks such as IFC, EBRD, ADB, IDB and ITFC for the benefit of our region. We would be further enhancing this cooperation in the coming years.

I would like to inform that we continue to maintain positive financial results. Although profit maximization is not our priority but as a financial institution we have to sustain a healthy financial profile to expand the operations and safeguard our capital base. According to audited results our net operating income was USD 13.2 million in 2018. We expect a fairly similar level of income in 2019 as well.

Excellencies,

As I move towards my closing remarks, let me state that currently we have majority of ECO member states on the board and we expect the remaining four ECO countries namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to join soon. Accession of new members would support the Bank to further expand its operations and influence in the region.

I am confident that with the support of the member states, ETDB would further mobilize its skills and experience in supporting development of our region in the years to come.

Thank you very much.



**Statement by Ahmet Volkan GÜNGÖREN,**  
**ECO Regional Coordination Centre**  
**for the Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council of ECO**  
**(14-16 January, 2020 / Tehran)**

**Honorable Chairman,**  
**Distinguished Representatives of ECO Member States and ECO Institutions,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honor for me to participate to the **30<sup>th</sup> Regional Planning Council** of ECO.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to provide brief information about the ECO Regional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security.

In the meantime, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for their great efforts and hospitality in organizing this meeting.

**Esteemed participants,**

As you all know ECO-RCC was inaugurated by the fifth ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in 2012 in Turkey to facilitate the identification, prioritization and addressing the main impediments to food security at national and regional levels.

Since its establishment, ECO-RCC implemented a number of activities. Our main goal is to help to achieve food security in a sustainable and consistent way as well as raise awareness about it in the region.

**Distinguished participants,**

When we look at the current nutritional state in ECO Region, it is estimated that **59 million** people are still suffering from the undernourishment, revealing about **13 percent** of the regional population (475 million).

The current nutritional state of the region points to the need to effectively govern actions to consolidate progress and eradicate undernourishment in the region.

**And it is obvious that** minimizing the food security problem will be possible not only by increasing the production of food, but also by obtaining qualified products and balanced sharing of the products obtained.

**In addition**, a strong agriculture sector and a developed intra-regional trade between the region will improve and sustain economic stability.

**Esteemed participants,**

At that point I would be pleased to indicate that as a step to find effective solutions for food security in the region, RCC has developed a study, namely ***"Overview of Food Security in ECO Countries"*** in 2019 in order to analyze the food security situation of ECO Countries.

This study submitted in the **6<sup>th</sup> Agricultural Ministerial Meeting** in Baku for the first time. We believe that the analysis, findings and suggestions in the publication will encourage a dialogue among the member states for developing a new effective regional programme for food security. Now I would like to share some of the important findings from this report;

- The ECO region has significantly reduced the prevalence of undernourishment during **1999-2017**; however, most recent years show an overall stagnation in almost all ECO countries.
- The ECO region has substantially reduced undernourishment over time, but malnutrition remains as a key challenge especially in countries that achieved large reductions in undernourishment. The nature of the problem calls for policy interventions based on the food systems approach.
- Food losses and wastes are high. A rough estimate of **30 million tons** of cereal losses took place in the ECO region during the period **2000-2013** implies that if the losses did not take place, an additional **3.2 million people** could have access to sufficient food each year.
- Progress has been made in creating healthy food consumption environments.
- Incidence of transboundary animal diseases is increasing with serious risk for food security.
- Incomes increased across the ECO region; however, its impact on access to food during the past 7 years has not been proportional.
- ECO countries have institutions and structures governing social access to food, but stronger political commitment is needed to strengthen social protection programs for vulnerable groups.
- Undernutrition has declined, but over nutrition is rising in many ECO countries.
- Agricultural exports declined recently in almost all countries.



**Esteemed participants,**

As you can appreciate although some progress has been made, we need to collaborate more for the future than in the past on food security.

**For the planned activities of RCC regarding 2020;**

- RPFS will be updated according to the findings in overview of food security and also consultation of the RPFS with ECO member countries will be in 2020.
- The formulation of a project titled *“Support for the transformation of the Economic Cooperation Organization for Food Security Coordination Centre (ECO-RCCFS) from a programme based organization to a self-sustainable institution in ECO”* finalized and the funding agreement signed.
- And as it is decided in the 5<sup>th</sup> High Level Experts Meeting in Baku, a project cycle management mechanism will be decided in the 4<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting of RCC which will be planned to hold in the third quarter of 2020. And the project proposals will be evaluated according to this mechanism.

**Distinguished guests,**

Food security promotes not only agricultural production but people's lives and the futures of their societies. Access to adequate, affordable, diversified and nutritious food is to key to ensuring food security and results in healthier lives.

Investment in food security drives the changes needed for a more prosperous future.

**Before concluding my remarks,** I would like to invite each Member State to participate in all our activities and more collaboration in ensuring food security.

I wish you all a successful meeting and hope it will pave the way for a sustainable and productive regional collaboration.

Thank you for your attention.