



**250th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

Report

8th February 2021
ECO Secretariat

Report

The 250th CPR Meeting was held on February 08, 2021 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Derya Ors, Ambassador of the Republic of **Turkey** to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Permanent Representative to ECO. The meeting was attended by the Permanent Representatives/Representatives of Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyz** Republic, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, Republic of **Turkey**, **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan**. The ECO Secretary General and the relevant staff of the Secretariat also attended the Meeting. List of participants is enclosed as **Annexure-I**.

2. **H.E. Ambassador Derya Ors, the Chairman** welcomed the distinguished participants and commenced the meeting according to the agenda.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

3. The **Council** adopted the following Agenda of the 250th CPR Meeting for deliberation:

- 1) Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 250th CPR Meeting
- 2) Adoption of the Draft Report of the 249th CPR Meeting
- 3) Preparations for holding virtual 14th ECO Summit (*continued*)
- 4) Submission of the 31st RPC Meeting Report along with Work Programme 2021 and Calendar of Events 2021 to the upcoming COM for approval
- 5) ECO Secretariat Staff Strength
- 6) Administrative matters:
 - i. Draft Budget proposal of ECO for the financial year 2021
 - ii. Recommendations of the Selection Panel
- 7) Any other business
- 8) Date of the next CPR Meeting

Agenda Item No.2

Adoption of the draft Report of the 249th CPR Meeting

4. The **Council adopted** the draft report of the 249th CPR Meeting, circulated by the Secretariat to the Member States on January 14, 2021, with the amendments proposed by the Republic of Kazakhstan at Para 13 and 28 of the report.

Agenda Item No.3

Preparations for holding virtual 14th ECO Summit (continued)

5. The **Chair** recalled that two fresh dates i.e. February 25, 2021 or March 4, 2021 were proposed by the Republic of Turkey for the 14th ECO Summit. Noting that the majority of the Member States conveyed their acceptance to hold the next Summit virtually on March 4, 2021, he requested the Republic of Turkey to update the Council on the latest developments regarding the relevant theme and draft agenda of the event.

6. **The Representative of the Republic of Turkey** informed that after the acceptance of March 4, 2021 by majority of the Member States, the relevant authorities in Turkey have accelerated the process of preparing the relevant theme and agenda of the Summit. He stated that the required information was expected to be received within a week which would be shared with the Secretariat, soon.

7. In consultation with the ECO Secretary General, **the Chair** proposed the establishment of a Preparatory Committee, to be represented at an expert level, to facilitate the preparation/finalization of necessary materials related to the Summit.

8. **The Deputy Secretary General (TC, HRSD/In-charge-CFU)** conveyed the proposal of the Republic of Azerbaijan to include in the draft agenda of the upcoming Summit the signing ceremony concerning the Charter of the ECO Research Centre to be established in Baku, as per the decision of the 21st COM. He added that the received proposal was circulated amongst the Member States to seek their willingness for signing the said Charter during the Summit.

9. **The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan** expressed his, in principle, support to the idea of signing the Charter of ECO Research Centre during the Summit. However, he informed that the Republic of Azerbaijan forwarded the same proposal directly to the Government of Kazakhstan, requesting not to include the matter in the agenda of the Summit until the formal response from their capital is received.

10. **The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** also supported the idea, proposing that it would be better to have such a signing ceremony in the agenda of COM's meeting if organized prior to the 14th ECO Summit, or otherwise the issue may be discussed during the meeting of Preparatory Committee to be scheduled for facilitating the Summit-related matters.

11. Agreeing with the views expressed by the Permanent Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Kazakhstan, the **Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan** informed that the response of their relevant authorities in the matter is still awaited. However, he requested the Secretariat for provision of a

brief/background concerning the ECO Research Centre project, for convenience of the Member States.

12. The **ECO Secretary General** acknowledged the initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan for establishment of the ECO Research Centre. Noting that since the Council appears to be agreeing with the proposal for signing the Charter of the Centre during the Summit, he said that the matter would be deliberated by the Preparatory Committee in its meeting to be held after receiving the theme and agenda of the Summit from Turkey.

13. The **ECO Secretary General** also recalled the issue of rotation of the COM Chairmanship. Referring the relevant discussions made during the 249th CPR Meeting, he said that the Secretariat circulated a Note Verbale dated January 28, 2021 proposing therewith amendment to the Rule 23 of the ECO Rules of Procedure on the chairmanship of ECO decision making organs, in order to ensure that such rotation takes an on-time effect.

14. **The Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan** informed that their position was officially conveyed expressing the readiness to assume the next chairmanship of the organization as per alphabetical order, following some modalities/mechanism to be made laying down the way out for future functioning of the organization.

15. **The Representative of the Republic of Turkey** underlined two options regarding the rotation of the ECO's chairmanship i.e. (i) the holding of COM's meeting by the incoming chair based on their preparation; (ii) making the proposed amendment in the relevant rule for rotation of the chairmanship at the beginning of each calendar year, with an additional paragraph for this year's rotation taking into account that almost one and half month of 2021 already passed. However, he categorically mentioned that the Republic of Turkey scheduled to organize only the next ECO Summit, and later on COM's chairmanship may be taken over by Turkmenistan.

16. **The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** reiterated their support on the amendment proposed during the last CPR's meeting to affect the rotation of chairmanship with effect from 1st of January with the exception of this year, as suggested by Turkey. He added that since the current chair was to hold only the next Summit, the COM's approval with regard to such amendment may be secured through the prescribed silence procedure, for smooth/automatic rotation of chairmanship if no objection is received from any Member States. He also proposed that Turkmenistan may hold a short meeting of the COM prior to the Summit on March 04, 2021, discouraging the delay in the matter, so that the next chair may head the upcoming meeting of the CPR. As regards the amendment in Rule 23, he also proposed a slight change in the language of the text revising the wordings as "ECO Chairmanship" instead of "COM's Chairmanship, in order to signify only one chairmanship of the organization. Furthermore, he suggested that if there is no other arrangement for COM meeting, the chairmanship of ECO will

automatically be transferred to Turkmenistan on March 5, 2021, unless another date is agreed upon.

17. **The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan** supported the views of his Iranian counterpart regarding the adoption of silence procedure for securing the COM's approval with regard to the amendment in Rule 23 of the ECO Rules of Procedure, to effect the rotation of chairmanship from January each year with the exception of 2021.

18. **The ECO Secretary General** sought the Council's approval to (i) establish a Preparatory Committee to facilitate the preparation of the Summit (ii) hold CPR Meeting prior to the Summit and (iii) make amendment in Rule 23 of the ECO Rules of Procedure.

19. In order to address the issue regarding smooth rotation of chairmanship of organization, not only for this year but also for future, **the Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Turkey** supported the views of the Islamic Republic of Iran and requested the Council to take decision without any delay in the matter.

20. **The Legal Adviser** readout amendment proposed to be made in Rule 23 of the ECO Rules of Procedure as circulated amongst the Member States through Note Verbale No. LA/Amending Rule 23/2021/78 dated 28 January, 2021 and modified during this Meeting as follows:

"The Chairpersonship of the ECO shall rotate in alphabetical order amongst the Member States at the beginning of each calendar year. The Member State holding the Chairpersonship shall host the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers in the year concerned."

21. **The Legal Adviser** further readout that the Council of Ministers may also agree on the following regarding the date on which the aforesaid amendment to Rule 23 takes effect:

"The aforesaid amendment to Rule 23 takes effect as of 4 March 2021 unless otherwise agreed by the Member States."

22. Considering all aspects of discussion and the consensus developed thereon, the **Council decided** to; (i) form a Preparatory Committee for facilitating the Summit's preparations; (ii) organize a CPR meeting prior to the upcoming Summit to consider the outcomes of Preparatory Committee's meeting; and (iii) amend the Rule 23 of the ECO Rules of Procedure as readout by the Legal Adviser for smooth rotation of the organization's chairmanship by securing COM's approval through adoption of prescribed silence procedure of a two-week period.

Agenda Item No.4

Submission of the 31st RPC Meeting Report along with Work Programme 2021 and Calendar of Events 2021 to the upcoming COM for approval.

23. The **Chair** briefed that the 31st RPC Meeting was held virtually on January 12-21, 2021, adding that the relevant Report, Work Programme and Calendar of Events for 2021 adopted by the RPC, were circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariats' Note Verbale dated January 24, 2021.

24. **The Deputy Secretary General (TC, HRSD/In-charge-CFU)** updated the Council regarding amendments/additions proposed by the Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Tajikistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** in the Calendar of Events 2021.

25. **The ECO Secretary General** sought the Council's approval for conducting those of the events virtually by the ECO Secretariat which could not be held physically by the relevant host (s). In this regard, he proposed the inclusion of a following sentence in the report:

"All ECO meetings provided for under the Calendar of Events 2021 might be held virtually if the exigency of situation requires so due to the pandemic. This approach should be applied only through prior coordination between the ECO Secretariat and the host Member State (s)."

26. The **Council** endorsed submission to the Council of Ministers for final approval the Report of the 31st RPC Meeting, along with ECO Work Programme 2021 and Calendar of Events 2021 with insertion of amendments/addition proposed by the Member States in the Calendar of Events, as well as the proposal made by the ECO Secretary General thereto.

Agenda Item No.5

ECO Secretariat Staff strength

27. The **Chair** briefed that based on the revised Organizational Chart approved by the 24th COM's Meeting, the Secretariat developed its draft Staff Strength and circulated amongst the Member States vide its correspondences dated November 23, 2020 and December 2, 2020. He requested the Council to consider and approve the ECO Secretariat Staff Strength.

28. **The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan** sought the Council's concurrence for a footnote to be given in the provided organizational chart to reflect the Kazakhstan's *post of Russian Interpreter or Programme Officer for Agriculture and Industry*.

29. **The ECO Secretary General**, while referring to the decision of the 24th COM Meeting on this post, suggested reproducing the said decision under table of the Staff Strength, as well as reflecting both titles in the Serial No. 26 of the ECO Staff Strength.

30. While asking the Secretariat to provide written position on the issue, **the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan** insisted on its stance to reflect the addition in the footnote of the organizational chart, adding that this was required to avoid any ambiguity or future misunderstanding.

31. **The Deputy Secretary General (TC, HRSD/In-charge-CFU)** recalled the Council's attention towards the availability of only two posts of Russian Interpreters and one post of Russian Translator in the Secretariat, adding that the post of Russian Translator would be abolished in near future as per follow-up of the reform process finalized by 24th COM. He clarified that in case of conversion of one post of Russian Interpreter out of two into Program Officer, only one Russian Interpreter would be left which would result in enormous difficulties to manage all the Russian translation and interpretation work of the Secretariat.

32. **The Representative of the Republic of Turkey**, while conveying concurrence of their relevant authorities as to the Staff Strength of the Secretariat, disagreed to make any such changes in the portfolios or titles of the directorates/sections, stressing that the same were already approved by the 24th COM.

33. **The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** emphasized that the staff strength may not contain the area of responsibilities as it should remain an open discretion of the Secretary General who may manage such intra-secretariat's bureaucratic arrangement subject to the emerging conditions and requirements. Discouraging any involvement in the micromanagement of the organization, he reiterated his earlier proposal to reflect some missing areas in the staff strength renaming some directorates/sections to make them more relevant and subjects-specific. It was also mentioned that preserving the post of Persian translator at the Secretariat is essential for the communications with the Host country. He further desired the Secretariat to brief sometime later in any other meeting of CPR on the important issue of Secretariat's Recruitment Policy that was introduced by making amendment in Article 6.7 of ECO Staff Regulations. Besides, he requested the inclusion of Category-A employees of the Secretariat in the provided Staff Strength. He also proposed the development of appropriate modalities for nominations, short-listing and holding interviews of candidates for appointments against various posts in Secretariat, seeking strict adherence to such a recruitment procedure. Moreover, while referring to the Pakistan's position regarding TOEFL and IELTS requirement, he sought the Council's approval to, at all, exclude the condition from job descriptions for all the Member States.

34. **The Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan** informed that since the response of their relevant authorities was awaited, the issue may be deferred.

35. **The Representative of the Republic of Turkey** agreed with the comments of the Secretariat concerning the post of Russian translator/interpreter, noting that such positions play backbone role in functioning of an organization.

36. **The ECO Secretary General** agreed to the view point of the Representative of Turkey about not to make any changes in the portfolios/titles of the directorates and sections which have already been approved by the COM. He also sought authorization for creation of a post of Persian Translator in A Category. Referring to the suggestion for postponement of the issue, he requested the Member States to convey their official position in the matter prior to the next Meeting, to facilitate the finalization of ECO Staff Strength.

37. **The Council decided** to defer the matter to be, later on, considered at its next Meeting and requested the Member States to provide the Secretariat with their position in written prior to the next Meeting to facilitate the finalization of Staff Strength of the ECO Secretariat.

Agenda Item No.6

Administrative matters:

- Draft Budget proposal of ECO for the financial year 2021

38. Recalling the previous discussions on the issue, the **Chair** underlined that a Working Group was established by the 249th CPR to facilitate the preparation/finalization of the ECO draft budget for 2021. He requested the chairman of the Working Group to brief the Council about the outcomes of their meeting held on January 19, 2021.

39. **The Chairman of Working Group** informed that their meeting took place on January 19, 2021 to consider and facilitate all aspects of the ECO Budget-2021. He added that the meeting was headed by the Representative of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey having the participation of the Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Kazakhstan and the ECO Secretariat. He underlined that the most relevant issue to be mulled over was the utilization of General Reserve Fund against some unavoidably required expenses to be incurred on staff movement during 2021, adding that an agreed version of the ECO Draft Budget for 2021 was developed, which is now required to be endorsed by the CPR for final approval of the COM.

40. While endorsing the ECO draft Budget 2021, **the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** inquired about the status of the loan-money (approximately US \$ one million) provided to the Secretariat by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2010-11. He also sought for the capacity of the Organization to pay back the said loan of Iran from GRF.

41. **The Chief Accountant** confirmed that the said debt to Iran is reflected in the accounts of the Secretariat.

42. **The ECO Secretary General** sought the favour of the Islamic Republic of Iran to consider the loan as a grant to the Secretariat.

43. **The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** recalled that a similar request was made by the Secretariat in the past on which it was agreed by the competent authorities of Iran to delay the repayment of the said loan. He also conveyed their inability to accede to the request, noting that Iran, like other countries, is also undergoing hard economic period.

44. **The Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan** pointed out that this issue is not related to the under-discussion agenda item, suggesting to deliberate the matter in any sitting of the CPR.

45. Considering the given briefing, the **Council decided** that the Secretariat should initiate a two-week silence procedure to secure final approval of the Council of Ministers for the ECO draft Budget-2021.

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

46. The Selection Panel met on February 08, 2021. The Meeting was coordinated by ECO Deputy Secretary General (Administration, EME and IR) and Chaired by the Representative of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey. Other participants of the meeting included the Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Turkey.

47. The Selection panel made the following recommendation for consideration by the CPR:

Programme Officer for Energy, Minerals & Environment (Category-II, P2)

Mr. Nurlan Darimov, **(Kazakhstan National)** may be appointed for a full term of four (04) years as Program Officer for (EME) (Category-II, P2) to be effective from February 08, 2021.

48. **The Council approved** the above recommendation of the Selection Panel.

Agenda Item No.7

Any other business

49. Referring the discussion made during the 237th CPR Meeting, **the Representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** recalled that it was concluded to transfer the money from Habib Bank London available under the account for ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan to Kabul. While stressing that such money was required for implementation of projects in Afghanistan, he expressed his concerns over the delay in the matter and requested to expedite the process for transferring of the said money, enabling them to execute the relevant projects in Afghanistan.

50. **The Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan** informed that the matter is in process with the relevant authorities in Pakistan. However, he mentioned that since the case involved certain departments, including Ministry of Finance of Pakistan and the UK's Central Bank, it appears to take some time. He added that the issue was expected to be finalized shortly. As regards any development projects in Afghanistan, he emphasized that such projects may be executed in line with the relevant modalities already prepared/finalized to facilitate the process of reconstruction and development in Afghanistan.

51. Considering the importance of the ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (EAPA), **the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** proposed to discuss this issue, later on, as a separate agenda item of CPR. He added that the Council was required to be briefed on the implementation status of EAPA, as well as needs and requirements of the Secretariat in this regard.

52. While referring the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran, **the Secretary General** sought Council's approval for insertion of EAPA as separate agenda item of CPR meeting after the upcoming Summit.

53. **The Council agreed** the issue to be included as a separate agenda item of CPR's meeting to be convened after the 14th ECO Summit.

Agenda Item No.8

Date of the next CPR Meeting

54. While adjourning the Meeting, **the Chair** expressed his sincere thanks to the distinguished Permanent Representatives/Representatives for their participation and valuable contribution.

55. **The Council** decided to convene its next (251st) Meeting on **February 24, 2021** at 10.30 hours in the ECO Secretariat.

Annex-I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Abdul Qayum, Deputy Ambassador
- Mr. Abdul Ghani Farahi, Second Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

- H.E. Mr. Bunyad Huseynov, Ambassador
- Mr. Subhi Ismailzade, Third Secretary

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Mr. Sayed J. Alavi, Permanent Representative
- Mr. Abolqasem Tahmasebi, Director of ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Khosravi, Attaché, ECO Affairs Bureau

The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- H.E. Mr. Askhat Orazbay, Ambassador
- Mr. Gamzat Khairov, Counsellor

The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- H.E. Avazbek Abdurazakov, Ambassador
- Mr. Akilbek Kilichev, Minister, Counsellor

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Mian Azmat Farooq, First Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- H.E. Mr. Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador
- Mr. Ismoilov Salohiddin, Attache

The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey:

- H.E. Mr. Derya Ors, Ambassador
- Mr. Emirhan Yorulmazlar, Deputy Head of Mission
- Mr. Mehmet Zahit Uzun, Counsellor

The Embassy of Turkmenistan:

- H.E. Mr. Ahmet Kurbanov, Ambassador
- Mr. Mulkiev Bairam, Third Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- H.E. Mr. Bakhodir Abdullayev, Ambassador
- Mr. Umid Babaev, Third Secretary

The ECO Secretariat:

- H.E. Mr. Hadi Soleimanpur, Secretary General
- Mr. Kanan Nazarov, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Huseyin Avni Bicakli, Deputy Secretary General

- Mr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Jandos Asanov, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Salohiddin Kiromov, Head of CFS
- Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar, Legal Adviser
- Ms. Mojgan Golchin, Chief Accountant
- Mr. Raza Muhammad Ahmed, Steno-Secretary
- Mr. Amjad Saeed Abbasi, Steno-Secretary
- Ms. Aynur Mammadova, English-Russian Interpreter/Translator
- Mr. Amir Javaheri, English-Persian Interpreter/Translator