



**252nd Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

Report

26th April 2021
ECO Secretariat

Report

The 252nd CPR Meeting was held on April 26, 2021 in hybrid mode under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov, Ambassador of **Turkmenistan** to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Permanent Representative to ECO. The meeting was attended by the Permanent Representatives of Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, **Kyrgyz Republic**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** as well as Representatives of Republic of **Kazakhstan**, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** and the Republic of **Turkey**. 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. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov, the Chairman** while welcoming the distinguished delegates to the meeting wished them blessing of the holy month of Ramadan. In his short statement, he highlighted that Turkmenistan attaches great importance to furthering cooperation within the organization and will make due contribution to secure the ECO's common goals. He underlined that the honorable President of Turkmenistan H. E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov considers ECO as an important regional Economic Organization to contribute to the economic and developmental process of our region. In this context, he added that Turkmenistan, upon assuming ECO Chairpersonship, issued a concept note defining the targets that are expected to be achieved in 2021. The Chair emphasized on the creation of new opportunities for enhancing cooperative partnership amongst the Member States to achieve the organization's aims and objective in the industrial, trade, economy, energy, culture, communications and humanitarian spheres. Copy of his statement is attached as **Annexure-II**.

3. **The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour** welcomed Ambassador Ahmet Kurbanov for taking over his responsibilities as the new CPR's Chair, and felicitated him for assumption of ECO's chairmanship for 2021 by Turkmenistan. The ECO Secretary General assured the Secretariat's full cooperation and support to Ambassador Kurbanov in meeting his tasks as Chairman of the CPR.

4. The Permanent Representatives/Representatives of the Member States also congratulated the new Chair and wished him and his country a successful chairmanship of the ECO.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The **Council** adopted the following Agenda of the 252nd CPR Meeting for deliberation:

- 1) Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 252nd CPR Meeting

- 2) Adoption of the Draft Report of the 251st CPR Meeting
- 3) Review and follow-up of outcomes of virtual 14th ECO Summit
- 4) Follow-up and Implementation status of the ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan
- 5) Adjustment of the title of Staffs whose post moved to other directorates under new staff strength
- 6) Audit Report for the years 2019 and 2020
- 7) Administrative matters:
 - Recommendations of the Selection Panel
- 8) Any other business
- 9) Date of the next CPR Meeting

Agenda Item No.2

Adoption of the draft Report of the 251st CPR Meeting

6. The **Council adopted** the draft report of the 251st CPR Meeting, circulated by the Secretariat on March 01, 2021.

Agenda Item No.3

Review and follow-up of outcomes of virtual 14th ECO Summit

7. Recalling that the 14th ECO Summit was held virtually on March 4, 2021 under the theme of "Regional Economic Cooperation in the aftermath of COVID-19" and chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the honourable President of the Republic of Turkey, **the Chair** requested the Secretariat to brief the Council about the event's follow-up.

8. **The ECO Secretary General** expressed his gratitude and congratulated the esteemed Member States to make the 14th ECO Summit a success. He highlighted that during the Summit, the ECO leaders not only reiterated their continued support to the ECO's developmental goals but also put forward their valuable views and guidelines for securing the organization's agenda as per aims and objectives of the ECO Vision 2025 which was adopted by 13th ECO Summit in March 2017 at Islamabad. The Secretary General informed that following the 14th ECO Summit, the Secretariat developed a document containing sector-wise status of the organization's activities as well as future course of actions according to the vision and views of our leaders. He added that the intent of such a line of actions is to push the process of cooperative regional development and to be well-prepared to report the ECO Heads of States during the 15th ECO Summit.

9. **The ECO Secretary General** illustrated that the organization was transiting through the midterm phase of ECO Vision 2025, noting that this is the right time for consideration by the Member States to establish a high-level working group to be aimed at reviewing the progress and implementation status of the ECO Vision 2025, as well as

evaluation of the shortcomings, if any, for rectification. He added that immediate formation of the proposed working group, to be headed by the CPR's incumbent Chairman or any of the other honourable Permanent Representatives, would enable the required mid-term review of the ECO Vision in light of the inspirations, views and proposals of the ECO Heads of States, seeking the Council's approval in this regard.

10. Appreciating the Secretariat's excellent efforts for compiling the said document, the **Chair** supported the proposal of the Secretary General to establish a working group for making necessary midterm review of the Vision in consideration of the guidance of ECO Heads of States, as well as the challenges posed by COVID crisis. He requested the Permanent Representatives/Representatives to volunteer themselves for joining and enriching the deliberation of the proposed working group, expecting the outcome of such an exercise to be submitted to the ECO Heads of States during their 15th Summit Meeting.

11. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** appreciated the ECO Secretary General and Secretariat for developing such a comprehensive document. To avoid any wrong connotation/annotation in regard to the proposals and ideas of ECO leaders as compiled and shared with the Member States, he noted that it should not be construed as if lesser emphasis was placed by the ECO Leaders on the activities of the Organization to which lesser or no reference were made during the Summit Meeting. Concerning the said formation of working group, he considered that it would be better to create a high-level Vision Committee for such an important review in the matter rather than looking into the issues at a mid-level working group. He further said that the proposed body might be mandated to complete the task of finalizing the midterm review of the ECO Vision-2025 within a two or three-month time under the incumbent Chair or any Permanent Representative of the Council.

12. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Tajikistan** also endorsed the proposal to create a working group for reviewing the Vision Document, requesting the Secretariat to suggest the composition of committee/working group. He proposed that the said committee/working group may be headed by current CPR's Chair, whereas other Member States may be represented there at different/appropriate level.

13. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Uzbekistan**, while appreciating the Secretariat for the promising document, suggested re-titling of the developed paper as working programme, course of actions or roadmap for accelerating the implementation of ECO Vision based on the proposals/ideas of ECO Heads of States. Recommending the CPR's Chair to lead the proposed setup, he encouraged that such issues might, however, be discussed/addressed at CPR level.

14. The Representative of the Republic of **Kazakhstan** stated that the intended working group/committee should be formatted comprising of Deputy Heads of

Missions under the chairmanship of an ECO Deputy Secretary General or Deputy Head of Mission of Turkmenistan.

15. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** seconded the views of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to finalize the task at CPR level instead of creating an alternative forum.

16. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** also endorsed the idea and supported the proposed working group/committee to be chaired at the Ambassador's level, offering his own services to co-chair the forum. Noting the salient issues to be reviewed under the said exercise, he considered that the projected task of making midterm review of the Vision 2025 was not so huge, which could positively be accomplished even before the next meeting of CPR.

17. The **ECO Secretary General** encouraged the CPR's Chair to lead the committee/working group together with two co-chairs from any Member States and ECO Deputy Secretary General (JPC & EAPA, Tourism), as coordinator of the committee. Considering some authority aspects, he underscored that the ECO Secretariat could only facilitate the proceedings of committee and make necessary coordination/arrangements in this regard.

18. Taking into account the proposal of the ECO Secretary General and views of the Member States thereon, **the Council** approved the creation of a high-level Committee to be headed by Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan/CPR Chairman, as well as co-chaired by Permanent Representative of Iran (H.E. Dr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari) and the Representative of Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Mr. Mian Azmat Farooq) for mid-term review of ECO-Vision 2025 in light of the proposals/views made by ECO Heads of States/Governments during the 14th Summit, as well as in consideration of the pandemic conditions.

Agenda Item No.4

Follow-up and Implementation status of the ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan

19. In reference to the decision of 250th Meeting of CPR regarding inclusion of an agenda item related to the implementation status of the ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA), the **Chair** requested the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan and the Representative of Pakistan to brief the Council about the latest developments in the matter.

20. As regards opening of the new bank account in Afghanistan, the Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** stated that the matter was under consideration of the Ministry of Finance of Pakistan. Regarding the transfer of money/account from Habib Bank Limited London, he said that the process involved an obligatory bureaucratic

procedure that seemed to take some more time particularly due to the ongoing pandemic conditions in UK and Pakistan, adding that the relevant details were already shared with the Secretariat. He underlined a simultaneous approach to be adopted, emphasizing that Afghanistan might submit their project proposals through the Special Unit for implementation as per the EAPA's revised modalities.

21. The Permanent Representative of Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, while noting that under the framework of ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan a new chapter of cooperation between the ECO Member States and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is commencing, expected that close cooperation of the ECO Secretariat and Member States particularly with Islamic Republic of Pakistan will pave the way for implementation of new high priority projects resulting economic development, stability and security in the country. He informed that the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan had already established the Special Unit, with participation of the focal points from different Ministries, which mainly focuses on preliminary measures, including (i) reviewing the related ECO documents, (ii) making the arrangements regarding the opening of new bank account in respect to the ECO Fund for Afghanistan and (iii) evaluating the new projects to be funded through ECO Fund for Afghanistan under revised modalities. He noted that without determining the opening of new bank account of ECO Fund, the actual steps for materializing new projects could not be taken. He requested the Council to (i) approve the opening of new bank account at Bank Millie Afghan in Kabul, allowing the concerned authorities of Afghanistan to proceed with the requisite procedure for opening the account to receive the amount from Habib Bank London as well as new contributions from ECO Member States and Non ECO countries; and (ii) authorize the Secretariat for accepting the new projects for implementation under framework of ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan and its modalities, enabling the Afghanistan to propose new projects. He assured that details of the members of Special Unit and its activities were sought from concerned authorities of Afghanistan and will be shared with ECO Secretariat.

22. The **ECO Deputy Secretary General (JPC & EAPA, Tourism)** updated the Council regarding background of the ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan and ECO Fund for Afghanistan as well as the ongoing activities of ECO Secretariat in this regard. He informed that due to COVID-19 and other difficulties the first ECO Donors Conference for Afghanistan could not take place, requesting the Member States to consider the hosting of the event. He further requested the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to share details of the activities/outcomes of Special Unit established in Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan to be placed before the ECO Afghanistan Committee.

23. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** stressed that the ECO Advocacy Programme Committee should be operationalized as soon as possible to implement the EAPA. He encouraged that the relevant authorities of Afghanistan might make the EAPA more visible during their interactions at other regional and international

forums for getting some outer support. In this regard, they may consider holding some sideline events during international conferences/meetings on Development of Afghanistan in the UN system and other donor's agencies.

24. The **ECO Secretary General** informed that the issue regarding the holding of ECO Donors Conference for Afghanistan is included in the Calendar of Events for 2021 and the possibility of convening it on the sidelines of next ECO Summit at Ashgabat in 2021 is being explored with the leadership of Turkmenistan. He suggested that the ECO Afghanistan Committee in the ECO Secretariat should be operationalizing and Special Unit in the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan should be established. He requested the Council's approval for financing the approved projects of Afghanistan from the amount available in Habib Bank London. He also suggested that while the matter regarding transfer of money from HBL was under consideration, a provisional account may be opened at the Bank Millie Afghan in Kabul.

25. **The Chair**, while noting that the matter to hold ECO Donors Conference for Afghanistan on the sidelines of next ECO Summit in 2021 is under consideration, suggested the adoption of new project proposals from Afghanistan under EAPA and its new modalities.

26. Considering the deliberations made by Member States as well as taking into account the suggestions of the ECO Secretary General, **the Council** approved the following to ensure smooth implementation of ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan:

- Opening of a new ECO bank account at Bank Millie Afghan in Kabul;
- Activation of the Special Unit in the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan as provided for in ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan;
- Convening meeting of the ECO Afghanistan Committee, which would be co-chaired by the incumbent CPR's Chairman and the Ambassador of Afghanistan;
- Provision of review report by the Secretariat regarding projects received from Afghanistan so far, for discussion in the ECO Afghanistan Committee;
- Secretariat will work with its international partners and the government of Afghanistan to find ways and means for more visibility of EAPA at relevant global forums;
- Comprehensive report in the matter to be submitted by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;
- Financing the projects of Afghanistan through the fund in Habib Bank London when accessible;

Agenda Item No.5

Adjustment of the title of Staffs whose post moved to other directorates under new staff strength

27. The **Chairman** recalled that ECO New Staff Strength (Categories I and II) was approved by COM through Silence Procedure on 11 March 2021 and requested the Member States to deliberate on the issue of necessary internal adjustment of staff as proposed in the annotated agenda.

28. The Permanent Representative of the **Kyrgyz Republic** sought Secretariat's clarification over the post of Programme Officer moved from EME Directorate to Agriculture and Industry Directorate.

29. The **ECO Secretary General** clarified that the said post of Program Officer at P- level would be upgraded to D1-level subject to materialization of annual budgetary contribution to ECO as per new scale of assessments by Kyrgyz Republic. Till then, and based on the decision of 245th CPR appointing, the nominee of Kyrgyz Republic to the post of Program Officer will remain in the EME Directorate for a full term of four years from the date of his joining. Nevertheless, if upgrading does not take place even after the termination of tenure of the appointee, the post will be moved under the Directorate of Agriculture and Industry.

30. The Permanent Representative of the **Kyrgyz Republic** expressed his satisfaction over the clarification made by ECO Secretary General.

31. The **Council** agreed on necessary modification/adjustment of titles of incumbent staff of the posts moved under new staff strength based on their fresh areas of activity for the remaining part of their tenures.

Agenda Item No.6

Audit Report for the years 2019 and 2020

32. The **Chair** informed that the Audit Board comprising of senior-level auditors from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey visited the Secretariat in February 2021 and conducted audit of the accounts of the Secretariat for the years 2019 and 2020. The Board prepared Audit Report for the years 2019 and 2020, circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale dated April 8, 2021 along with Para-wise explanation of the Secretary General thereon.

33. The **Council** agreed that the Audit Report for the years 2019 and 2020 may be submitted to the Council of Minister (COM) for approval.

Agenda Item No.7

Administrative matters:

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

34. The Selection Panel met on April 26, 2021. The Meeting was coordinated by ECO Deputy Secretary General (Administration, EME and IR) and Chaired by the Representative of the Embassy of Turkmenistan. Other participants of the meeting included the Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan.

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

Head of Section for Judicial and Parliamentary Coordination and ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (JPC&EAPA) (Category-I, D1)

Mr. Muhammad Eesa Qudrat (Afghanistan National) may be appointed against the newly created post of Head of Section (JPC&EAPA) for a full term of three (03) years to be effective from the date of his joining the Secretariat.

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

Agenda Item No.8

Any other business

37. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Uzbekistan** informed that despite the prevailing COVID conditions, the Republic of Uzbekistan intends to host the 4th Meeting of Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and Ombudsmen of the ECO Member States in person/hybrid mode on June 16-17, 2021 at Tashkent. He stressed for active participation of Member States in the said event. While calling on the Member States to expedite confirmations of their participation in the said meeting, he requested the Secretariat to make necessary coordination in this regard.

38. The **ECO Deputy Secretary General (JPC & EAPA, Tourism)** informed that the Secretariat was already coordinating with the relevant authorities of Uzbekistan for holding this important event, making efforts to ensure maximum participation of the Member States.

Agenda Item No.9

Date of the next CPR Meeting

39. The **Council** decided to convene its next (253rd) CPR Meeting on **May 24, 2021** in Hybrid Mode.

40. The **Chair** expressed his sincere thanks to all participants and adjourned the meeting.

Annexure-I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H.E. Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Lival, 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. Khosravi, Attaché, ECO Affairs Bureau

The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- 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:

- Mr. Mehmet Zahit Uzun, Counsellor

The Embassy of Turkmenistan:

- H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov, Ambassador
- Mr. Bairamov Atamirat, First Secretary
- 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. 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
- Mr. Muhammad Ahmed Raza, Steno-Secretary
- Mr. Amjad Saeed Abbasi, Steno-Secretary
- Ms. Aynur Mammadova, English-Russian Interpreter/Translator

Unofficial translation of the ECO Secretariat

Annexure-II

**Statement by the Chairman of CPR, Ambassador of Turkmenistan
(252nd CPR Meeting, April 26, 2021)**

Good morning, distinguished colleagues, representatives of ECO member states, Secretariat's staff and distinguished Secretary-General!

Today, after a long break, we begin the work of the Council of Permanent Representatives. Important events have taken place during this period: first of all, the 14th ECO Summit of Heads of State, which due to the current pandemic conditions was virtually held via videoconference at a high organized level, we will revisit the subject with the course of our work. In addition, almost all of us have celebrated Nowruz holiday, in Iran has started the year 1400 on occasion of which we congratulate our Iranian brothers, wishing this year to be a happy, successful one without coronavirus and fruitful for all of us. I also wish to congratulate everyone on the beginning of the Holy month of Ramadan and wish both mental and body fortitude for those who are fasting and we pray that Allah will reward and accept the prayers of all Muslims.

With the assumption the presidency at the ECO Secretariat, Turkmenistan attaches great importance to further cooperation within the organization and, in accordance with the Concept of the Presidency, will try to contribute to the achievement of our common goals. Our efforts will be aimed at strengthening cooperation and creating an atmosphere of understanding and trust.

As a strategic task, we consider promoting the expansion of integrated partnership opportunities within the ECO framework in the economic, trade, industrial, energy, transport, communication and cultural and humanitarian spheres.

To that end, first and foremost, we will be guided by decisions and dedicate our efforts towards achieving objectives posed by the Heads of State at the 14th ECO Summit, which set firm benchmarks and priorities.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the ECO member states for their high trust to Turkmenistan and look forward to fruitful interaction in the upcoming period.
