



253rd Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Report

24th May, 2021
ECO Secretariat

Report

The 253rd CPR Meeting was held on May 24, 2021 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 Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, **Kyrgyz Republic**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** as well as Representatives of Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, 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** welcomed the distinguished delegates and commenced the meeting as per its agenda.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

3. The **Council adopted** the following Agenda of the 253rd CPR Meeting for deliberation:

- 1) Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 253rd CPR Meeting
- 2) Adoption of the Draft Report of the 252nd CPR Meeting
- 3) Review and follow-up of outcomes of virtual 14th ECO Summit (continued)
- 4) ECO Small Sized Project Implementation Status Overview
- 5) Appointment of new Secretary General
- 6) Administrative matters:
 - 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 252nd CPR Meeting

4. The **Council adopted** the draft report of the 252nd CPR Meeting, circulated by the Secretariat on May 04, 2021.

Agenda Item No.3

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

5. **The Chair** recalled that the High Level Committee (HLC), established under a decision of 252nd Meeting of CPR for midterm review of the ECO Vision 2025 in special consideration of the views/proposals of the ECO Heads of States expressed during the 14th ECO Summit, held three meetings, so far, to address the issue at hand as per the mandate given. He requested the HLC's Co-chairs (Permanent Representative of the

Islamic Republic of Iran and Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan) to update the Council about the outcomes of their meetings held so far.

6. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** (*Co-Chair of the HLC*) informed that, given the need for adoption of an appropriate method for reviewing ECO Vision, the HLC focussed on the impediments hampering smooth implementation of the ECO Vision – 2025 as the starting point of review process. It was noted that the views and guidelines of the ECO Heads of States expressed during the 14th Summit also be considered to go forward. He brought to the attention of the Council that HLC has, so far, agreed on the following:

- To secure written views/comments of the Member States on HLC's two working documents i.e. (i) midterm review of the ECO Vision – 2025 (bottlenecks/impediments and way forward and (ii) review of the issues raised by ECO Heads of States/Governments at the 14th Summit (which were not covered under ECO Vision 2025).
- HLC's final report will consist of three parts, including: (i) stocktaking (ii) impediments in implementations of ECO Vision and (iii) recommendations for possible revision;
- First draft report of HLC is expected to be ready in the first week of June 2021; and
- Once the draft report is finalized, the Membr States may have another opportunity to peruse and review the document for making their final views/comments during the fourth round of HLC.

7. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** (**Co-Chair of HLC**) **also briefed the Council on progress made by HLC to address its mandate, so far. It was further stated that the HLC's final recommendations would be submitted to the COM through the CPR for approval of adjustments/revisions.**

8. The **Council** expressed satisfaction over the progress of HLC, expecting more tangible outcomes to be developed by HLC on the given task before the next meeting of CPR.

Agenda Item No.4

ECO Small Sized Project Implementation Status Overview

9. The **Chairman** recalled that the 24th Council of Ministers Meeting held on 8-9 November 2019 in Antalya, Turkey put an emphasis on short-term, bankable small sized projects, authorizing the Secretary General to hire specialists/consultants for 10 small sized bankable projects (SSPs) annually, utilizing US\$ 10,000/- for each project from the General Reserve Fund (GRF). Moreover, he requested the Secretariat to brief the Council regarding latest developments in this regard.

10. The **ECO Secretary General**, while highlighting the salient features of small sized projects, noted that scientifically the implementation of small sized projects in international organizations means to save the 60% time and cost. The ECO Secretariat during the 2nd half of the preceding year primarily focused on optimization of project processes in line with the recommendations of the COM. Likewise, new trend necessitated the development of bankable projects through restructuring of pre-pandemic project profiles into smaller manageable ones, he added. This was supported by the decision of the 24th COM that mandated for selection and implementation of at-least 10 small sized short-terms bankable projects. Following the project oriented and result based approach as per ECO Vision 2025, the ECO Secretariat made tremendous efforts to institutionalize the concept, achieving the optimization of the process through developing small sized short-term bankable projects. He further explained that the measures taken to meet the requirements include the following:

- a. Streamlining the procedural method through 12 steps' modality for smooth execution of small sized projects;
- b. Finalization of Terms of Reference (ToR) to hire the services of relevant project specialists;
- c. Opting merit-based selection of project specialist(s), involving the concerned ECO Deputy Secretary General and directorate; and
- d. Formation of a two-way policy of interaction among the project teams.

11. **ECO Secretary General** further informed that the 31st RPC endorsed the inclusion of 10 more pre-feasibility and feasibility projects to be sponsored under GRF for implementing such a process. Relevantly, the Secretariat prepared a brief overview reflecting the current status of projects implementation and concept paper for consideration of the Member States. Hence, in addition to already approved 10 bankable small sized projects, the Council may approve 10 more pre-feasibility/feasibility study small sized projects to be implemented annually until the year 2025. Moreover, the Secretary General sought Council's consideration for appointment of expert either at A-level or P level as a temporary staff to support the functioning of Project Management Section of the Secretariat (full text of his presentation is attached as annexure-II).

12. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** supported the explanation of the Secretary General that aimed at making the ECO a project and result-oriented organization. However, he sought some clarifications about (i) either the importance of establishing any project is for a specific group of Member States or all Member States and; (ii) criteria for selection of relevant consultants.

13. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** thanked the Secretary General for briefing on the issues and raised question about the benchmarks of small size, bankable as well as short terms project as funds from other than GRF have already been utilized on some projects reflected in the given booklet. According to international definition, even the feasibility or pre-feasibility studies are covered under small size projects. In the

given context, Secretariat may clarify the complex between feasibility/pre-feasibility studies and already authorized small size project as per international concepts, he requested, adding that the concept paper and the proposal for expanding the scope of small sized projects to feasibility study projects are under consideration by their relevant authorities in Turkey. He mentioned that in the absence of clear instructions from capital, he was unable concur with the proposal.

14. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey**, however, emphasized that the focus of discussions should remain on the topic of agenda. Recalling the decision of 31st RPC, he requested the Secretariat to convene the mid-term RPC meeting as scheduled in the ECO Calendar of Events for 2021. Moreover, he underlined that the issue related to the recruitment of an A-level staff/temporary P-level staff is also subject to the expansion of scope of the projects which may be considered after the finalization of the matter.

15. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** while appreciating the Secretary General for his idea to expand the scope of small sized projects to feasibility study noted that the organization should not be limited to only small sized projects, highlighting the need of some mega projects, as well. Furthermore, he desired clarification from the Secretariat regarding (i) a missing project out of ten new projects reflected in the provided booklet (ii) beneficiaries of the implementation of small sized projects (iii) initiator of the small sized projects and (iv) definition of social justification as mentioned in the relevant TOR. Apart from this, given the importance of efficiency of the staff of the Secretariat and the role of Secretariat in the effectiveness of the Organization, he proposed that a small sized project might be developed as part of capacity building programme to enhance the professionalism of ECO staff. In this regard, he made a reference to the UNITAR training activities and the arrangements which might be made to this end by the Secretariat

16. The **ECO Secretary General**, while expressing his pleasure over the interest of the Member States in the matter, explained that the 24th COM mandated the Secretary General to simplify the organization's bureaucratic process, ensuring the implementation of small sized projects that seems necessary in order to institutionalise the project oriented approach. Responding to the queries of the Member States, he made the following explanations:

- a. Small-sized projects are scrutinized by Sectoral Ministerial Meetings/sectoral committees and or by the Regional Planning Council;
- b. All Member States are beneficiary of these projects with identified approach to benefit the maximum number of Member States. In few cases, some Member States are benefited directly while the other indirectly;
- c. Some feasibility studies might fall within the scope of the small sized projects. Therefore, Secretariat seeks the Council's approval to wider the scope of both bankable and feasibility/pre-feasibility study projects.;

- d. The criteria of small size project (s), approved by the 24th COM, includes: short duration, low cost (maximum US \$ 10000/-), limited number of objectives, narrowly defined scope and simple methodology, solo decision-making and clear project outputs with few interdependencies among skill areas;
- e. The Secretariat offers both i.e. small and mid sized projects for making the organization more project oriented. Mid sized/long term/mega projects normally take time (more than a year) to be implemented. The source is Feasibility and General Purpose Fund and normally carried out with participation of interested financial institutions. This kind of projects have their Functional Methodology. In 2020, as an example, while five mid-sized long-term projects were completed in the transit transport sector, the ECO switched to small sized project in the said sector this year;
- f. The Secretariat is presently working on nine small sized projects which are approved by RPC. The remaining one is intentionally reserved to be offered to any interested Member State which may introduce a new project proposal for feasibility study;
- g. The social justification reflected in TOR is in consideration of the Environmental Impact Assessments to evaluate the project's aspects of implementation on society, economy and environment;
- h. The Secretariat selects the expert through the roster of experts which is updated annually on the recommendations of Member States by introducing the most relevant experts related to priority areas as well as on the proposal of relevant directorate and approval of Secretary General. Moreover, to be benefited from other anonymous experts of the region, the Secretariat places the Request for Proposals and relevant ToR on the ECO Website;
- i. In order to review the implementation status of small sized projects the Secretariat convenes meeting (s) of the Project Management Group regularly. The next one might be in the second half of June.
- j. Considering the tight working schedule of activities during June 2021, the mid-term RPC will possibly be held in July, 2021 in consultation with the Chair and Member States.

17. While appreciating the explanation made by the Secretary General, the **Chair** seconded the views of Iranian side regarding inclusion of some mega projects in the agenda of the organization.

18. Taking into account all aspects of deliberations, the **Council agreed** for (i) holding of meeting of the Project Monitoring Group for reviewing the report on the implementation status of the small sized projects (ii) mid-term RPC Meeting in July

2021 (iii) deferral of discussions on expansion of scope of small sized projects to feasibility study as well as recruitment of a staff till the next meeting of CPR.

Agenda Item No.5

Appointment of the new ECO Secretary General

19. The **Chairman** informed that the term of Office of the incumbent ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour will be completed on August 13, 2021, conveying the receipt of candidature of H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan to the post. He added that the received nomination was circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale dated April 11, 2021, requesting the Council to decide on the adoption of a two-week silence procedure to secure approval of the COM for appointment of Tajikistan's candidate as next Secretary General for a term of three years.

20. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Uzbekistan** supported the candidature of the Republic of Tajikistan for the post of ECO Secretary General and informed that their formal concurrence, in this regard, would follow shortly.

21. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** while congratulating the Republic of Tajikistan for their candidature, supported the adoption of a prescribed two-week's silence procedure to secure approval of the COM in this regard.

22. The Representative of the Republic of **Kazakhstan** conveyed that response of their Capital was yet to be received in regard to Tajikistan's candidature for the post of ECO Secretary General. He requested the deferral of discussions in the matter till the next meeting of CPR.

23. The Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** considered the need of some rules to provide appropriate timeframe to the Member States for securing their positions/feedbacks in such cases.

24. The Permanent Representative of Republic of **Tajikistan** noted that the candidature of Tajikistan for the post of ECO Secretary General, conveyed to the Secretariat on April 05, 2021, was circulated amongst the Member States with no timeframe/deadline to secure any views/comments thereon, expressing his concerns in this regard.

25. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan** supported the nomination of Tajikistan against the post of ECO Secretary General.

26. To accommodate the views of all Member States as to the time of initiation of the silence procedure for obtaining approval of COM on the appointment of new Secretary General, the **Council** decided to defer the agenda item for the next meeting of the CPR.

Agenda Item No.6

Administrative matters:

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

27. The Selection Panel met on May 24, 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.

28. The Selection panel made the following recommendations for consideration of the CPR:

Legal Advisor (Category-II, P3)

The tenure of service in respect of Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar (**Iranian National**) may be extended till the joining date of his successor.

Steno-Secretary (Category-II, P1)

Mr. Shahid Hussain (**Pakistan National**) may be appointed against the post of Steno-Secretary for a full term of four (04) years to be effective from the date of his joining the Secretariat.

29. The **Council** approved the above recommendations of the Selection Panel.

Agenda Item No.7

Any other business

30. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** informed that 2nd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO Member States was scheduled to be held from May 31 to June 03, 2021 in Islamabad, seeking active participation of the Member States in the event. While calling on the Member States to expedite confirmations of their participation, he sought the Council's approval for inclusion of the said conference in the list of events to be sponsored under the Special Support Fund (SSF) for ensuring maximum participation of the Member States.

31. The ECO **Secretary General** informed that in view of the pandemic conditions, the Organization made some austerity measures in its current year's budget, allocating only an amount of US \$ 7000/- under the head of account for SSF. He added that such amount could cover a single event only, whereas there were many other meetings included in the Calendar of Events for 2021.

32. Considering the availability of insufficient amount of money in the SSF as well as relevant provisions in the PAECO's structure, the **Council**, despite acknowledging

the importance of the PAECO's 2nd General Conference, could not be able to include the proposed Conference in the list of events to be sponsored under SSF.

33. The **Chair** while informing that H.E. Mr. Bunyad Huseynov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan and H.E. Avazbek Abdurazakov, Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic to the Islamic of Iran and Permanent Representatives to the ECO would be completing their terms of offices, expressed his gratitude to the distinguished dignitaries for their participation in the CPR's proceedings, cooperation and support to the organization. He wished them best of luck and success for their future assignments.

34. The **ECO Secretary General** while acknowledging the support and cooperation of Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Ambassador the Kyrgyz Republic, expressed his deep appreciation for their kind contributions to the working of CPR and development of the agenda of the Organization. He extended sincere felicitations to both the dignitaries for successful completion of their assignments.

35. The Permanent Representatives/Representatives of the Member States also joined each other to thank and felicitate H.E. Mr. Bunyad Huseynov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan and H.E. Avazbek Abdurazakov, Ambassador the Kyrgyz Republic for their professional cooperation.

Agenda Item No.8

Date of the next CPR Meeting

36. The **Council** decided to convene its next (254th) CPR Meeting on **June 22, 2021** at ECO Secretariat.

37. The **Chair** while adjourning the meeting conveyed his thanks to all participants.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- 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. Mr. 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. 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. Golchin Mozhgan, Chief Accountant
- Ms. Bayan Adilbekova, Heas of PMS

- Mr. Muhammad Ahmed Raza, Steno-Secretary
- Mr. Amjad Saeed Abbasi, Steno-Secretary
- Ms. Aynur Mammadova, English-Russian Interpreter/Translator