



**255th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

Report

*July 26, 2021
ECO Secretariat*

Report

The 255th CPR Meeting was held on July 26, 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 Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, the Republic of **Turkey** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** as well as Representatives of Republic of **Azerbaijan**, **Kyrgyz Republic** and Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**. 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 participants formally initiated the proceedings of the meeting.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

3. The **Council** adopted the following Agenda of the 255th CPR Meeting for deliberation:

- 1) Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 255th CPR Meeting
- 2) Adoption of the Draft Report of the 254th CPR Meeting
- 3) Preparation for the 15th ECO Summit, preceded by 25th COM
- 4) Follow-up and mid-term review of ECO Vision 2025 (*continued*)
- 5) Renewal/extension of observers status of Turkish Cypriot State
- 6) Authorization of the CPR to enter into negotiations with PUIC for signing MOU
- 7) Administrative matters:
 - Appointment of new Deputy Secretary General (Trade & Investment and Agriculture & Industry)
 - 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 254th CPR Meeting

4. The **Council adopted** the draft report of the 254th CPR Meeting circulated by the Secretariat on May 30, 2021, along with the amendment proposed by the Republic of Turkey on the Agenda Item No. 6 of the said report which was circulated vide Secretariats Note Verbale dated July 5, 2021.

Agenda Item No.3

Preparation for the 15th ECO Summit, preceded by 25th COM

5. Reminding that the 15th ECO Summit to be preceded by 25th Meeting of Council of Ministers (COM) is scheduled for November 28, 2021 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, the **Chair** requested the Council to consider the establishment of Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for developing necessary agenda, programme and making the required coordination to ensure the successful holding of the scheduled events.
6. The Representative of Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** sought procedural clarifications as regards the establishment of Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) and expected issues to be discussed by the PrepCom.
7. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Tajikistan** inquired the level and composition of the proposed Committee.
8. In response to the inquiry made by the representative of Pakistan, the **Secretariat** clarified that the main issue which is expected to be considered at the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) is the draft Declaration of the upcoming Summit, however other issues related to the coming meetings of COM and Summit could also be addressed at the PrepCom meeting(s). It has also been noted that although the meeting(s) of preparatory committee would be open-ended, participation of representatives of Embassies of all Member States in these meetings is highly expected. It was added that the meeting would be held under the chairpersonship of the current chair.
9. The Representative of the **Turkmenistan** informed that with a view to making systematic preparation of the next Summit and COM, the Honourable President of the Turkmenistan established an Organizational Committee comprising of the representatives of relevant Ministries for necessary coordination and preparations. He also welcomed the establishment of PrepCom for 15th ECO Summit.
10. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** while supporting the establishment of PrepCom proposed that the Chair or any other Permanent Representative may lead the said committee for interaction/coordination between PrepCom and Organizational Committee established by the Honourable President of Turkmenistan. He also inquired about the meetings/events to be planned by Turkmenistan on the side-lines of the Summit.
11. The **Chair** noted that the establishment of the PrepCom is mandatory for organization of the Summit and COM in order to ensure adequate preparations as well as finalization of the relevant documents and issues in advance. Stressing the participation of the all Member States in this Committee, he intimated the schedule of the meetings of said committee will be shared by Secretariat at latter stage. Furthermore, he proposed that some synchronized arrangement should be made between PrepCom

and the Committee established in Turkmenistan under the President's directives. The **Chair** also expressed that the official note regarding the 15th Summit from Turkmenistan was yet to be received and the host authorities were also considering a Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), donor's conference for Afghanistan, exhibitions of Member States and business forums as side-lines events of Summit. The outcomes will be shared with the Member States, he assured.

12. The **ECO Secretary General** recommended the Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Chair the PrepCom, assuring that the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair would finalize the schedule of PrepCom's meeting(s). He further informed that the Secretariat had already developed draft agenda(s) of the Summit and COM as well as the zero draft declaration of the Summit to be considered and finalized by PrepCom.

13. In consideration of the foregoing, the **Council** established an open-ended Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for 15th Summit/25th COM under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan and tasked the Secretariat to take necessary action and prepare related documents in this regard.

Agenda Item No.4

Follow-up and mid-term review of ECO Vision 2025 (continued)

14. Recalling the last CPR's discussions on follow-up of the outcomes of 14th ECO Summit and mid-term review of the ECO Vision 2025, the Chair requested the Co-Chair(s) of the High Level Committee (HLC) to brief the Council on latest developments in the matter.

15. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran being HLC's Co-Chair reported that the committee was still working on the zero draft report of the given task which will be shortly circulated amongst the Member States to secure their feedbacks. On receipt of feedbacks from Member States, the HLC will finalize the report for submission to the SOM/COM through CPR. He highlighted that the structure of report includes introduction, review of the expected outcomes envisaged by the Vision-2025 in six sectors/pillars (*trade, transport/connectivity, energy, tourism, economic growth & connectivity and social welfare and environment*) and implementation framework by addressing every single outcome in the vision by three perspectives (i) stocktaking, what has been done so far, (ii) what are the impediments and (iii) way forward. Another section of the report will be addressing the outcomes of the 14th ECO Summit with some specific actions on the views expressed by the Honourable ECO Heads of States/Governments, he added. The Co-chair also informed that the HLC was awaiting Secretariat's response on the proposal made by the Honourable President of the Republic of Kazakhstan regarding the rectification of categorization between the founding and non-founding ECO Member States.

16. The **Council** commended the efforts made by the HLC and Secretariat for preparation of draft report and desired that the HLC might circulate the zero draft

report amongst the Member States, giving a one-week time to secure their view/feedbacks.

Agenda Item No.5

Renewal/extension of observer status of Turkish Cypriot State

17. Referring previous discussion in the matter, the **Chair** informed that the Secretariat circulated the request of Turkish Cypriot State for renewal/extension of its ECO Observer Status on May 30, 2021. He requested the Member States to consider the request and give their suggestion(s) in this regard.

18. Having no objection raised by any Member State, the **Council** recommended three years' extension/renewal of observer status of Turkish Cypriot State through adoption of a two-week silence procedure to secure the COM's approval to this end.

Agenda Item No.6

Authorization of the CPR to enter into negotiations with PUIC for signing of MoU

19. The **Chair** informed that Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) through informal communication with the Secretariat sought ways and means of signing an MoU for establishing cooperative relations with ECO and requested the Secretariat to brief the Council in the matter.

20. The Head of Section (International Relations) noted that enhancement of close cooperative relations with regional and international organization is considered an effective tool of ECO. In view of the directives of the various decision-making bodies of the Organization, ECO has been engaged in developing and promoting mutually beneficial relations with a host of international partners in a focused and sustained manner for supporting the development activities in the areas of common interest. The Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), founded in 1999, is one of the key subsidiaries of the OIC. Considering the fact that all ECO Members are part of the OIC, recently ECO and the PUIC had made informal communications for seeking ways and means for establishing cooperative relations. The draft Agreement/MoU shared with Member States provides the possible areas of cooperation between the PUIC and the ECO as well as potential benefits for the ECO, he added. Keeping in view the commonalities of the two organizations and potential benefits of establishing cooperative relations with PUIC, the ECO Secretariat is of the view that at this stage an MoU may be signed with the PUIC. Since the authorization of the CPR is required by the Secretariat to enter into formal negotiations for signing MoU/Agreement with the potential partners, he requested the CPR to deliberate on the issue and make a decision on the subject matter.

21. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** stated that Iran always supported the extension of the outreach of ECO and, in principal, is totally in favour of such relations. However, he inquired the nature of proposed ECO-PUIC partnership in consideration of their dissimilar areas of scope, recommending that such

a proposal for cooperative relationship is advisable between PUIC and PAECO. However, he proposed some kind of mechanism to be mutually offered by ECO and PUIC for securing each other's observer status.

22. The Representative of **Kyrgyz** Republic backed up the views of Iran, emphasizing to promote the ECO's envisaged economic cooperation profile rather than exploring others aspects of irrelevancy. He proposed that it would be better to be involved with other regional/international organizations in our own areas of scope and priorities.

23. Looking into certain features of discussion, the **Council** mandated the Secretariat to develop observer-ship status by both ECO and PUIC on mutual basis.

Agenda Item No.7

Administrative matters:

- Appointment of new Deputy Secretary General (Trade & Investment and Agriculture & Industry)

24. The **Chairman** informed that the Islamic Republic of Iran nominated Mr. Mohammad Hasan Sheikholeslami for appointment against the post of Deputy Secretary General (T&I and A&I) in place of Mr. Syed Yahya Akhlaqi who is completing his term of service on August 13, 2021. The said nomination was circulated amongst the Member States on July 13, 2021. Furthermore, he requested the Council to consider the adoption of a two-week silence procedure for securing the COM's approval in regard to the requested appointment of Mr. Sheikholeslami.

25. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan** welcomed the nomination of Mr. Sheikholeslami. However, he noted that Afghanistan had nominated his candidate for the first time against the post of DSG who is obliged to relinquish his position prior to the completion of a 3-year prescribed term of service at the Secretariat. Given the fact that all Member States should be provided equal opportunities in term of their services with the organization, he lamented over the premature term of service of Mr. Akhlaqi. He expected the Council to mull over the issue for figuring out a way forward to address the matter, enabling the Afghanistan's incumbent DSG to complete a 3-year prescribed tenure of service. He particularly looked forward to the opinion of Iran's Permanent Representative who holds considerable working experience in the ECO.

26. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran recalled the history of the appointment of the DSG from Afghanistan. He reminded that in the light of two DSG candidates from Republic of Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, COM decided to offer both candidates successively, each for three years. Accordingly, the DSG from Republic of Azerbaijan served for a full term of three years as "DSG for Trade and Investment". Due to specific circumstances in the Secretariat, at the request of Secretary General and consent of Pakistan, the Azerbaijani DSG then moved to the post of "DSG for Transport and Communications", pending joining of the DSG from Pakistan, which was due in 2-3

months. And the DSG from Afghanistan replaced the DSG from Azerbaijan as “DSG for Trade and Investment”. Despite the fact that COM had considered a full tenure of three years for DSG from Afghanistan, he was appointed to serve until 12 August 2021, when the SG from Iran would leave its post and the DSG post occupied by DSG from Afghanistan has to be vacant for a candidate from Iran. This arrangement, besides delay in nomination and joining of the DSG from Afghanistan reduced his tenure to almost 2 years. As nomination of a DSG from Pakistan is still pending, the DSG from Azerbaijan has so far served for more than 5 years.

27. Addressing the concern raised by the distinguished Ambassador of Afghanistan, the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran asserted that the very nature of the original COM decision was to give equal treatment to both candidates from Republic of Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. However, due to reasons explained above, this has not been the case. He further highlighted that his delegation is ready to show some flexibility as regards commencement of tenure of DSG from Iran to rectify the situation, and at the same time proposes that Pakistan may wish to concur that pending its own nomination, the post of “DSG for Transport and Communications” may be occupied by the DSG from Afghanistan for certain period of time. This will be without any prejudice to the legitimate right of a DSG from Pakistan to fill this post at any time. This arrangement will enable the DSG from Afghanistan to continue its service until a DSG from Pakistan joins the Secretariat. His tenure should not in any case exceed three years.

28. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** emphasized that his country’s principled policy is to always support the functioning of the Secretariat and all its mutually beneficial initiatives. Based on the proposal of the ECO Secretary General, Pakistan considered the request of the Secretariat to move the Azerbaijani DSG against the Pakistan’s vacant position for three months or until the joining of Pakistan’s own DSG, enabling smooth completion of the organization’s reform process and some other important organizational tasks. He desired the establishment of a procedure under which all Member States could enjoy equal opportunities, noting that some necessities of time, such as the current situation, do not let the prescribed cycle intact. Acknowledging the concerns of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, he noted that in this particular case Pakistan had not received any formal request from the Secretariat to seek instructions of their relevant authorities. He said that Pakistan had been ever-receptive and supportive for Afghanistan as a brotherly neighbour. Apart from this particular issue, he conveyed that the longstanding matter of transfer of Afghanistan fund’s account from Habib Bank London to Bank-e-Millie Afghan was resolved, requesting the Secretariat to take further necessary action to complete the relevant process. Considering the proximity of new administrative setup in the Secretariat as well as proposal of the Permanent Representative of Iran, he stated that Pakistan was open to receive a request from the Secretariat to this end for securing instructions from Islamabad.

29. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Kazakhstan** stated the Iran had already introduced its candidate, having a legitimate right to take over their post of DSG on August 13, 2021 from Afghanistan. However, he said that the question was how to fairly deal with this issue of current DSG of Afghanistan from human perspective, stressing that the matter remains solely under discretion of Pakistan that has the right to

accept or ignore the proposal, and nominate whoever and whenever the country deems appropriate. Considering that the instructions from Islamabad may take some time, he proposed the incumbent DSG of Afghanistan should vacate the post on August 12, 2021 to be taken over the same by Iranian candidate on August 13, 2021. However, Mr. Yahya Akhlaqi may be appointed against the Pakistan's post of DSG presently held by Azerbaijani national, to complete his three-years tenure of service at the Secretariat or until the appointment of DSG from Pakistan that may happen sooner or later. Moreover, the current Azerbaijani DSG may relinquish charge of the post, in question, from August 12, 2021.

30. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** thanked the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan for explaining the proposal. He mentioned that if the given explanation was acceptable to all, it would require clear instructions from Islamabad to conclude the matter. He requested the Secretariat for providing the specific request to this end, conveying the current circumstances therein.

31. The Representative of the Republic of **Azerbaijan** stated that, if procedure required, Azerbaijan was ready to leave on the set deadline the position of DSG, presently occupied by their national. As far as securing instructions of their headquarters within the timeline given on the issue discussed today are concerned, the same would be conveyed in due course, he added.

32. The Permanent Representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** thanked Representatives of Kazakhstan and Pakistan for their constructive approaches and supported the idea of representative of Pakistan that a request should have been made to Pakistan to consider the proposal. Having reminded that this is the last CPR meeting before the deadline of 12 August, he proposed that the suggested arrangement may be put to a two-week silence procedure for COM approval which in itself is a formal request by ECO to Pakistan as well. He again underlined that Iran is ready to show one or two months flexibility as regards commencements of the tenure of the Iranian DSG.

33. The **Chair** supported the viewpoint of Iran to provide equal opportunities to all Member States and emphasized for making a constructive approach to satisfy the all Member States on this issue.

34. On the request of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the **Council** took into account all aspects of discussion. To ensure equal opportunities for all Member States as well as smooth functioning of the Secretariat, the **Council** decided to recommend the adoption of a two-week silence procedure for securing the approval of the Council of Ministers (COM) to the following:

- a) Mr. Mohammad Hasan Sheikholeslami (**Iranian National**) may be appointed as Deputy Secretary General for Trade & Investment and Agriculture and Industry (**Category-I, D3**) with effect from September 15, 2021.
- b) The incumbent Deputy Secretary General for Trade & Investment and Agriculture & Industry, Mr. Yahya Akhlaqi (**Afghanistan national**) may move to

the post of Deputy Secretary General for Transport and Communication & HRSD with effect from September 15, 2021 till the completion of his three years service at the Secretariat as Deputy Secretary General from Afghanistan, or until the joining of DSG from Pakistan, whichever is earlier.

- c) Tenure of the incumbent Deputy Secretary General for Transport and Communications & HRSD/In-Charge (CFU), Mr. Kanan Nazarov (**Azerbaijani national**) will be terminated on September 14, 2021.

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

35. The Selection Panel met on July 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 Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan.

36. The Selection panel made the following recommendation for consideration of the CPR:

Program Officer for Tourism (Category-II, P2)

Mr. Seyed Mohammad Hadi Ghaderi (Iranian National) may be appointed for a full term of four (04) years with effect from the date of his joining.

37. The **Council** approved the above recommendation of the selection panel.

Agenda Item No.8

Any other business

Participation of Turkish Cypriot State in Mid-term Meeting of RPC as Observer

38. The **ECO Deputy Secretary General** (T&I and A&I) informed that the Secretariat received a request from Turkish Cypriot State for participation as observer in the Mid-term Meeting of the RPC scheduled to be held on July 28, 2021 and sought the Council's approval in this regard.

39. The **Council** approved the participation of Turkish Cypriot State in Mid-term Meeting of the RPC as "Observer", in line with the relevant provisions of the ECO Modalities for Granting Observer and Dialogue Partnership Status.

Completion of the tenure of Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour as ECO Secretary General

40. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** expressed his deep appreciations and thanks to the outgoing ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour for a very active role during his tenure and hoped that the blueprint of Mr. Soleimanpour would continue to be witnessed by the organization for long time. He extended his best wishes to him for his future career and personal life. Furthermore, he informed that as host country the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran is considering to organize a ceremony in honour of Dr. Soleimanpour. While

welcoming the appointment of new ECO Secretary General, he expressed optimism that next Secretary General would maintain the current momentum of the Organization as well as continue the working on the initiatives that Dr. Soleimanpour made during his term of office. He expected the Secretariat to be more viable under the command of next Secretary General.

41. The **Chair** expressed his gratitude to ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour for the successful completion of his tenure, believing that the initiatives and activities of Dr. Soleimanpour made to enrich and develop the agenda of the ECO would be echoed for longer time in the organization. He acknowledged that the ECO noticed so many changes, improvement and progress with no complexity during the Secretary General-ship of Dr. Soleimanpour, underscoring that despite certain complications and difficulties, he never stopped but introduced new and innovative ideas as well as projects while directing the Secretariat on the proper path of progress. The services of Dr. Soleimanpour are extensively appreciated by all the Heads of the Member States, the Chair noted.

42. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Turkey** expressed his official and personal thanks and appreciation to Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour for excellent services, outstanding performance record and remarkable achievements during his term of office as ECO Secretary General, a seasoned diplomat and brilliant Ambassador of Iran. He commended and acknowledged Dr. Soleimanpour's contribution, prudent management, ever-friendly cooperation, honesty, integrity, sincerity that appeared to be seen not only in his words but actions during Turkey's Chairmanship of ECO from November 9, 2019 to March 4, 2021. Being the former Chairman of CPR, he extended sincere gratitude to H.E. Dr. Soleimanpour, adding that his successful mission was reaching an end almost after the 255th Session of CPR to open a new chapter on the book of his life. As friend and brother of Dr. Soleimanpour, the Permanent Representative of Turkey hoped and wished him a better future life, bearing the days ahead even brighter, praying the almighty Allah for his health and success.

43. The Permanent Representative of the Republic **Kazakhstan** also joined the delegates of the Council to express sincere thanks and appreciation to H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour for his valued services, kind and extensive efforts to unite all Member States, leading the Organization to steadily move forward in the pursuit of envisaged aims and objectives as well as developmental goals set up under the guidance of ECO Heads of States/Governments. He praised not only Dr. Soleimanpour's professional qualities and abilities but also very importantly his nice personality, personal potential being a kind human being not as a leader. He recalled that from the very beginning all members of the Council had the privilege to deal with Dr. Soleimanpour on different occasions in connection with taking into account a very wide range of issues. He stressed that the Members of the Council always found Dr. Soleimanpour very supportive, positive and forthcoming with an ever greater and constructive approach. He congratulated Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour for his achievements, praying that may almighty Allah give him more success in his career and future endeavours as well as in his personal and family life. The Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan also wished

the upcoming Secretary General to be as successful as Dr. Soleimanpour. Following the tradition of the Republic of Kazakhstan, he also presented a national costume of Kazakhstan to Mr. Soleimanpour.

44. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan** also appreciated the valuable services of Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour that he rendered to ECO during his office term, acknowledging with thanks his very cooperative behaviour. He highlighted that Dr. Soleimanpour always appeared to be more than a colleague and kind friend to every Member States, especially Afghanistan. He extended his warm gratitude to Dr. Soleimanpour for all his efforts in the ECO made to be aimed at attracting cooperation and support as well as implementing development projects, particularly for Afghanistan. He hoped that the existing momentum of the organization would continue with the arrival of next Secretary General who is from their friendly and brotherly Tajikistan. He further believed that the Member States would maintain the level of cooperation, friendship and bonds of sincerity even outside the ECO Region. He wished Dr. Soleimanpour a very happy and prosperous future live, quoting a Tajik saying: **“May your path be white”**.

45. The Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** extended his heartiest congratulation to Dr. Soleimanpour for successfully being on the verge of completion of his tenure. He underlined that the outgoing Secretary General was bequeathing a rich legacy for the convenience of his successor. He recalled that in 2018 when Dr. Soleimanpour assumed his responsibilities as ECO Secretary General the Secretariat was undergoing a lot of issues, including financial and administrative matters that had remained a huge challenge for him to handle the organizational affairs in such a difficult situation. He praised the most pivotal role that Dr. Soleimanpour played for involving all the Member States, especially from central Asian Member Countries, to actively participate in ECO activities. He emphasized that it was extremely important for the organization to be effective and object-oriented, noting that whatever the ECO's forerunners ever-perceived for betterment of the organization as well as intra-regional development, coordination and institutional linkages, came to be largely true during Dr. Soleimanpour's Secretary General-ship of the Organization. He said that Pakistan would also welcome the new Secretary General from Tajikistan in a same way, expecting him to be able to make further progress for securing the ECO's aims and objectives.

46. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Tajikistan** expressed thanks and congratulations to Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour for the successful completion of his tenure during challenging years. He commended that under the able and professional leadership of Dr. Soleimanpour, the difficult reform process was finalized smoothly and effectively. Besides, Dr. Soleimanpour with dedication and devotion has remained able to initiate the realization of Vision - 2025, the main ECO document to pursue the organization's set developmental targets. He acknowledged the viewpoint that the tenure of Dr. Soleimanpour would be written as much as successful and revival period of the organization. He also noted that the ECO would miss his brilliant ideas as well as

skilled professional approaches. He also congratulated Iran for the appointment of country's new Deputy Secretary General.

47. **Secretary General, Dr. Soleimanpour** extended sincere gratitude to the distinguished participants for the wonderful expression of their kind words in acknowledgement his services rendered to the Organization during the last three years as Secretary General of the ECO. He, while feeling honoured to address and participate in the last meeting of CPR, conveyed his joy to have the opportunity of serving peoples of the region in close collaboration, coordination and support of the esteemed Member States through a well-established and reputed organization. He thanked the Member States for all their support with constructive approach to help him meet the given responsibilities, as well as bestowed trust throughout his tenure in the ECO.

48. The **Secretary General** underscored that during the last three years, the Organization witnessed significant achievements, adding that he tried his best to revitalize the contents and the spirit of Izmir Treaty concentrating on the economic activities as mainstream of the organization while avoiding geopolitical issues. He underlined that the rationale behind ECO aspirated with the region's shared values and heritage, recalling that our forerunners built up the ECO region on the basis of geo-economy and geo-culture. While informing that he did his best to remain focused on these two conceptual elements, Dr. Soleimanpour emphasized on the need of preserving such narrative.

49. The **Secretary General** recalled that the ECO successfully finalized the overdue reform process and new scale of assessments, increasing the sense of owner/partnership amongst all Member States, followed by development of staff's fresh job descriptions as well as organizational chart. In this context, he also thanked Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kanan Nazarov and Legal Advisor Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar who were diligently involved in the reform preparatory work and contributed to the process. He, however, noted that the reform would remain a constant process to be occasionally done based on the emerging needs and requirements of the organization.

50. **Dr. Soleimanpour** stressed on the inter-institutional linkage between the Secretariat and the ECO Specialized Agencies that he called necessary to be reviewed and adjusted, considering that some of them were less functional due to the lack of comprehensive membership by all Member States, or experiencing hard owing to the unpaid annual contributions, ambiguity on their work cycle etc. He lauded over the recent efforts to make the ECO an effective organization which led it to the point that within only one year, the organization was able to manage two Summit events, one of which was held in March 2021 while the other scheduled for November 28, 2021, besides the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO Member States was also under process of establishment at the same time. He further highlighted the meeting of the ECO Heads of Anti-Corruption and Ombudsman held in the same period. The Secretary General noted that without a Strategic Adoptive Management (SAM) through inter-organizational reform process, the existing momentum would lead to frustration, emphasizing that this issue was genuinely required to be followed up by CPR. In

continuation of organizational reform, the CPR needs to address financial adjustments to make the budget more efficient and particularly projects oriented, he underscored. The Secretary General further proposed that the CPR might also address the annual staff assessment, making all staff to be more accountable and responsible.

51. Reiterating the ECO's freshly adopted project-oriented approach, **Dr. Soleimanpour** considered that this practically wise method should be institutionalized. He said that while the CPR had a vital role to choose this internationally accepted approach for expanded regional cooperation, it might also assist the organization to institutionalize such approach. He suggested that the CPR might seek ways and means to involve ECO Trade Bank for co-financing as well as ECO Chamber of Commerce for implementation of such projects through private sectors of the Member States.

52. **Dr. Soleimanpour** acknowledged that the establishment of PAECO created an excellent opportunity to mull over and merge the regional projects jointly under National Development Plans of Member States, implementation of which would have a significant boost if CPR could succeed in devising an appropriate mechanism to this end. The Secretary General recommended that by defining as well as designing the mid-and-large-sized projects, the CPR and RPC might figure out the way forward for consideration of this kind of regional projects under the respective National Development Plans of the Member States.

53. The **Secretary General** noted that the ECO had a great achievement on using ITC in its activities during the last two years, enabling itself to cope with the impacts of COVID-19. He added that the Secretariat digitalized all its archived documents from the year 2003, which are now available to the staff and Member States in an environment-friendly manner as well easy accessible way. Moreover, he recalled that the ECO organized may of its events in virtual modes, saving a significant part of budget and time with increased level of participation. Dr. Soleimanpour proposed that the CPR might evaluate the development of virtual organization of the events in terms of efficiency and promptness of the ECO's work program, using international experiences and making appropriate decision to avail maximum gains of the contemporary techniques of digitalization for the betterment of the organization.

54. The Secretary General offered a few more suggestions in line with the ongoing process of enhancing organization's effectiveness, efficiency and relevancy that include the following:

- i. Nexus approach is a requirement for adjusting ECO with the new and emerging issues in contemporary regional and international affairs. It is complementary to the project oriented approach and regional project prioritization. Nexus approach on trade and transport will lead the region to the creation of economic corridors. The nexus approach on water-energy and food-security is vital for GDP increase as well as human well-being, poverty reduction and sustainable development;

- ii. Regional production chain to improve and enhance regional productivity and facilitate movement of capital-technology-skilled workforce as well as easing barriers in market access;
- iii. Comprehensive trade negotiations among all ten Member States based on Framework Agreement on Trade Cooperation to create a new momentum to address tariff and non-tariff issues for achieving Comprehensive Free Trade Arrangements in the region. At the same time trying to find out solutions for implementation of ECOTA;
- iv. CPR and the Secretariat may continue collaboration to properly address the appropriate execution of the proposals made by ECO leaders during the 14th ECO Summit;
- v. Adoption of a balance approach on the establishment of new ECO Centres in the region with their rational distribution among Member States which have yet to host any such centres in their territories. This will help increase even more partnership in the organization.

55. The **Secretary General** re-appreciated the Member States for their kind support to him during ever session of the CPR, especially the Chairpersons, including Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan. He also thanked Iran, being host of the ECO and assisting the Secretariat to function in a smooth working environment. Dr. Soleimanpour further extended his gratitude to all the ECO Staff, particularly the four Deputies Secretary General for their dedicated services and contribution to support the functioning of the secretariat.

Agenda Item No.9

Date of the next CPR Meeting

56. The **Council** decided that Secretariat may finalize the date of next (256th) CPR Meeting in consultation with Chair and Member States.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H.E. Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, Ambassador
- Mr. Abdul Ghani Farahi, Second Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

- 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:

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

The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- 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. Derhan Dogan, Counsellor

The Embassy of Turkmenistan:

- H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov, Ambassador
- Mr. Bairamov Atamirat, First Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- H.E. Mr. Bakhodir Abdullayev, Ambassador
- Mr. Eldor Askarov, Attaché

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. Muhammad Farooq, Head of IR Section
- Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar, Legal Adviser
- Mr. Raza Muhammad Ahmed, Steno-Secretary
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