

**Statement by ECO Secretary General Mr. Khusrav Noziri  
at the 4<sup>th</sup> UNESCAP Ministerial Conference on Transport  
14-17 December 2021, Bangkok (virtual)**

**Madam Chair,  
Your Excellency Mrs. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana,  
Executive Secretary of ESCAP  
Excellencies, Ministers,  
Distinguished Participants  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) I would like to convey the sincerest greetings and best wishes to the esteemed Ministers and high level delegations participating in this very important Ministerial Conference on Transport.

I am confident that events of this level have great potential for rapprochement and mutual understanding of the strategies and programs for the development of transport and connectivity in the light of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This important Conference is being organized at crucial time as the international supply chain is severely under pressure due to unforeseeable consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The negative impacts of supply chain disruption are more visible particularly in landlocked Central Asian countries.

The decline of total trade of ECO Member States from 798 billion USD in 2018 to 661 billion USD in 2020 clearly reflects the adverse effects of the pandemic on the economies of our region. Major portion of the decline was due to restrictive measures taken by countries to control the spread of the Covid-19 that in some cases caused complete halt to transit, trade and business.

Besides the destructive effects of the pandemic on global trade, lack of regulatory and administrative harmonization, the insufficient road and rail linkages, difficulties at border crossings, the use of obsolete transport systems, lack of safety and illegal practices continue to pressure the transport industry.

Learning from past, it is expected that this interaction would be productive and make some necessary decisions in order to properly address the safety, resilience and sustainability of transport industry that directly deals with the global supply chain. In this connection some policy recommendations as well as technical measures might be taken into consideration by the esteemed Ministers.

Under such hectic situation of Covid-19 and to address the stressful circumstances, the ECO Secretariat has initiated various measures to help its members to adopt new technical solutions to overcome the hurdles and irregularities originated from the new norm of life.

The ECO Transport Ministerial Meeting in December 2020 adopted ECO Practical Guidelines on Cross Border Facilitation Measures under Conditions of Covid-19. The Guideline, among others, calls for application of the UN TIR Convention and related IT tools that allow transportation of goods in a securely loaded compartment, requiring no physical checks and, therefore, reduces physical contacts amongst the individuals at the borders. It also requests the Member States to use electronic solutions and procedures such as e-TIR and e-CMR instead of paper documents to expedite releases of trucks at borders and decrease risks of physical contacts among the people.

The ECO Secretariat has also taken practical steps towards digitalization of transport, particularly, through promotion of application of e-TIR and e-CMR in cooperation with IsDB and UNECE.

As ECO, we attach great importance to the role of UN bodies in development of our region and with this understanding we have been cooperating with the UNESCAP as a development partner that has resulted in tangible enhancement of transport in our member states. In this connection, the ECO Railway and Road Maps have incorporated some of the main routes and corridors of the ESCAP Trans-Asian Railways (TAR) and Asian Highways for enhancing regional and international connectivity.

I am delighted to also inform that a joint ECO/UNESCAP/IDB Study Project on Commercialization of KTI Corridor (connecting Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran) has been conducted and finalized with technical contribution from UNESCAP in November 2021.

The signing of the MoU between ECO and UNESCAP at the highest level of our organizations on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit on 27 November 2021 in Ashgabat also demonstrated our profound commitment towards sharing our strength for development of the region and our people.

The Organization of Economic Cooperation attaches great importance to the convergence with international organizations in transport sphere and in particular with UNESCAP to promote and enhance connectivity in ECO Region, considering the recently signed MoU as a proper framework to expand our cooperative partnership in this field.

I am confident that this Ministerial Conference will further highlight the challenges of the sector, recommend practical solutions and streamline all the stakeholders towards a more supportive, resilient, cost effective and sustainable transport.

In this context, the ECO will courageously enhance its efforts for development of transport and connectivity in the region for the betterment of life standards and prosperity of its people and here I would like to invite all the

international organizations and financial institutes and banks to support ECO in implementing the wide range of projects included in the ECO Railway Network Development Plan and ECO Road Network Development Plan that benefit its members collectively.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Her Excellency Mrs. Armida Salsiah Alisjahban, the honorable Executive Secretary of UNESCAP for inviting me to this important Conference, and making excellent arrangement to organize the event.

Thank you for kind attention.