

**Statement by the ECO Secretary General Mr. Khusrav Noziri  
at the Plenary Session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the ECO RPC  
(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)**

**The honorable Chairman, Mr. Ashraf Khodjaev,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Dear Participants,**

It is, indeed, a privilege to welcome you all to this Plenary Session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> ECO Regional Planning Council, and extend my sincere gratitude for your participation in this important event. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all distinguished delegates who have wholeheartedly been involved from last week onward, in thorough assessments of all our mandated activities and have provided guidance on the way forward, the outcome of which shall be presented for your kind consideration and endorsement today.

I also take this opportunity to felicitate the Republic of Uzbekistan for assuming the Organization's Chairmanship for 2022. I have fervent hope that under Uzbekistan's able leadership, ECO shall better obviate the major ongoing global and regional challenges affecting all socio-economic aspects of contemporaneous life. I would also like to assure of our full cooperation to ensure the implementation of initiatives by Uzbekistan for the continuity of development process in the region.

I would like to recall that the RPC holds a very significant place in the ECO as it is essentially entrusted to analyze and evaluate the Organization's ongoing activities as well as consider and develop some new projects and programs to be implemented to shoulder, support and assist continuation of our regional development process.

As you are aware, the situation developed in the aftermath of COVID-19 continues to hamper regional and global efforts being undertaken to get back to the pre-pandemic conditions. Though it is impeding our way, the ECO Secretariat, in close collaboration with its Member Countries, has been ardently pursuing its progressive targets in line with ECO's annual Work Programs and Calendars of Events as per previous conclusions and recommendations of the RPC. We have been able to hold several important meetings in 2021, including the virtual organization of the 31<sup>st</sup> RPC in January, the 14<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit in March, Midterm RPC Meeting in July, as well as the in-person convening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of PAECO in June at Islamabad and

the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit preceded by the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) in the Ashgabat city of Turkmenistan during the last week of November 2021.

It is pleasing to note that the 25<sup>th</sup> COM has approved the proposal of the ECO Secretariat concerning the expansion of scope of small-sized projects to pre-feasibility/feasibility study projects. The 25<sup>th</sup> COM further allowed the Organization to implement 10 more projects annually each within the cost of 10,000 USD to be financed from General Reserve Fund (GRF). Therefore, the total number of annual small-sized projects, which is presently standing at total 20, appears to fuel and augment the **ECO's project-and-result-oriented approach**.

This notable development is based on and in pursuance of the recommendation of the 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of RPC. I congratulate and thank the Council for its kind support to this end. In addition, the COM has desired that the ECO should also focus on some mega and long-term projects, alongside carrying out the short term small and medium-sized projects. This will contribute to a long-term perspective and help strategize our approach to the development of our region, inter alia, through proceeding with large-scale development projects.

I have the further pleasure of informing you that based on the approval of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), a High-Level Committee (HLC) was formed for conducting Midterm Review of the ECO Vision 2025 and developing follow-up mechanism on the proposals of ECO Heads of State/Government that were put forward during the 14<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit. The given task was successfully accomplished by HLC, and duly endorsed as well as appreciated by the 25<sup>th</sup> COM. From now on, the ECO Secretariat is required to submit annual progress reports to the COM regular meetings on the state of affairs of implementation of the measures and recommendations envisaged in the HLC's Report.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

Although the progress is being made in diverse areas of scope for greater regional interest and community improvement, I take this opportunity to convey some sector-wise activities of the Organization.

**Trade** is one of the core areas of activity on ECO's agenda of cooperation to support the process of regional development. Our region accounts 6.6% of the global population, contributing only 2% in the global trade. The region's share in the global trade amounted to 661 billion USD in 2020 with exports of 289.78 billion USD and 371.4 billion USD imports. The intra-regional trade remained around 49.8 billion USD in 2020 which is almost 7.5% of the region's global trade. The primary reasons for this low share include, inter alia, lack of complementarities among economies of the Member States and high cost of doing business and higher costs in intra-regional trade.

The post-pandemic regional and global economic recovery is inevitably linked to an increased and scaled-up cooperation amongst the Member States. To normalize, maintain and accelerate regional trade and related activities as well as overcome the impediments to this end, an expanded collaboration is required to be aimed at moving forward for greater value addition to be culminating in Regional Value Chains (RVC) to push trade flows. Such a target is optimistically achievable by implementing the ECO's agreed legal and institutional frameworks. Relevantly, the Secretariat in close collaboration with Member States is pursuing trade liberalization under ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and expansion of Preferential Trade Regime under a Free Trade Agreement as envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025.

To get there, Parties must finalize outstanding work under the Agreement that has remained unfinished and make their best to figure out a best practical way forward. The overarching significance of trade and its role as promoter of overall cooperation and growth within ECO call for meaningful interaction and the flexibilities required for ECO's enhanced intra-regional and global trade. A study conducted by the Secretariat, to introduce at least three scenarios for implementation of ECOTA, was appreciated and recommended by the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy in 2021 for Member States' consideration, which was accordingly shared with the Member Countries.

Moreover, the ECO is further firm for reviving and bolstering the supply side through the creation of investment-friendly climate in the region. In this regard, efforts are being made to effect the operationalization of ECO Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI). Trade facilitation is also a very important area that is in focus of ECO leaders. A draft Trade Facilitation Agreement along with list of non-tariff barriers prepared by the Secretariat has also been shared for views of the Member Countries to finalize necessary trade facilitation strategy which is targeted to improve trade facilitation index in the region.

To meet the envisioned goals aimed at increasing regional trade flows and creating conducive working environment to promote trade and investment in the region, the Secretariat has carried out a feasibility study on **Regional Payment System in the ECO**. The intent of the perceived project is to facilitate financial transactions among the selected commercial banks in our region and the prospects of creating an ECO Clearing Union among the Central Banks of the Member States. The study is further aimed at establishing a network of nominated regional commercial banks to regulate trade related payments for wider transparency, predictability and uniformity as well as reducing costs in doing business and trade in the region.

I would like to recall that the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), a very important organ of the Organization, is functioning professionally and progressively. It

can play a momentous role to accelerate and shoulder our efforts for sustainable development in the region, if patronized by all ECO nations. While serious efforts are being made to expand the Bank's membership and enhance its shares/capital, the relevant authorities of the remaining Member Countries are sincerely encouraged to expedite their consideration process for joining our financial body. It may be noted that the ECO Secretariat, in consultation with the ECO-TDB, is working to develop some regional projects for the shared prosperity and high dividends in the Member States. However, the maintainable support of the Member Countries is inevitably required to ensure fruitful progress to that end.

Cooperation amongst the Economic Zones of the region is also one of the primary areas of our concern, which is inevitable for achieving the desired growth in trade and investment. In this regard, ECO Secretariat held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Heads of Free Trade/Special Economic Zones of ECO Member States on August 2, 2021. It is worth-mentioning that the detailed Terms of Reference for Study on preparation of the guidelines and Joint Action Plan for the establishment of ECO Regional Network of Special Economic Zones/Free Trade Zones (SEZs/FTZs) in the ECO Member States have been prepared. The prospect for the said Zone is that it will integrate the existing networks of Special Economic Zones of each of the ten Member Countries through one-point-of-entry at ECO, with the objective to spur up the growth in economic uplifting and trade exchange among the ECO countries on privileged terms.

Furthermore, the First Meeting of the Heads of National Development Funds was held on December 16, 2020 which, inter alia, agreed to explore possibility of setting up a network of the Sovereign Wealth/National Development Funds in the region to finance infrastructure related regional projects. We are looking forward to the collaboration and cooperation of the ECO Member States to achieve the collective aims in promoting the establishment of new enterprises in high value-added segments of the industrial value chains in the region and institutionalizing a comprehensive dialogue mechanism among the Sovereign and National Development Funds of the Member States on investment-related issues with a view to promoting cooperation in sectors of mutual interest.

**Dear Participants,**

**Transport** also remains one of the major sectors, which is essentially important to secure ECO's goal of greater regional integration. I am glad to inform that some notable progress has been made for enhancing connectivity in the region. It most prominently includes (i) the finalization of commercialization of KTI Corridor; (ii) operationalization of ITI Cargo Train; (iii) implementation of some parts of KTAI Corridor and (iii) operationalization of ECO-ITI Road Corridor. Moreover, on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit held in late last November, an MoU has been signed between the relevant authorities of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran on the implementation of KTI

Railway Corridor. We are moving forward in a steady mode for making consolidated progress in this sector.

The advancement of the **Energy** agenda of ECO necessitates enhanced ownership and active involvement by all stakeholders. ECO Vision 2025 laid down the long- and mid-term regional objectives and expected outcomes in the energy sector. To provide supportive policy environment and enhanced policy coherence, 4<sup>th</sup> ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting held in 2021, adopted fundamentally new ECO Energy Strategy and its Action Plan 2030. Our joint efforts can be devoted to come up with proposals on project development and regional cooperation initiatives to implement the subject Action Plan.

Joint ECO-UNIDO Project on establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre is also an explicit example of sustainable energy transformation efforts set out also in our new ECO Energy Strategy. The 25<sup>th</sup> COM has approved the Charter of the Centre and endorsed the selection of the Republic of Azerbaijan to host the bureau of this Centre. It is targeted at increasing the share of clean energy in overall energy mix amongst ECO Member States and further to manage cooperation to avail the region's tremendous opportunities in renewable energy efficiency. We strongly hope that the host country along with other Member States will utilise ad-hoc mechanism that has also been established under the 25<sup>th</sup> COM decisions for soonest operationalization of the Centre.

In addition, the ECO Member States are striving to dig out maximum trade opportunities and selectively enhance physical infrastructure to eventually facilitate the electricity exports and imports that could be fuelled by the available reserves of natural gas and hydro-potential. In this regard, on-going pilot project to establish ECO Regional Electricity Market can become turning point in 2022 by the joint endeavours of our Member States. Taking advantage of the RPC, the Member States may decide for establishing joint mechanism of power trade through implementation of envisioned project.

As regards **Environment**, the data is unequivocal: climate change is widespread, rapid, intensifying and already impacting every region on Earth. The six years, since the Paris Climate Agreement, have been the "six hottest years" on record. We face a stark choice: we either choose to recognize that business as usual isn't worth the devastating price we're paying and make the necessary transition to a more sustainable pattern of consumption and production or we accept that we're investing in our own extinction.

In this context, the ECO countries have reiterated their commitment towards environmental protection and sustainability in line with the relevant objectives of ECO Vision 2025 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. One of the environmental common concerns in the region is the Land Degradation which has cross-cutting social, environmental and economic impacts. It is very moment that our Member States render

every possible support to launch this comprehensive project on ECO Landcare Program. I extend my sincere gratitude to all Member States for their continued support and special thanks to the Government of Turkey for holding in-person preparation meeting for implementation of this project.

The Secretariat would also like to embark on the launching implementation process of Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming for ECO Member States and the Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region. ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) has played effective role during recent years to strengthen the capacity of key actors in environmental conservation in the region and promote exchange of information and experiences with efficient management of resources. The Member States as well as host country - Iran are expected to collaborate effectively on empowering the Institute to meet its mandates as reflected in its Charter.

**Dear Delegates,**

**Tourism** is globally acknowledged as one of the most dynamic and job creating sectors. However, it has been among the most affected areas during the pandemic due to the suspension of air travels, lockdowns and social distancing protocols imposed globally. The uncondusive post-COVID conditions also hampered several ECO tourism events. However, recently it became possible in August 2021 to hold International Festival of Dushanbe - ECO Tourism Capital along with the International Forum on Agro-Tourism Development dedicated to the development of agro-tourism in the region.

The Ashgabat Consensus for Action, adopted by the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit, assigns the ECO Tourism Ministers to address the serious challenges in ECO tourism industry according to the other regional and global post-COVID initiatives. In line with this and to revitalise the tourism sector, the Secretariat has prepared a Plan of Action on elimination of COVID-19 pandemic consequences in the tourism sector for facilitating recovery in the ECO region and circulated it for the proposals and views of the Member States.

It is encouraging that the Republic of Uzbekistan and the current ECO Chair has proposed a regional programme on developing a safe tourism in the post-pandemic period to be adopted at the 4<sup>th</sup> Tourism Ministerial Meeting in Bukhara during 2022. It further appears to pay attention to the development of religious tourism and other joint tourist products, widening of geography of aviation links and development of tourist infrastructure.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Agriculture and Industry** also remains one of the most important sectors on ECO's priorities in special consideration of the challenges posed by COVID-19. Considering the ongoing conditions and views of the Member States, the Secretariat, in cooperation with ECO Regional Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCC) and FAO, has updated the ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (ECO-RPFS). Moreover, the establishment of ECO Center of Excellence for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture (ECO-CEEUWA) is also under process. **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Working Group Meeting for Establishment of this Center was held in 2021. The relevant draft Plan of Action and draft Statute have been finalized with valuable cooperation of the Member States.**

To support sustainable socioeconomic development in the region, the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) can play instrumental role to contribute to the strengthening of the quality infrastructure in the region through cooperation with the relevant international organizations. The 8<sup>th</sup> High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology was organized by RISCAM in 2021. Our task ahead is to have joint ownership, responsibility and accountability with a view to trigger joint cooperation for establishment of Technical Management Boards on RISCAM.

The **Human Resources and Sustainable Development** is another area of our prime concern. Pursuing the objectives of ECO Vision 2025, the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction held in March 2021, adopted the ECO Regional Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and its implementation roadmap (2021-2025). The 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials/Heads of Disaster Insurance Authorities was held on December 14, 2021 where Member States discussed the establishment of the (a) ECO Regional Disaster Information System and (b) ECO Disaster Insurance System. The Report of the session was circulated among Member States for their views. The ECO is in touch with the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM). A joint ECO-APDIM Project on Enhancing capacity in Member Countries has been prepared and introduced to the Member States which is aimed at improving disaster management framework for cascading risks.

Regarding area of health, a small-sized project on the Regional capacity on intra-trade of pharmaceuticals (RCIP) was recommended by the 31<sup>st</sup> RPC in 2021. A consultant was hired for development of the envisioned project, and necessary questionnaires were distributed among Member States. The Final Report of the small-sized project was also circulated amongst the Member States for their consideration in the middle of 2021.

The ECO is also focused and working to magnify the **Judicial and Parliamentary cooperation** in the region. To meet such ends, efforts are being made to ensure the establishment and operationalization of the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCAC). Moreover, the formation of ECO

Police (ECO-POL) is also being pursued in collaboration with the Member States. Though a notable progress is achieved, the accelerated actions and responses of the Member Countries are required to support our endeavours in this regard.

It is encouraging that the parliamentary dimension of the ECO is also developing. The Charter of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO (PAECO) came into effect after four Member States ratified it. The 2<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of Parliamentary Assembly of ECO Member States held at Islamabad in June last year was very constructive and successful. I call on Member States to consider joining the Charter of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO.

### **Dear Participants,**

Due to the recently developed conditions in Afghanistan, the ECO leaders during the 15<sup>th</sup> Summit in Ashgabat expressed firm support to the international efforts aimed at providing urgent humanitarian aid to the Afghan people through effective, transparent and accountable mechanism. The continuity of development process in Afghanistan is quite essential for the collective wellbeing of the entire ECO region. The Organization is deeply determined to secure the developmental goals of **ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan**. Relevantly, the Member Countries are strongly encouraged to provide their valued proposals to support the Organization in its endeavours to assist the socioeconomic development in Afghanistan.

Moreover, the enhancement of Organization's **International Relations** constitutes an important component of ECO's strategy to achieve its strategic goals and objectives. ECO enjoys cooperative relations with a number of organizations, including the United Nations, OIC, European Commission, IDB, WTO, SCO, CICA, OTS, ASEAN and a host of UN Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes, like UNIDO, UNESCAP, FAO, UNCTAD, and many more. Recently, the *ECO's image in the international arena has notably enhanced*. The UN General Assembly has passed a fresh resolution on ECO-UN cooperation in September 2021 inviting, inter alia, its Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes to support ECO's initiatives and activities. Furthermore, I am pleased to mention that during the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers held on November 27, 2021 in Ashgabat, ECO and UNESCAP have signed a fresh Memorandum of Understanding for further institutionalizing the cooperative relations existing between the two organizations.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

Today, the Council is set to adopt the ECO Work Program and Calendar of Events for 2022. I am sincerely thankful and extend my deep felicitations to all the Sectoral Committees for dedicated work to finalize the contents of these documents.



I am privileged to mention that the Regional Planning Council endorsed the Secretariat's proposal to arrange a brainstorming session at the level of relevant deputy ministers of the Member States in the second quarter of this year to initiate the next phase of ongoing reform process.

I consider that the role of ECO is increased in the developing working conditions inflicted by the pandemic. However, our combined initiatives and synergic actions would leave no stone unturned on our way to success for shared progress and prosperity in the region. Before I conclude, let me once again thank all of you for your kind participation in this important roadmap meeting. I am optimistic that the outcomes of this meeting will lead us to make fruitful achievements in 2022.

Wish you all the best.

**Statement by Mr. Ashraf Khodjaev,  
Director of the Department of Economic Diplomacy of the  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Chair)  
at the 32<sup>nd</sup> RPC of ECO  
(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)**

**Благодарю господин председатель,  
Уважаемый Генеральный секретарь,  
Уважаемые главы делегаций!  
Дамы и господа!**

Прежде всего, позвольте присоединиться к словам признательности в адрес Секретариата ОЭС и принимающей иранской стороны за высокий уровень организации мероприятия, оказанный теплый прием и традиционное гостеприимство.

**Уважаемые участники заседания,**

Как здесь сегодня уже говорилось, Узбекистан впервые принял на себя роль председателя в ОЭС в 2022 году и, в этой связи, хотелось бы заверить всех вас в том, что мы решительно настроены на эффективное осуществление наших функциональных обязанностей в плане дальнейшего укрепления всеобъемлющих отношений в рамках Организации.

Принципиально важным считаем практически использовать значительный потенциал возможностей, особенно в сфере торговли, транспорта, энергетики, инвестиций и туризма для достижения целей, изложенных в «Перспективах ОЭС 2025».

Мы выступаем за наращивание торгово-экономических отношений в регионе ОЭС, всестороннее развитие взаимной торговли, в том числе путем устранения торговых барьеров, последовательного упрощения процедур торговли.

В условиях продолжающейся глобальной пандемии и возникших проблем, связанных с разрывом цепочек поставок, считаем необходимым принятие совместных и согласованных мер по планомерному восстановлению транспортных коммуникаций и торговли в нашем регионе.

В ходе 15-го саммита глав государств ОЭС в ноябре прошлого года Президент Узбекистана Шавкат Мирзиёев выдвинул ряд инициатив, которые, на наш взгляд, могут эффективно способствовать развитию многостороннего партнерства для обеспечения устойчивого социально-экономического развития наших стран.

В частности, узбекская сторона предложила объявить период своего председательства в Организации в 2022 году - «Годом укрепления взаимосвязанности».

Мы выступаем за разработку и принятие обновлённого и всеобъемлющего Торгового соглашения, и Плана совместных действий, направленного на увеличение потока взаимных инвестиций и усиление их надёжной защиты, углубление производственной кооперации между нашими странами.

Наряду с этим считаем, что создание Центра торговли, инвестиций и инноваций в рамках Организации в сотрудничестве с Организацией ООН по промышленному развитию (ЮНИДО) и Специальной программой ООН для экономик стран Центральной Азии (СПЕКА) с размещением штаб-квартиры Центра в городе Ташкенте, послужит активизации сотрудничества между нашими странами.

Президентом Узбекистана также выдвинута инициатива по разработке региональной стратегии, направленной на развитие транспортно-коммуникационных связей и расширение транзитного потенциала наших государств, а также созданию постоянно действующего Совета по диалогу на высоком уровне с участием учёных и экспертов в области окружающей среды.

Кроме того, мы выступаем за принятие региональной программы по развитию безопасного туризма в постпандемический период и создание Экспертной группы высокого уровня для подготовки конкретных предложений и рекомендаций по дальнейшему совершенствованию деятельности Организации.

Мы надеемся на Вашу поддержку в этих вопросах.

**Уважаемые друзья,**

В последние годы Узбекистан значительно активизировал свое участие в мероприятиях ОЭС по всем направлениям. Мы настроены участвовать в многоплановом сотрудничестве со странами-членами ОЭС, особенно в реализации программы «Перспективы ОЭС 2025».

В этой связи, хотел бы обратить ваше внимание на мероприятия, которые мы планируем организовать в Узбекистане в рамках ОЭС в период председательства:

- заседание министров сельского хозяйства в марте с.г.;
- 4-ое совещание министров туризма стран-членов в ноябре с.г.;
- заседание министров энергетики во втором полугодии с.г.;

- и другие деловые и экономические мероприятия.

Мы будем признательны Секретариату Организации и всем странам-членам за поддержку в их проведении и активное участие.

**Уважаемые участники заседания,**

В заключение, позвольте поблагодарить уважаемого Генерального секретаря ОЭС Е.П. г-на Хусрава Нозири и уважаемых коллег за оказываемое содействие Узбекистану в период председательства в ОЭС в 2022 году.

Для эффективного осуществления председательства мы должны совместно действовать целенаправленно и с ориентацией на конкретные результаты.

Узбекистан считает принципиально важным сохранить принцип первостепенности экономического сотрудничества в Организации.

Уверены, что только совместными усилиями мы сможем активизировать и улучшить нашу работу.

Благодарю за внимание.

**Statement by Mr. Khayyam Dashdamirov,  
Counselor of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
to the Islamic Republic of Iran  
at the 32<sup>nd</sup> RPC of ECO  
(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)**

Dear Mr. Chairman,  
Dear Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellences and distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I would like to extend our greetings to the participants of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC).

I'd also like to express our gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Secretariat of the ECO for organizing this meeting smoothly.

Dear participants,

The growing economic prominence of the region is a key component in the ECO region's good outlook for regional economic growth. The region offers great prospects for promoting economic and business relations across many sectors of Member States' national economies, thanks to some complementarities in their economies and a diverse market. This, in turn, encourages intra-regional trade growth and leads to increased inter-regional trade beyond the ECO region.

Azerbaijan places a premium on cooperation within the ECO. Ashgabat Declaration and the Midterm Review of ECO Vision 2025, as we all know, was endorsed by the Heads of Member States at their most recent ECO Summit in Turkmenistan, with the goal of increasing intra-regional trade, increasing ECO's share of global trade, and further unlocking the full potential of regional commerce. As a result, our meeting will give an important opportunity to assess the outcomes achieved and targets established thus far as part of the follow-up to the adoption of both documents, expound on themes of common interest, and propose guidance for the Organization's future work.

Transport and transportation pillars of our collaboration, as we all know, play a crucial role in boosting trade volumes across the region and beyond. Our common goal is to build safe, dependable, commercially sound, and bankable transportation and infrastructure projects. With this goal in mind, Azerbaijan is creating a web of infrastructure projects such as East-West, South-West, and North-South transportation corridors to help promote regional and even inter-regional trade. Given the importance of such infrastructure projects in generating economic growth and trade potential in

land-locked nations, I believe Azerbaijan is doing everything it can to build and share prospects with its ECO partners. With this goal in mind, Azerbaijan tries to diversify and upgrade its transportation infrastructure in order to increase the interconnections between Trans-European and Trans-Asian infrastructure networks, as part of its goal of developing transit potential.

The president of Azerbaijan told his colleagues about the Zangazur corridor during the most recent ECO Summit. We can now say that the Zangazur corridor has become a reality. The East-West and North-South corridors will benefit greatly from this new transportation infrastructure. I am certain that this route will also benefit the ECO Member States.

Furthermore, we are convinced that completing the Rasht – Astara rail link in Iran as soon as possible will assist in the realization of the North-South Transport Corridor across Azerbaijan in the near future, providing a new impetus to trade opportunities for the countries involved, as well as the entire region. The North-South Transport Corridor has always been on the agenda of both Azerbaijan's and Iran's heads of state.

A high level of contribution and assistance demonstrates our intention to engage more closely with ECO partners on transportation and trade concerns. This is something that ECO can and should benefit from. As a result, Azerbaijan welcomes its ECO Member State partners to utilize those infrastructure ties to develop trade between themselves and other countries.

Dear participants,

The Charter of the ECO Research Center was signed by Azerbaijan and Turkey during the 14th ECO Summit in March 2021. I am grateful to the Member States for supporting the initiative of Azerbaijan's late President, Heydar Aliyev. Azerbaijan will do everything possible to ensure that the Center based in our country runs smoothly. I extend an invitation to the remaining Member States to participate in this vital endeavor.

Azerbaijan is also thankful for the ECO Member States' valuable support in its quest to host the ECO Clean Energy Center, and is committed to developing the center as a platform for helping the region's States' energy transition, and welcomes the Member States to sign the Charter as soon as possible.

Dear colleagues,

There is sufficient potential for ECO to be transformed into a stronger and efficient organization that, in our opinion, could be more focused and develops a practical toolset for project implementation. Simultaneously, it is necessary to conduct regular

analyses of the Organization's activities, prepare assessments, ensure a follow-up of the reform process, mainstream the Secretariat's functions, improve the follow-up mechanism of high-level meeting decisions, and give priority to specific projects in order to improve the legal and functional mechanisms of multilateral cooperation within the Organization.

We repeatedly point out that the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to play an active role in ECO. We believe that as a result of joint efforts and existing potential of the Organization, the Member States will strengthen their positions in the coming years.

Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership to the organization. Since joining ECO, our country has actively participated in a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening regional economic and trade connections, and we remain committed to expanding mutually beneficial collaboration.

In conclusion I would like to wish to our Meeting a success and fruitful discussions, as well as accomplishment of desirable results for all participants.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by**  
**H.E Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari**  
**The Permanent Representative**  
**of Islamic Republic of Iran to the ECO**  
**at the 32<sup>th</sup> RPC of ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)*

**Mr. Chairman,**

Let me begin by congratulating your appointment as the Chairman of this RPC meeting. I am thankful to all Member States who attended the sectoral Committees as well as the Council meeting today, both in person and in virtual mode. We are also grateful to the distinguished Secretary General and his able team for excellent arrangement of the Committee meetings as well as this plenary session. I also appreciate the very comprehensive report delivered by Secretary General on the achievements since last RPC meeting.

**Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,**

I do not intend to explain what has been done since 31st RPC meeting as distinguished Secretary General elaborated in his report very eloquently. Rather, I would like to share with you some comments on the way forward as regards implementation of whatever we will decide today.

Two important developments happened since last RPC, namely the 15th ECO Summit in Ashgabat and the mid-term review of the ECO Vision 2025. What we experienced in this Summit was quite a turning point in the history of our Organization. So I think we do have too much to relay on in the year ahead.

I have not yet gone throughout the draft work programmes developed by 9 Committees in the last 10 days. I am quite hopeful that the Committees have taken into account what we have received from the Summit and the revised version of the ECO Vision.

We need to keep the momentum. There is a need for support from both the membership and the Secretariat while implementing what we have in front of us. We have to show that we are guided by the mandates given by our Heads of State and Government in the Summit. Such guidelines are very valid and concrete mandates to the ECO. Besides, RPC is also guided by the revised ECO Vision 2025. It includes the mandate to RPC to develop its annual work programme in line with the revised Vision.

Given the importance of consistent follow-up to Summit, RPC and the revised ECO Vision, we expect the honourable Secretary General to ensure this consistency in the implementation processes.



At the end, I would like to remind that the ECO founding documents clearly stipulate that RPC should be convened at the level of heads of planning organizations of the Member States. Indeed, RPC is a contribution by planners to the political machinery of the Organization. We think there is a need to revive RPC as it is projected in our founding documents. In our turn, we will push for renewed participation of Iran's high level planning officials in the next RPC meeting.

I appreciate again Mr. Chairman's leadership as well as the Secretary General and all esteemed Member States contributions into this important 32nd RPC meeting.

I thank you for your attention.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Askhat Orazbay**  
**Ambassador of Republic of Kazakhstan to Iran**  
**at the 32<sup>th</sup> RPC of ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)*

**Mr. Chairman**  
**Mr. Secretary General,**  
**Colleagues!**

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan I extend my gratitude to the ECO Secretariat for arranging the 32<sup>nd</sup> RPC Meeting.

The Council has done a great job over the last two weeks. I thank all of the delegations for their tremendous efforts.

This year RPC Meeting is being held in light of recovery of our economies from Covid-19. It gives a huge hope that our plans for this year will be implemented in full.

**Dear participants,**

Kazakhstan always remains adherent to its commitments. During the last year, our country actively participated in main events of our Organization.

The 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summits held subsequently in one year were attended by our President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and former Prime-Minister Askar Mamin.

The First Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan took part in the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Council of Ministers.

The Republic of Kazakhstan was also represented by the Health Minister at the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Health Ministers, by the Chairman of Kazakh Anticorruption Agency at the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Heads of Anticorruption Bodies, by the Vice-Minister of Energy at the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Energy Ministers.

Members of our Parliament actively participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of ECO Parliament Assembly.

Signing of MoU on implementation of KTI corridor should be commended separately given the fact that en-route states managed to agree upon the document fairly quickly.

We look forward to keep working together on implementation of our Leaders' initiatives put forward at the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summits in order to advance our common ECO Agenda for the benefit of the whole region.

Kazakhstan therefore endorses the Work Program and the Calendar of Events for 2022 and wishes successful year for all ECO member-states.

**Thank you for your kind attention!**

**Statement by Ms. Zhibek Davlesova**  
**Head of Section for International Cooperation,**  
**External Relations Department,**  
**Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic**  
**at the RPC of the ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)*

**Dear heads of delegations,**  
**Dear Secretary General,**  
**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honor for me to represent the Kyrgyz Republic today at the 32nd meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

On behalf of the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome all the participants and thank the ECO Secretariat for the high level of organization of today's meeting, and wish everyone success in their future work.

I would like to note that the state bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic took an active part in all past plenary meetings of the 32nd meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council.

We believe that the past meetings are of great importance in achieving the goals set out in the ECO Vision 2025.

We believe that all ECO member countries and the ECO Secretariat will make every effort to achieve all the goals set for 2022, and we hope that all the voiced proposals, ideas, and tasks will be successfully implemented.

In turn, the Kyrgyz Republic will take an active part in all planned activities within the framework of the ECO for further successful economic integration in the ECO region.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the ECO countries, having a powerful potential and being in the center of the Eurasian continent, are fully capable of fulfilling the tasks facing the Organization.

Let me once again thank the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization for the excellent organization of today's meeting and wish everyone success, peace and prosperity.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by Ms. Hina Afzal, Assistant Chief,  
Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiative  
Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of the ECO  
(26 January, 2022 - Tehran)**

**The Honorable Chairman** of the 32<sup>nd</sup>RPC, His Excellency **Mr. Ashraf Khodjaev**,  
**Director of the Department of Economic Diplomacy**, Republic of Uzbekistan  
Secretary General ECO, His Excellency **KhusravNoziri**  
Distinguished Colleagues from Ministries of Planning and other relevant  
departments/institutions of the Member States,  
**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Assalam-o-Alaikum,**

Please allow me to complement our brotherly country of the Republic of Uzbekistan for conducting the proceedings of the 32<sup>nd</sup>Regional Planning Council Meeting (RPC), being the Chair.

I would also like to avail this opportunity to express my profound appreciation to Secretary General for making extra ordinary arrangements for conducting the Council Meeting.

I would also like to thank our brotherly country Iran, that hosts the Secretariat and always facilitates the work of this organization.

I would also like to express my utmost thanks to all the participating member states for their active participation in the discussions. The efficacious conduct of this 32<sup>nd</sup>RPC, a mega event of ECO, during the ongoing pandemic needs thorough appreciation. This reflects the political will of the Member States alongside overwhelming capacity of the organization to rise at the need of the hour.

**Dignitaries,**

I would like to emphasize that RPC of the ECO provides us a platform to discuss ways to improve and develop our region through promoting trade and investment. It also provides us an opportunity to explore possibilities and utilize the available abundant human and natural resources for the benefit of our people.

Working under the UN Charter, ECO offers an invaluable platform to establish a single market for goods and services like European Union. Improved connectivity & people to people contacts can help in increasing intra-regional trade and enhancing economic cooperation among the Member States. The role of ECO Cultural Centre in Iran, Economic Bureau in Turkey and Science Foundation in Pakistan are adding great deal of efficiency of the Organization.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our shared history, common borders, outlook towards common problems and cultural affinities further complement our strong ties. However, these strengths need effective channelization and a common strategy to synergize our endeavors for the collective progress & prosperity of our peoples.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Over the past three decades or so, the ECO Member States have been collaborating to accelerate the pace of regional development through their common endeavors. Besides shared cultural and historic affinities, they have been able to use the existing infrastructural and business links to further fortify their resolve to transfer their hopes and aspirations into a tangible reality at the forum of RPC.

Similarly, we hope that different initiatives of ECO that are aimed at promoting investment in the region, may succeed such as Agreement for Promotion and Protection of Investment, establishment of ECO Re-Insurance Company and agreement on matters related to taxation etc.

## **Excellencies,**

Economic development of the ECO region, as elsewhere in the world, has experienced a setback during 2020. Production has temporarily halted during that period, to prevent regional community from covid-19-related hazards.

Investment which naturally feeds real sector economy has largely been crowded out by pandemic-styled prudence thereby suppressing regional economic activity. That, has especially impacted export-oriented and commodity-linked investments in the ECO region. On the positive side, many see the global crisis as a catalyst for process of structural transformation of international production and supply chains that may, in turn, lead to adequate adjustments in financial systems.

## **Dignitaries,**

We must appreciate that in the form of ECO, we have a regional multilateral platform available to formulate a collective response and policy for our common issues.

Given the current challenges, the ECO has done well in developing Covid-19 guidelines to facilitate trade and movement of goods and persons at the border crossing points and organizing most of the events online during 2021.

As we have seen during this RPC that various events or ministerial meetings were held in the past but they were not held at a regular interval which is required in order to

monitor our progress. Significant gaps in between such events negatively impact progress on important issues.

In order to overcome this issue, we need to develop a calendar of events to assure continuity and consistency. If it's not possible for the participants to physically attend any event, it may be held virtually on convenient dates.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

"ECO Vision 2025", adopted during the 13th ECO Summit in Islamabad is a key document to assess progress made thus far. The mid-term review of ECO Vision 2025 carried out during latest COM Meeting at Turkmenistan was a very valuable and successful exercise. Now we need to assess the implementation of various objectives of ECO Vision seriously and to develop a realistic timeline for achieving other objectives as well.

### **Excellencies,**

Other tangible outcomes include operationalization of the transport and economic corridors especially KTAI and ITI. We are pleased to note the successful run of TIR consignments from Pakistan to Azerbaijan and Turkey through Iran and the operationalization of Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Cargo train. Regional connectivity and development of economic interlink ages are the key pillars of the policy of Government of Pakistan and inline with our leadership's vision of geo-economic integration and connectivity of our region. We intend the ITI corridors to be fully operational with involvement of private sector of enroute Member States so that it becomes a self-sustained project with ECO ownership. it will also promote operationalization of other corridors in the ECO region.

### **Excellencies,**

We would like to highlight the finalization of the host country agreement of the ECO Science Foundation by Pakistan, about which the ECO Secretariat and esteemed Member States have been duly informed. We look forward to the full operationalization of ECO Science Foundation with the arrival of the new President and consistent support of all ECO Member States. We would like to take this opportunity to stress upon the need of ratification of ECO Science Foundation Charter and its additional protocols by non-ratifying Member States in line with the spirit and objective to promote scientific and technological collaboration among ECO Member States.

### **Dignitaries,**

World merchandise trade contracted by around 8% in 2020 over 2019, to US 17.5 trillion in 2020. On the other hand, the contraction in ECO region's world trade declined by more than 9%, from US\$ 729.7 billion to US \$ 661.5 billion over the same period.

The share of the ECO region in Global Trade in Services was US \$ 115 billion in 2020. This included ECO exports of \$ 55 billion and imports of \$ 59 billion. The total volume of intra-regional trade stood at around US\$ 50 billion, around 7.5 % of total trade of the ECO member states in 2020. We hope that different initiatives of ECO that will help in promoting intra-regional trade and investment in the region.

### **Excellencies,**

With regards to financing regional projects, we wish to see ECO Trade Development Bank further expanded to achieve the benchmark capital requirement of 1 billion USD, so that it establishes itself as a fully functional regional financial instrument. It will be able to finance regional projects and assist the Member States through provision of finances for bankable projects. We believe ECO-Trade Development Bank will pave the way for establishment of ECO Clearing Union to forge cooperation with the Asian Clearing Union and to facilitate payments and thereby promote intra-regional trade.

### **Mr. Chairman!**

The progress of the RPC requires a firm stride with a vision to create robust linkages among the Member States. I will take this opportunity to offer my considerations for the respected participants as key takeaways of 32<sup>nd</sup>RPC:

- i. Double intra-regional trade and increase ECO's share in the global trade, especially commercial services sectors i.e. transport, logistics, tourism etc. and transform the ECO region into a zone of economic growth and collective prosperity.
- ii. Enhance regional cooperation and political will in all the priority areas of ECO such as Trade & Investment, Transport & Communication, Energy & Environment, Tourism, Agriculture & Industry, Sustainable development, and Parliamentary Coordination.
- iii. Promote labour and capital mobility through improved access to transport, information and opportunities and through simplifying issuance of visas and procedures at the border crossing points;
- iv. Hold events rather than postponing, which often happens due to conflicting schedules of the participants from the Member States;
- v. Setting up of task forces for promotion of tourism comprising of Member States from relevant agencies is a welcome initiative of this RPC Meeting;

I thank you!

**Statement by Mr. Sayfullo Qodirov**  
**Head of the Department of International Relations**  
**Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan**  
**at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of the ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)*

**Уважаемый Председатель,**  
**Уважаемый Генеральный секретарь,**  
**Уважаемые коллеги,**  
**Дамы и господа,**

Разрешите от имени делегации Республики Таджикистан выразить искреннюю благодарность Секретариату Организации Экономического Сотрудничества за приглашение принять участие на заседании Совета регионального планирования и отличную организацию данного мероприятия.

**Уважаемые коллеги,**

Организация Экономического Сотрудничества, являясь региональным межправительственным организацией, со дня своего образования внес значительный вклад в развитии особо важных секторов, такие как торговля, транспорт и коммуникации, энергетика, туризм и т.д.

Как известно, торговое и инвестиционное сотрудничество является одной из приоритетных сфер деятельности Организации.

Сегодня удельный вес стран-членов во внешнем торговом обороте Республики Таджикистан составляет порядка сорока процентов от его общего объёма. В этом направлении, считаем целесообразным разработку дальнейшего совместного плана по эффективной реализации торгового потенциала региона ОЭС.

Наша Организация, также уделяет особое внимание развитию транспорта и коммуникации с акцентом на роль транзитных транспортных коридоров, которые являются ключевым звеном сотрудничества и развития экономики между нашими странами.

Стоит подчеркнуть, что государства-члены ОЭС обладают огромным транспортно-коммуникационным потенциалом, и эффективное использование существующего потенциала может послужить экономическому росту в регионе.



В свою очередь, Правительство Республики Таджикистан придает особое значение развитию транспортных коридоров для повышения качества жизни населения, экономического роста и ее превращения в удобную транзитную зону.

В связи с этим, Республикой Таджикистан реализуются проекты в основном направленные на укрепление транспортной инфраструктуры, формирование новых транзитных транспортных коридоров, выход на морские порты и создание благоприятных условий для международных автомобильных перевозок.

С этой целью в годы независимости в транспортной сфере страны по непосредственной инициативе Правительства Республики и при финансовой поддержке международных финансовых институтов были реализованы 59 инвестиционных проектов регионального значения на общую сумму более 2,1 миллиард долларов США.

### **Уважаемые коллеги,**

Несмотря на то, что пандемия внесла свои коррективы в развитие торгово-экономических отношений стран-региона за последние два года, Правительство Республики Таджикистан в сотрудничестве со своими соседями приложило усилия для обеспечения продолжения деятельности международных грузоперевозок.

Из-за негативного влияния пандемии COVID-19, международная транспортно-логистическая система оказалась одной из наиболее пострадавших сфер, поэтому вопрос использования цифровых технологий и внедрения интеллектуальных транспортных систем на сегодняшний день является весьма актуальным.

В связи с этим, в 2019 году была принята Концепция цифровой экономики Республики Таджикистан, основанная на Национальной стратегии развития Таджикистана на период до 2030 года, и представляет собой общее видение использования современных цифровых технологий.

Кроме того, хочу особо подчеркнуть, что сегодня вопрос организации мультимодальных перевозок является актуальным для укрепления регионального сотрудничества в области транспорта.

Республикой Таджикистан совместно с Республикой Узбекистан и Китайской Народной Республикой принимаются необходимые меры по активизации транспортно-транзитного коридора Узбекистан – Таджикистан – Китай, с целью возрождения «великого Шелкового пути». Также, совместно с Туркменистаном и турецкими коллегами прорабатывается вопрос создания мультимодального коридора Турция – Иран – Туркменистан – Узбекистан – Таджикистан – Китай.

Следовательно, в целях укрепления регионального сотрудничества и создания благоприятных условий развития транспортной отрасли в регионе ЭКО, выражается просьба Секретариату ЭКО уделить особое внимание дальнейшей координации следующих вопросов:

1. Активизация и развитие международных транспортных коридоров;
2. Создание региональных логистических центров;
3. Организация мультимодальных перевозок, и цифровизация всех транспортных процессов международных автомобильных перевозок (в первую очередь внедрение e-CMR и e-TIR).

**Уважаемые коллеги,**

Сотрудничество в сфере энергетики имеет большое значение для экономического роста и устойчивого развития в регионе ОЭС.

Мы заинтересованы в активном участии в реализации разрабатываемых проектов по соединению и формированию региональных энергетических сетей, в частности по созданию Регионального энергетического рынка.

Подчеркиваем важность своевременной и полной реализации проекта строительства высоковольтной линии электропередачи КАСА-1000.

Таджикистан, как известно, располагает огромными ресурсами чистой возобновляемой энергии. Около 98% электроэнергии Таджикистана производится на гидроэлектростанциях.

В этом направлении разработка Стратегии обеспечения энергетической устойчивости региона ОЭС может содействовать реализации проектов, которые ориентированы на возрастающее использование возобновляемой энергии и развитие «зелёной» экономики.

Таджикистан заинтересован в развитии сотрудничества с государствами-членами ОЭС в области промышленности. В этом направлении считаем важным уделить внимание расширению инвестиционного сотрудничества, а также разработке механизмов финансирования малых и средних предприятий.

Обеспечение продовольственной безопасности, будучи актуальной задачей, требует активного сотрудничества стран-членов Организации.

Потребность к такому сотрудничеству приобретает ещё большую актуальность в связи с необходимостью преодоления социально-экономических последствий пандемии Ковид-19.

В этой связи, считаем актуальной разработку в рамках Организации долгосрочного плана развития сотрудничества в области сельского хозяйства и координации вопросов по обеспечению продовольственной безопасности.

**Уважаемые коллеги,**

Наши страны продолжают оставаться уязвимыми перед рисками изменения климата, в том числе участившимися стихийными бедствиями, засухой, ускоренному таянию ледников и другими природными явлениями, которые ежегодно наносят значительный урон экономике.

С учётом этих факторов, считаем важным в рамках нашей Организации уделить приоритетное внимание вопросам изменения климата и в этом контексте снижению риска стихийных бедствий.

*Уважаемые коллеги,*

Одной из сфер регионального сотрудничества, в наибольшей степени пострадавшей от пандемии, является также туризм. Устранение негативных последствий пандемии и восстановление внешнего и внутреннего туризма в нашем регионе требуют укрепления сотрудничества стран-членов в этой области.

В этой связи, странам членам ЭКО необходимо предпринять совместные усилия по реализации мер, нацеленных на всемерное использование туристических возможностей наших стран.

В заключении хотелось бы подтвердить нашу готовность и впредь принимать активное участие в деятельности Организации во всех приоритетных направлениях на благо устойчивого развития региона ЭКО.

**Благодарю за внимание!**

**Statement by Mr. Abdullah Rıdvan Ađaođlu**  
**Vice President of Strategy and Budget,**  
**Presidency of Trkiye**  
**at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of the ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 - Tehran)*

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

H.E. Ashraf KHODJAEV, Mr. Chairman, Head of Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, (teyit edilecektir)

H.E. Ambassador Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatuh

**Excellencies,**

It is a great pleasure for me and my delegation to be with you on the occasion of the thirty second (32<sup>nd</sup>) Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC).

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the ECO Secretariat for the arrangements made for the successful conduct of this Meeting.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

Unfortunately, as humanity, we all have been struggling with the threats and risks posed by the COVID Nineteen (19) pandemic which has been affecting every sphere of human activity including the economy, trade, transport and tourism. After almost two years into the pandemic, the total confirmed COVID Nineteen (19) cases exceeded two thousand seventy (270) million, and the total deaths, unfortunately, exceeded the 5 million lives.

Besides its devastating effects on every aspect of human life, the COVID Nineteen (19) has significantly disrupted the global economy and international trade.

During this intense period, as humanity, we observed that collective action is required to address the very challenges posed by pandemic and experienced in every area of life. Being aware of this, as Trkiye, we have been trying to respond to assistance requests received from all around the world since the onset.

Up to now, we have delivered aid to twelve (12) international organizations and one hundred and sixty (160) countries. We have also supported some members of ECO by

granting exporting and purchasing licenses for medical equipment and by providing personnel and training aid.

Within this context, as ECO member countries, we should concentrate on how we can make better use of our organization to reinforce our economic cooperation through enhancing mutual understanding, dialogue, cooperation and solidarity among us.

### **Distinguished Colleagues,**

Unfortunately, so far, we couldn't succeed to make better use of the significant potential of ECO and our member countries. The current level of intra-ECO trade, which is about eight point three percent (8.3%), is far below its potential. We should intensify our efforts to boost our trade volume to the desired levels. In this regard, we should, first of all, implement the ECOTA.

### **Esteemed Participants,**

Another important aspect to enhance our economic cooperation especially intra-ECO Trade is strengthening transport and connectivity among member countries. In this respect, effective implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and smooth and efficient functioning of the ECO road and railway projects are extremely crucial for the ECO Region.

Within this context, it is a great pleasure to mention that the opening ceremony of the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad Cargo train between three neighboring sister countries has been realized in December. The beginning of the train service is a significant step towards regional connectivity. We hope that the resumption of this project will pave the way for realizing our immense trade potential and strengthening the friendly and fraternal relations between our member states.

### **Distinguished Colleagues,**

ECOBANK headquartered in Istanbul is one of the great achievements of ECO, by presenting a concrete financial tool for our regional integration. It has become a full-fledged institution, collaborating with several multilateral development banks in financing development projects. Considering the rising funding gaps of the member countries, the Bank needs to maintain its relevance in the rapidly changing operating environment. Therefore, we have to increase the number of members to Bank from its present level of six to all ECO countries.

One of the other sectors, as its importance underlined by the COVID Nineteen pandemic once again, is Agriculture. As it is well known the agricultural sector provides significant contributions to economies as well as generates an important source of employment.

In this respect, the ECO Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC) hosted in our country is an important asset in enhancing cooperation in the organization towards ensuring food security and developing the agricultural sector in our region. We believe that ECO-RCC can be a key player in the realization of fruitful projects in this area. Therefore, we would like to invite all our member countries to engage more with the programs and projects offered by this Center.

### **Esteemed Delegates**

Human resources development is of great importance for our region and capacity building in this area will contribute to rendering every ECO effort more fruitful. In this context, as the host country of ECO Educational Institute, we give utmost importance to its valuable work and invite all member states to benefit more from the facilities provided by the Institute.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

I would like to reaffirm our commitment to implement the ECO Vision two thousand twenty five (2025). This document is of vital importance to realize our common targets and make our organization a more focused and result-oriented one.

We are all well aware that ECO has too many diverse issues and subjects on its agenda which slows down the performance of the Organization. As Türkiye, we have always underlined that ECO needs a sharper focus especially on trade-related issues and needs to concentrate on areas where the member countries show interest and therefore member countries can produce fruitful results quickly for the benefit of our people.

Therefore we kindly ask the Secretariat to set the stage towards that end including our last year's proposal regarding the unattended meetings and cooperation areas that do not induce required interest from the member countries.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Before concluding my remarks, I wish you all the success for the thirty-second (32nd) RPC Meeting.

Thank you very much.

Assalamualaikum ve Rahmetullahi ve Berakatuh.

**Statement by Ms. Selda Çimen**  
**Director of OIC Affairs at the Ministry OF Foreign Affairs**  
**of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus**  
**at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of the ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 - Tehran)*

**Mr. Chairman,**  
**Mr. Secretary General,**  
**Distinguished Heads of Delegations,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour and privilege for me to participate at the 32nd meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the Economic Cooperation Organization amid COVID-19 pandemic. I extend to you all the heartfelt greetings of the Turkish Cypriot people.

At the outset, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the secretary-general as well as the eco secretariat for their precious efforts in making this meeting a great success.

**Mr. Secretary General,**  
**Distinguished Delegates,**

The Turkish Cypriot state shares a common history and culture with the ECO member states, and is fully committed to the objectives of the economic cooperation organization at large and the ECO vision 2025 in particular.

**Excellencies,**

We have been participating in the organization's activities and events since 1992, and were granted observer membership status in 2012, which was extended by the ECO council of ministers for three years as of 15 October 2021. Since attaining the observer status, the Turkish Cypriot state has been a dedicated observer member, doing its utmost to contribute to the work of the organization.

We have been a keen participant at the meetings of the organization at all levels and have co-hosted numerous successful eco events in TRNC.

In this context, I would like to bring to the esteemed delegates' attention that, the ECO events of "the 4th Experts Group meeting on ecotourism", "Second Workshop on Capacity Building and Best Practices on Biodiversity Issues", "Workshop on Protected Areas Systems" and "Workshop on Ecosystem Services" that were planned to be co-hosted by Turkey and Turkish Cypriot state in 2021, postponed due to the increasing daily covid-19 cases in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as well as in member

countries. We will follow the global epidemiologic indicators and keep updated the esteemed eco secretariat as well as the honorable member countries regarding the possible dates of the said events within the third quarter of this year.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

The pandemic caused a huge damage on the world economy and the economic fallout seems outlive the health crises. Currently tourism, transportation and education sectors have been among the most exposed to major upheaval, and unfortunately, they are the leading ones in our country.

With the development of and wider access to the COVID-19 vaccine and the positive effects of the Turkish Cypriot Government's timely measures, we have managed to limit the fatalities caused by the COVID-19. In addition to the health measures, our government has been taking the necessary economical measures to secure the domestic economy afloat. The implementation of such a balanced public policy will improve our economy's resilience to enable us to adopt to the vastly and rapidly changing global environment.

### **Excellencies,**

Within the era prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the international environment generated a process of establishing and expanding regional cooperation among the countries. Today, more than ever before, the international and regional cooperation is the key to address the global challenges and identify common interests in various economic areas. We must mobilize our resources to reduce the economic effects of the pandemic and take measures to encourage trade among ourselves.

Finally, I would like to refer to the eco vision 2025 and underline the six priority areas of cooperation, namely "trade, transportation and connectivity, energy, tourism, economic growth and productivity as well as social welfare and environment" and reiterate our will to cooperate, in particular on tourism and education where our expertise lies.

Thank you all for your most kind attention.



**Statement by Ms Atsuko Hirose**  
**Deputy Secretary-General of the International Energy Charter**  
**Meeting of the Regional Planning Council of the**  
**Economic Cooperation Organization**  
*(26 January, 2022 - Tehran)*

**Excellences, distinguished participants,**

I am pleased to participate in the 32nd Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council on behalf of the International Energy Charter. We appreciate our continued cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization, which is logical. First of all, due to our overlapping constituency - eight ECO Member States out of ten are Contracting Parties to the Energy Charter Treaty. Secondly, both our organizations pursue the same goals and objectives when it comes to developing open and competitive energy markets.

Promoting energy cooperation and integrating energy markets is crucial to achieving sustainable development and energy transition. Regional energy cooperation has multiples benefits, including technical, economic and environmental, especially in the ECO region. We need to accelerate regional integration to benefit from economies of scale, available technologies and natural resources. I am glad that we are on the same page with the ECO countries and the Secretariat in addressing this issue. In 2020, together with the ECO Secretariat, we organized a successful workshop to promote ECO Regional Electricity Market. This event helped develop a common vision, reflect on the common benefits of market integration, and exchange best practices and lessons learnt. Indeed, this is a promising but challenging task, which needs a lot of effort and commitment. We are ready to continue this work towards a regional energy market in the ECO region in order to support our Member and Observer countries.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement of Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro**  
**President ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)**  
**32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)*

Excellency, the Chairman,  
Excellencies the Delegates from ECO Member States  
Excellency the Secretary General of ECO  
Excellencies, the Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies,

**Assalam-O-Alaikum and a Very Good Day to you all!**

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address the August Forum of 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the RPC!

Excellencies, on behalf of ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) and on my personal behalf, I express my deep gratitude to all the Member States and ECO Secretariat for their cooperation extended to the Foundation. Our acknowledgement and special appreciation to the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan for their patronage, logistic support and continued budget contribution.

Ladies and gentlemen, in today's fast technological development, the ECOSF fully recognizes that investment in Science, Engineering, Technology and Innovation (SETI) builds the strong foundation to help sustain & enhance; the economic growth, community well-being and integrated development of any country or region. ECO region can achieve global competitiveness, if it ensures that the region has qualified and capable human resource, to develop and maintain the infrastructure and capacity, and keep pace with technological development. The ECO comprising of just 10 countries with well established, strong historical and religio-cultural linkages, is better positioned to steer the economic development and harness the economic benefits for the whole region. The fact that China's mega programme of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is across the ECO region, makes it even stronger argument for ECO to benefit from; ECOSF in this respect has demonstrated excellent collaboration to the benefit of member countries. However, a strong support to ECO Secretariat and its organs- Specialized Agencies from the member states including the due budget contributions is a prerequisite.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ECO Science Foundation continues to pursue the promotion of scientific and technological research and related activities with an end goal to raise socioeconomic standing of its member states; however, with numerous hick-ups and challenges.

As we know, the entire world has been facing challenges due to deadly COVID-19 since end of 2019. Although situation is improving, it is not yet back to normal. Hence, the pandemic has not only raised the expectations we have of science, it has also emphasized the fact that stronger collaboration & cooperation among nations to develop scientific solutions towards this global challenge, is much needed. Therefore, collaboration across scientists and experts is a powerful way of bringing evidence and scientific consensus to the attention of policymakers to make informed decisions grounded in the evidence-based research. This lies at the core of values & principles that ECOSF was established for.

Realizing this need for capacity building and knowledge sharing, particularly around the health sciences and practices among the scientists and research community of the ECO region to respond to COVID-19, I am pleased to report that ECOSF conducted the impact assessment, 2 and hosted several virtual events by engaging scientists, researchers and policy experts towards this overarching goal. Pandemic has transformed entire businesses around the world; thus, during the pandemic year, we had to adopt digital technologies to keep pace with moving world and organized numerous strategic events virtually. A comprehensive report has already been shared with all member states.

I am pleased to share that ECOSF contributed scientifically and the following research articles have been published in various international publications:

1. Chapter "Ethics and Education in Pakistan: Principles, Policies and Practices" published in the Book "**Children and Sustainable Development- Ecological Education in a Globalized World**" by Pontifical Academies and Springer, 2017.
2. Chapter on "Pakistan: Changing Landscape of Science **Communication**" published in the book "**Communicating Science: A Global Perspective**" by Australian National University (ANU) Press, 2020. Link: <https://pressfiles.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n6484/html/ch27.xhtml?referrer=&page=30>
3. ECOSF supported the Government of Pakistan on Development of Electric Mobility Development Plan: Link: <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/Environment%20&%20Climate%20Change/Scaling%20Up%20Electric%20Mobility%20in%20Pakistan.pdf>
4. Status Paper on the Impact of COVID-19 in the ECO Region published in Asian Research Policy Journal, 2020. Link: [http://www.arpjournal.org/usr/browse/view\\_issues\\_detail.do?seq=187](http://www.arpjournal.org/usr/browse/view_issues_detail.do?seq=187)
5. ECOSF as a Catalyst to Promote STI in ECO Region published in Asian Research Policy Journal, 2021. Link: <http://ecosf.org/uploads/files/ECOSF%20Profile%20-%20ARP.pdf>

6. Decarbonizing road transport sector through electric mobility in Pakistan published in Asian Research Policy Journal, 2021. Link: [http://www.arpjournal.org/usr/browse/list\\_issues\\_detail.do?seq=33](http://www.arpjournal.org/usr/browse/list_issues_detail.do?seq=33)

I am also pleased to report that the Foundation has developed a robust collaboration with China under the BRI as reported previously. In 2020 ECOSF joined hands with Beijing Technology and Business University (**BTBU**) and launched the **“BTBU-ECOSF Joint Training Center on Scientific, Technological and Economic Cooperation”** under the BRI. It is funded by the China Association for Science and Technology (CASAT). The Center serves as a strategic training platform for many economic sectors, which is critical for infrastructure development and socio-economic growth for B&R countries, including the 10 ECOSF member countries.

Under the initiative, we have so far organized four trainings on:

- 1) “Management and Development of Special Economic Zones” in December 2020
- 2) “Low Carbon Development for Belt and Road (B&R) Countries/ECO Countries” in July 2021
- 3) “Digital Transformation for the Belt and Road Countries” in October 2021
- 4) Science, Technology & Innovation Policy and Instruments for Sustainable Development for the Belt and Road Countries in December 2021.

Dear Delegates, ECOSF has developed strong collaboration and is working very closely with China Association of Science and Technology- CAST since 2017. Under this collaboration, ECOSF is focal organization for STI and science education in ECO region for One Belt One Road (OBOR) programmes. So far, ECOSF has facilitated/sponsored participation of 972 young students and teachers/coordinators/officials from Member Countries in the B&R Teenager Maker Camps, Teacher Workshops and Student Contests held in China. ECOSF has also been contributing towards the development; “Fusion of OBOR Civilizations” school curriculum in collaboration with Inter-Academy Partnership Science Education Programme (IAP-SEP) and CAST under the BRI. The curriculum is focused to promote global peace and harmony through S&T education.

ECOSF is also pleased to report that the Capacity Building Program on IBSE launched in NurSultan-Kazakhstan in 2015; is continuing nicely in Iran and Pakistan. We are set to get Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkey on board through the National Academies of Sciences who have shown their interest, but the financial constraints and COVID-19 issue have hampered the plans.

Excellencies, it must be realized that the Foundation CANNOT pursue its intended goals and function, without adequate budgetary support from the Member States. The fact is that over the last three years, the Foundation has been facing serious financial crisis; so much so that the Foundation had to cut down its core activities and is not able to even pay the full salaries and benefits to the staff! At the moment, we only receive the

mandatory budgetary contribution from the Government of Pakistan. Hence, the Foundation greatly appreciates the support of Pakistan in keeping the organization alive.

**Member States are therefore urged to pull the Foundation out of serious financial challenge on immediate basis by paying their outstanding budgetary arrears and contributions. That is the only way forward to let the Foundation continue its functions.**

The Foundation appreciates the Government of Pakistan for paying their annual mandatory budget contributions since inception in the year 2012, whereas, I.R. of Iran had provided partial mandatory budgetary support for some events within Iran in the past.

We call upon I.R. of Iran and other three ratifying member states- Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to kindly make their mandatory contributions to strengthen the Foundation. The Member States, who have not yet ratified the ECOSF Charter and its Additional Protocol, are urged to do so at their earliest, so as to benefit from Foundation's programs and let it function at the fullest.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am personally and on behalf of the Foundation, grateful to the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan for signing the Host Country Agreement in December 2021, thereby making it possible for staff from other Member Countries to join ECOSF in Islamabad. I hope that my successor from I.R. of Iran Prof. Syed Komail Tayebi will join soon and I wish him all the best. This also means that this RPC meeting is going to be my last meeting; hence I personally thank all the Member States and the Secretary General, the past four Secretaries General of ECO as well as the Scientific Community of the region & ECO Secretariat staff, especially the Assistant Directors (present and past) of International Relations for their continuous support in establishing the organization and running it for the last over eight years. My sincere appreciation to ECOSF's small but dedicated and able team for their efforts and support in my endeavours as the Founder President.

At the end, I assure you of continued efforts of the Foundation for pursuing its mandate with dedication. I also hope that the Member States will own the organization and support it with their mandatory budget contribution. I express my sincere thanks to the ECO Secretariat for the commendable efforts in organizing this 32nd Meeting of RPC despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and wish the ECO family all the best ahead.

I thank you Excellencies!

**Statement by Prof. M. Akif Kireççi**  
**President of the ECO Educational Institute**  
**at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of ECO**  
*(26 January, 2022 – Tehran)*

Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Heads of Delegations,  
Presidents of Specialized Agencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I salute the ECO family here as a whole. On behalf of the Educational Institute, it is a pleasure for me to share with you some of our accomplishments and activities in the area of education since the last ECO RPC meeting.

One of the most important developments was signing of the **Host Country Agreement** between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and Economic Cooperation Organization Educational Institute (ECOEI) relating to the Rights, Privileges and Immunities of the ECOEI on 23 July 2020 in Ankara. It is a tremendously important step towards institutionalization of the organization, whereby we establish a firm ground for its future activities. Currently, the Host Country Agreement is at the Turkish Grand National Assembly for ratification.

As you may recall, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of ECOEI **Board of Trustees**, held on 12 August 2020, reviewed and approved ECOEI's Scale of Assessments, its Annual Budget, and the Institute's **Work Program** for 2020-2022. I'd like to invite all Member States to peruse our Work Program, which is available on our website and to take part in our activities. Since it has been approved by the Education Ministers of all ECOEI Member States, the Work Program has the potential to be a draft Plan of Action on Education as a whole. Therefore, I suggest that the Council would take the necessary step by recommending its adoption as such.

During the past year, the Educational Institute had to be very selective when organizing its activities and strived to achieve its targets despite the challenges such as COVID-19 and financial difficulties. We focused on projects that are high impact in terms of fostering development through education in ECO Member States.

We also organized two online workshops on "**How to Write and Publish Articles for International Journals**" -one with Isfahan University on 19 August 2020 and the other with International Islamic University, Islamabad on 29 March 2021- to improve the academic writing skills of graduate students and young scholars in these universities. We aim to hold similar workshops with other universities in the ECO region to contribute to the academic output of the young scholars in the Member States.

We are determined to extend our activities to every level of education, and we put particular emphasis on early childhood education. We organized an online **Preschool Education Summit** on 25-26 September 2021 with the theme “Do not give up on your dreams.” More than 700 educators, teachers to-be and parents benefited from workshops with diverse themes such as gifted children at preschool age, teaching math using drama, puppet theatre, children’s literature, musical activities, speech disorders, introduction to coding and many more. ECOEI strives to have an active role in improving preschool education practices and rendering it accessible to all children in the region. The report of this Summit will be prepared and shared with the Member States.

Our most recent high profile event was a **High Level University Representatives Forum** on internationalization of higher education, held online on 30 September 2021 with the participation of 60 experts from 7 countries and 30 universities. In the forum, we had the chance to discuss opportunities and challenges regarding internationalization of and regional cooperation on higher education in three comprehensive roundtable sessions. This was a major step in bringing universities in the ECO Region together so that they can meet each other, share their ongoing projects, and establish partnerships. We are designing a full-fledged web portal that aims to promote student mobility within the ECO region by facilitating the initial research of prospective students on educational opportunities offered by universities in the ECO region. Our web platform, **StudyinECO.org**, will provide information on each member country and provide an overview of its education system. The prospective student will be able to list available degree programs at universities and filter them according to several criteria of interest. By providing all necessary information in one database, studyinECO.org will make university choice and application easier for international students and increase digital visibility of universities in the ECO region. With the participating universities, we may even collect international applications each semester for different programs and hand over the information to evaluation committees and announce the application results. Educational Institute’s primary goal in creating this platform is to help stimulate economic development and intellectual exchange through increased student mobility within the ECO region.

In the past two years, another major goal we had in mind was to produce reference works for region’s youth. We have completed the editing and preparation of the articles from the **Symposium on Common History, Education, Culture and Civilization** for publication. The book consists of two volumes with forty-seven papers from fifteen different countries. We have also published a series of reports based on the results of the sessions held during the **Language Teaching and Learning Workshop** on October 19-20, 2018 in Ankara. These reports put forward the challenges of teaching and learning ECO languages and encompass recommendations for both teachers and policy makers. Lastly, ECOEI has published “The Status of Mathematics Education in the ECO

Member States” which is a comparative analysis of mathematics results in TIMMS and PISA in Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Turkey.

ECO Educational Institute is ready to take on the task of promoting highly educated societies as envisaged in ECO Vision 2025 Statement. We are firmly committed to support advancement of education in Member States, through supporting experts, educators, institutions, and students, establishing regional networks on higher education, regional exchange and scholarship programs/mechanisms. Yet, I’d like to highlight that our success heavily depends on the ownership of the member states. The most important step to show ownership would be to establish consistent and **institutionalized channels of communication**. Therefore, I’d like to invite Member States to nominate their **focal points**, who may ideally be officials at the respective Ministries of Education of Member States. I would also like to invite Governments of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to join the Institute and become full members.

I believe that ECO Educational Institute has come a long way since its inception and will continue to thrive as an indispensable tool for advancement of ECO Member States. As I do in all ECO meetings, I would like to close my statement by repeating my favorite reminder “Every dollar invested in education contributes fifteen-fold in economy.” I assure you that ECO Educational Institute makes every effort to fulfill its mandate.

Thank you.



**Statement by Ms. Fatemeh Mirbagheri,  
International Affairs Manager of ECI  
32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of ECO  
(17-26 January 2022)**

**Honorable Chair, distinguished delegates,**

At the outset, allow me to extend my congratulations to your Excellency for your election as the chairperson of this meeting. It is a pleasure for me to address this important event on behalf of ECO Cultural Institute.

Also, on behalf of the ECO Cultural Institute, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Republic of Turkey for the ratification of the Charter of ECO Cultural Institute at the latest meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Following the 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council, ECO Cultural Institute has arranged a wide variety of cultural programs and activities. The complete report of the activities of our Institute is available in the working paper of the Committee of Specialized Agencies and Affiliated Bodies of the ongoing RPC meeting but our most important activities were as follows:

In line with the former consultation meeting between the three ECO specialized agencies and the significance of a trilateral partnership for further realization of ECO aims and objectives, a virtual consultation meeting between the presidents of all the specialized agencies was held on "The Role of Culture, Education and Science in Sustainable Development "on 18 January 2021.

Also, in continuance of joint activities between the specialized agencies of ECO, the First Joint Symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member-State Universities was held virtually on 04 March 2021. It is considered a milestone in the partnership between the ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Educational Institute, ECO science Foundation and Allameh Tabataba'i University. The Institute managed to attract participation of the major universities of all the ten ECO member states. The second meeting is scheduled to be held in 2022 in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

To strengthen the network connection among national libraries, the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of ECO Heads of National Libraries was held online on 15 June 2021. The purpose of this meeting was to exchange views on common issues of the National Libraries of the member countries and to create a new chapter in cooperation in the field of cultural interactions at the regional level and to share experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The meeting was organized in cooperation with Iran's National Library as the host. The event was participated by authorities of most of the ECO member states as well as President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and Acting Representative of UNESCO Cluster Office. The 6<sup>th</sup> meeting is scheduled to be held in 2023 in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

To make arrangements for the teaching of the languages of the Region which is among the key objectives of the Institute, a complete handbook of Urdu language and grammar for Persian speakers) written by the late Dr. Shahid Choudhary with a foreword by the honorable Ambassador of Pakistan in Iran, republished by ECI because it is much in demand as a reference for university students and researcher.

Also, ECI in partnership with Saadi Foundation held an online Persian learning course for the members of diplomatic corps residing in Tehran. It is a starter course and is gratis. ECO Cultural Institute plans to hold similar courses for the other common languages in the ECO region.

To preserve traditional festivals and rituals of the ECO region, ECO Cultural Institute held the celebration of "Nowruz, an Occasion for Solidarity" in March 2021 to mark the arrival of spring and to promote solidarity and friendship among the peoples of the ECO region. The event yielded a spectacular attendance; present at the meeting were President of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, Ambassadors of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and a group of ambassadors and diplomats from other countries. The celebration was also well received by a great number of enthusiasts on social media.

Commemoration of the famous figures of the ECO region is one of the key mandates of the ECO Cultural Institute. In this regard, On the occasion of the 144<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Allama Iqbal, ECO Cultural Institute held the international event "Iqbal-e Ishq" on Monday, November 15, 2021 in partnership with the Embassy of Pakistan and the Sahar TV Channel.

Also, on the occasion of the 580<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Amir Alisher Navoi, the renowned poet and writer, ECI in partnership with the embassy of Uzbekistan in Tehran held an international webinar in February 2021, titled " Alisher Navoi's works as the cultural achievements of the ECO region".

Furthermore, on the occasion of the 110<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mirzo Tursunzoda, people's poet and national hero of Tajikistan, an international webinar in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Tehran, titled "Poet of Peace and Friendship" was held on Thursday 20 May 2021.

For preserving the historic heritage of the ECO region, ECI has published an inclusive book titled "World Intangible Heritage in the ECO Region" which is the collection of

intangible heritage of all the ten member states inscribed in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

For promotion of tourism in the ECO region, ECI has started a series of special issue of its quarterly journal, ECO Heritage. Over the last year, two journals dedicated to the cities Dushanbe, Capital of Tajikistan and Khiva in Uzbekistan. Also, two issues of the quarterly will be dedicated to the cities of Sheki in Azerbaijan and Sari in Iran. ECI is willing to promote the other major cities of the ECO region in its journal upon the request of the esteemed member states.

Finally, regarding new publications of our Institute, ECI has published 6 new books and 5 quarterly journals during the year 2021.

**Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

ECO Cultural Institute has a great potential to efficiently play its role in ECO cultural integration through its activities. However, organization of cultural events is subject to necessary support from the Member States and availability of funds. Taking into consideration the fact that ECI is mostly dependent on the financial contribution of its four member states, we stress on the urgent need for timely payment of annual contributions by the member states, as delays would hamper ECI's activities.

ECI welcomes proposals from all the ECO member states for holding joint cultural events and strongly encourages all the member states to participate in the programs of the Institute. This will help the smooth functioning of the Institute in promotion of the rich common cultural heritage of the region.

Lastly, we would like to invite those signatory member states of the Institute to ratify its Charter and the remaining ECO member states to accede to ECI.

Thank You.

**Statement by Dr. Atousa Goodarzi, Dean  
ECO College of Insurance (ECO-ColI)  
32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of RPC of ECO  
(17-26 January 2022)**

**Mr. Chairman  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honor for me to participate, in this meeting on behalf of ECO College of Insurance. I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretariat for their efforts and I hope that the meeting would succeed to achieve its goals and objectives.

I would like to take this opportunity to submit a brief report on activities of the ECO College of Insurance during the last year.

Given the various developments in the international arena, modern diplomacy has started to expand its functions and manifestations in the world today. One of the major directions it has taken is the *Academic Diplomacy* and the active role played by the academia in developing peace and friendship among different nations.

To this aim, Allameh Tabataba'i University, as the main state-owned university in Iran which specialises in the areas of humanities, social sciences, and the application of technology, together with the ECO College of Insurance which is conducting academic and research activities inside Allameh Tabataba'i University and under the support of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) have been eagerly involved in a plethora of academic events and activities in 2021 to fulfil their roles and reveal their commitments in the realisation of the goals of Academic Diplomacy.

Accordingly, Allameh Tabataba'i University and the ECO College of Insurance have had extensive cooperation with the universities and higher education institutes throughout the ECO region in 2021. In what follows, I will try to provide a brief overview of the major activities we have had with the universities in the ECO Member States.

1. We have signed and exchanged 2 memorandums of understanding with *Heriva Institute of Higher Education* and *Payam Institute of Higher Education in Afghanistan*, and one memorandum of understanding with the *Istanbul Arel University in Turkey*.
2. ECO College of Insurance has held *an international session* entitled "*Afghanistan in the Past, Present, and Future*" in partnership with the *Scientific Association for Afghan Studies*, in which scholars from Iran and Afghanistan delivered speeches.
3. To help solve the country's problems, we held a session entitled "*The Rise of the Taliban: the Challenges and Requirements of Iran's Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan*" with the presence of diplomats and professors from Iran and Afghanistan.

4. In the Autumn Semester of 2021, a course was offered on *Energy Economics* in the Regional Studies Department. Professors from *Iran and Kazakhstan* taught and students from *Iran, Kazakhstan, and Russia* attended the course.
5. Another joint session entitled "*India and Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan*" was held online in the Regional Studies Department in December 2021. This session was held in collaboration with *Ferdowsi University of Mashhad* and professors from *Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India* participated in this online event.
6. A series of *workshops* on "*Introducing the Cultural Rituals of Ramadan in ECO Countries*" were held in the spring of 2021. The workshops were held for *ten evenings* during the holy month of Ramadan, and every night a professor from *one of the ECO member countries* delivered a speech on the topic. Participants from *most ECO Countries* attended the workshops.
7. A webinar entitled "*Contemporary Russian Policy in the South Caucasus, and Iran-Russia Interactions in the region*" was also convened in the Regional Studies Department. The webinar was chaired by one of the College's faculty members and taught by a professor from Russia.
8. The *joint spring school* entitled the "*Prospect of the Balance of Power in Asia in the 2020s*" was held in partnership with the *Iranian Political Science Association (IPSA)* for *10 days* and teachers from *ECO countries*, including *Turkey, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan* were the lecturers of the school.
9. A webinar was held on "*Recent Turkish Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus*" where Dr Azki Ozen, a professor from Sabanci University of Turkey was the speaker.
10. We held an event entitled "*Recognition of Avicenna's Thought and Knowledge Heritage*" in partnership with *the ECO Cultural Institute* in the summer of 2021.

It is worth adding that Allameh Tabataba'i University, in collaboration with the ECO Cultural Institute, hosted *the first Summit of Rectors from ECO member-state universities* in March 2021, and *22 university rectors and presidents* participated in this event. We are currently founding *the ECO Universities Network* to provide a good academic sphere for all academics in the region to share their ideas and contribute to the wellbeing of the region.

I hope the measures taken in the ECO College of Insurance in 2021 have managed to provide a platform for further cooperation between the ECO-region universities and countries.

### *Suggestions for the 2022 year*

- 1) Holding short-term courses and workshops for the staff employed in the ECO Member-State embassies;

The College has the capacity to hold courses in the areas of

- a. Insurance
- b. Stock exchange and financial markets
- c. International Relations and Regional Studies

Therefore, applicants interested in attending these events are invited to suggest their desired courses, and the ECO College can plan for holding the programmes.

- 2) Given the allocation of 4 scholarship quotas for each ECO Member State (excluding Iran), all countries are invited to nominate the applicants to study in the programmes available at the ECO College.
- 3) The ECO College is well prepared to improve its bilateral interactions with all ECO Member States. To this aim, we would like to suggest that members from the embassies of ECO states visit the ECO College, and our faculty and students have the opportunity to visit the ECO Secretariat and the embassies of ECO states (mainly during special events).
- 4) ECO College is equipped with one of the best libraries in Iran in the areas of regional studies, actuarial sciences, finance, and insurance. Accordingly, if the esteemed embassy members would like to donate general books (on such topics as the culture, literature, economy, finance, etc. of each ECO member country) or specialised volumes to our library, parts of the library could be embellished with the names of the donating countries.

**SG's Closing Remarks at  
Plenary Session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> RPC Meeting  
(January 26, 2022)**

**The Honourable chairman,  
and the Distinguished Participants,**

Before the esteemed Council moves forward to conclude this final session of RPC, I would like to thank you all for effective, meaningful and result-oriented discussions. Taking this opportunity, I congratulate the distinguished participants for successfully finalizing the ECO Work Program and Calendar of Events - 2022.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to all our sectoral committees for their deep dedication and hard work to facilitate the task of this august Council. Today, the adoption of important documents is done due to their meticulous and professional contribution which is acknowledged with high appreciation.

Moreover, I especially thank and commend all ECO Deputies Secretary General, Directors, Heads of Section, Program Officers, Translators, Stenos and other staff of the Secretariat for their valued and excellent services to facilitate the finalization of this year's work program and calendar of events.

Given the exigencies of recurrently changing situation owing to the challenges inflicted by COVID-19, ECO is keenly devoted and making every possible effort to address the region's post-pandemic needs and requirements in close collaboration with all stakeholders, including regional and international organizations. Our prime target is to fuel the slackened activities, especially in most essential areas of development, which is aimed at normalizing the socioeconomic condition of regional community. I am confident that with continued support of the esteemed Member countries, we would be certainly able to achieve our perceived goals in 2022 and during the years ahead.

I am more than optimistic that the sustainability of our oneness as well as the continued exhibition of interest will leave no stone unturned on ECO's way to greater regional integration. Closing my remarks, I once again thank all the distinguished Heads of Delegation and other respectable delegates for their kind participation and significant contribution to make this event a success.

**Thank you with best of luck and wishes.**