

**26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)**

*Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, January 24, 2023*

*Tashkent Communiqué*

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs/Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States, assembling at the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) on January 24, 2023 in Tashkent under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Saidov, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, to evaluate and discuss the activities and engagements of ECO as well as decide the prospects of future actions of the Organization, and while:

**Bearing in mind** the principles and objectives of the Treaty of Izmir, as well as targets envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025 and Ashgabat Consensus for Action; **Renewing** our firm commitment and dedication for continued support to their implementation;

**Acknowledging** regional connectivity and integration as cornerstone for sustainable and resilient economic growth and development in the ECO region and in this context; **Appreciating** the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to proclaim 2022 as the Year of Strengthening Connectivity, also reflected in the resolution 76/295 “Strengthening connectivity between the Central and South Asia” adopted on July 11, 2022 by the UN General Assembly;

**Extending** deep gratitude to the Republic of Uzbekistan for exquisitely chairing the ECO in 2022 and making meaningful and result-based proposals for further improvement of the Organization during its chairmanship;

**Recalling** the UN General Assembly Resolution of September 9, 2021 on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization, stressing the importance of further developing systematic and integrated interaction between the ECO and international and regional organizations, including the UN and its specialized institutions;

**Welcoming** the ECO Chairmanship 2023 of the Republic of Azerbaijan under an important regional theme “Green Transition and Interconnectivity”;

**Marking** the importance of the results of 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit (Ashgabat, November 28, 2021) that endorsed number of important documents calling to put valuable contribution in further development of constructive cooperation as well as stirring up of the activities of the Organization and its structure;

**Stressing** the need for the post-COVID collaboration amongst the Member States; **Emphasizing** the significance of intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation as well as global partnerships in this regard;

**Recognizing** the role of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies in supporting and promoting the Organization's agenda and; **Reiterating** our continued support for their operations;

**Acknowledging** the importance of trade liberalization in the ECO Region, as a driving force, for extensive realization of its trade and development potential;

**Highlighting** the importance of digital economy development and expressing the aspiration for widespread use of the digital technologies impacting our daily lives, technological industrial development of the ECO Member States, and shaping innovations in all sectors, including politics, economy, society, culture and environment;

**Recognizing** the need to ensure the safety, sustainability and resilience of the supply chains through developed transport infrastructure and digital systems under the framework of ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) as well as the importance of developing a Regional Strategy aimed at developing transport and communication links and increasing transit potential, in particular, through extending regional transport corridors to Europe and China and other international transport networks;

**Recognizing** the need to intensify cooperation in the implementation of transport and communication projects that will connect the ECO region with the main hub ports and world markets, including the construction of new railways China - Kyrgyzstan - Uzbekistan and Termez - Mazar-i-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar, which can become complementary elements of the transport corridor Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan - Iran - Oman - Qatar and Jaloliddini Balkhi (Tajikistan) - Sherkhan Bandar (Afghanistan) railway;

**Highlighting** the importance of digitalized transport, customs and border crossing procedures for ECO enhanced connectivity; **Underlining** the significance of expanded air connectivity among our countries for trade and tourism purposes;

**Paying** special attention to the development of transport and communication system as one of the main areas of economic cooperation; **Appreciating** the implementation of the projects for the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, power lines and fiber-optic communication systems Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan (TAP);

**Mindful** of the fact that enhanced energy security and sustainability in the region is among ECO's strategic objectives and the outcomes of the 4<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy held in June 2021; **Underscoring** the need for continuous efforts towards ECO regional power/electricity integrated market, transformation to renewable as well as cleaner and sustainable energy sources;

**Underlining** the importance of enhancing collaboration on environment as a cross-cutting issue to all aspects of development in line with ECO Vision 2025 and UN

Agenda for Sustainable Development; **Recognizing** the significance of transition to a low-emission and climate resilient development pathway in the ECO Region;

**Considering** the well-timed fifth water initiative of the Honorable President of the Republic of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon to declare 2025 as the “International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation”, proclaim the March 21<sup>st</sup> of each year the “World Day of Glaciers”, establish an International Trust Fund for the Glaciers Preservation and convene High-Level International Conference on Glaciers’ Preservation in Tajikistan in 2025, as mentioned in the UN General Assembly resolution No. 77/158, to facilitate access to accurate and timely information on the cryosphere;

**Stressing** the pivotal role of agriculture as a driving force in the economies of the region for achieving food security, poverty alleviation, rural welfare and sustainable economic development and; **Expressing** concerns over the impacts on ECO Region by current global food insecurity, interruption of supply chain and rising food prices;

**Expressing** concerns on the challenges in food security and agricultural development in the region as a result of global political escalations, , climate change, land degradation, drought, water shortage and other environment-related problems and; **Emphasizing** on enhanced post-COVID cooperation and collaboration to eliminate the food-insecurity and boost the capacity of the Member States to tackle such issues in future; **Highlighting** the importance of an updated ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS) developed by the ECO Regional Cooperation Centre for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS) and endorsed by the 7<sup>th</sup> Agricultural Ministerial Meeting;

**Expressing** grief and concerns on the losses due to climate change induced floods in Pakistan and extending support to Pakistan to meet the challenges, including in Food Security;

**Emphasizing** the need for the introduction and application of climate technologies in the ECO Region and contributing to the technological advancement of the region in the field of climate change and in this regard; Noting the high importance of Turkmenistan's initiative to establish UN Regional Center for Climate Technologies in the ECO Region;

**Noting** the importance of the 4<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism held virtually on December 13, 2022 under the Chairmanship of Uzbekistan for the post-COVID recovery and onward development of regional tourism industry and welcoming the adoption of the Samarkand Declaration and the Road Map to ensure speedy recovery, safe and sustainable development of tourism after COVID-19 in the countries of the ECO Region;

**Underlining** the crucial role of tourism as a means of sustainable socioeconomic development of the region; **Taking** into account the rich cultural and historical

heritage of the ECO Region; **Calling for** increased joint efforts for the elevation of tourism sector based on the targets envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025; **Paying** special attention to the development of cultural and pilgrimage tourism, taking into account the rich cultural, historical religious heritage of the ECO Region;

**Expressing** support to the normalization of inter-state relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders and; **Believing** that this development will pave the way for sustainable peace and economic prosperity in the Caucasus region through establishment of good-neighborly relations;

**Expressing** deep concerns over the continuously deteriorating humanitarian and economic conditions in Afghanistan, including those of women; **Welcoming** the efforts of the ECO Member States to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people;

**Reiterating** our support to assist the process of reconstruction, development and socioeconomic progress in Afghanistan as set out in the ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan;

**Welcoming** the initiative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to establish in Almaty the United Nations Regional Center on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Central Asia and Afghanistan which will help improve existing cooperation between UN and ECO Region;

**Re-emphasizing** the need for early finalization of ECO relevant cooperation frameworks on fight against drug trafficking and transnational organized crimes; **Highlighting** the importance of law-enforcement and judicial cooperation as instrumental for successful economic cooperation in the region;

**Expressing** satisfaction over the development pace of the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Member States (PEACO) and; **Emphasizing** the need for further strengthening of cooperation within the framework of PAECO aimed at addressing and overcoming major challenges, including those of the post-pandemic period.

**Have agreed to:**

1. **Reconfirm** our full commitment to implement Ashgabat Consensus for Action and ECO Vision 2025, particularly, those of their targets related to enhance intra-regional connectivity, trade, finance and investment, energy, tourism, food security, technology and innovation, protection of environment, disaster risk reduction capacities, health, education, digitalization, etc.;
2. **Welcome** the outcomes of the Brainstorming Session held at the level of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers under the Chairmanship of Uzbekistan on May 23-24, 2022 in the ECO Secretariat and; **Stress** the importance of implementation

of its recommendations on prospects of cooperation in the ECO Region; **Mandate** them to regularly meet in the context of newly established High-Level Committee (HLC);

3. **Request** the ECO Ministers of Trade to expedite the implementation of ECO Summit mandate on FTA negotiations and ECOTA, as specified in paragraph 6 of Ashgabat Consensus for Action;
4. **Welcome** the efforts by ECO Trade Development Bank to act as a trade supporting body; **Recall** the ECO Summit's request for enhanced role of the Bank in ECO projects and for expansion of membership of the Bank in response to growing demand for economic change in the ECO Region;
5. **Emphasize** the operationalization of ECO Re-Insurance Company for extending its insurance coverage to ECO projects and establishing ECO Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) as well as ECO Clearing Union with the aim of boosting and increasing trade ties amongst the Member States;
6. **Underscore** the dire need for early finalization/and or full operationalization by signatory Member States of all trade-supporting mechanisms, including ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement, ECO Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Custom Matters, Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI), Agreement on Establishment and Operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Databank, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), Agreement on the Exchange of Information in Tax Matters among ECO Member States and; **Encourage** the interested non-signatory Member States to join all such trade-supporting mechanisms;
7. **Facilitate** private sector involvement in trade activities through regulatory and institutional supports at the national and ECO levels as well as mechanisms such as ECO Chamber of Commerce; **Encourage** cooperation among ECO Member States on SME's and Entrepreneurs with the aim to foster and deepen the economic and trade relations in the region;
8. **Encourage** the accession to the WTO by non-WTO Member States and; **Request** the ECO Secretariat to render all support to this end, including through partnerships with WTO Secretariat and other relevant organizations;
9. **Encourage** our relevant authorities to continue furtherance of discussion on ECO arrangements on visa facilitation for businessmen, transit drivers and tourists;
10. **Appreciate** the Republic of Azerbaijan for accepting to host the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Finance/Economy; **Encourage** the Member States to ensure their high-level participation in the event and; **Emphasize** for expeditious formulation of relevant policy guidelines to boost cooperation among the Member States in the spheres of finance and economy;

11. **Reject** unilateral coercive measures, sanctions and economic pressures as breach of the Right to Development of the People, which hamper the stability and prosperity in our region and; **Express** support to the ECO Member States affected by such measures;
12. **Urge** for an expedited implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) to facilitate sustainable transport in ECO Corridors;
13. **Commend** the joint attempts for development of transit and transport corridors in the ECO region, including the Trans-Caspian East-West and North-South Corridors; **Request** for further policy coordination, infrastructure development, logistic improvement and financial support; **Call** for an ECO corridor management mechanism to expedite commercialization of ECO road and railway corridors;
14. **Welcome** the initiative of the Secretariat in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on discussion of operational rail capacities for ECO region, including the Trans-Caspian and ECO related Corridors particularly Almaty-Istanbul Corridor and the Establishment of the Coordination Committee composed of relevant experts of the Member States to follow to this end;
15. **Strengthen** the connecting role of the ECO for intercontinental economic, trade and investment partnerships and; **Contribute** in every possible ways and means to the full use of the transit and transport potential of Caspian ports of Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Kazakhstan to connect ECO Region to Europe, Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean;
16. **Recognize** the increasing transit potential of the Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor and North-South Corridor passing through the territories of certain ECO Member States; **Welcome** the establishment of new mechanisms of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation, such as Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan-Türkiye, Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Uzbekistan, Iran-Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan etc. aimed at enhancing regional cooperation in the field of transit corridors development;
17. **Welcome** the developments to establish transport and communications links between the Eastern Zangezur Economic Region and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in line with the Trilateral statements between the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation dated November 9/10, 2020 and January 11, 2021, and in this regard, **Welcome** the MoU between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed on March 11, 2022 to facilitate transport communications between the Eastern Zangezur Economic Region and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan through the territory of Iran;

18. **Commend** further the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Transit attended by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan in Tehran on October 9, 2022 as an important and timely initiative to address connectivity challenges of ECO land-locked countries;
19. **Acknowledge** the growing interest in ECO to cooperate in the ICT sector, including implementation of the recommendations of the 2025 Regional Strategy for Information Society Development;
20. **Welcome** the active implementation of the Digital Silk Road Project, which aims to create a new telecommunication backbone route between Europe and Asia;
21. **Emphasize** the importance of strengthening cooperation on the Digital Economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution among the ECO Member States;
22. **Task** the Secretariat to enhance the ECO cooperation with relevant international partners i.e. IsDB, ADB, UNECE, UNESCAP, UNOHRLLS, UNCTAD, FAO, IRU, OTIF, OSJD, ITU, etc. with a view to seeking their financial and technical support for the execution of ECO programs and projects in transport sector;
23. **Appreciate** the establishment of Loss and Damage Fund at UN climate change conference COP 27, for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters and commit to enhance cooperation among ECO countries for mitigation and adaptation measures against climate risks;
24. **Enhance** the regional cooperation framework for increased energy security and sustainable energy, including but not limited to low-carbon energy, renewables, energy efficiency, energy conservation, financing clean energy transition and low emission finance mechanisms; **Support** operationalization and full functioning of ECO Clean Energy Center;
25. **Encourage** the result-oriented steps for launching of the ECO Regional Electricity Market Project;
26. **Highlight** the linkage and magnitude of major global conventions on environment, as well as the necessity of strengthening cooperation amongst the ECO Member States, including but not limited to, mitigate climate change and combat land degradation and pollution;
27. **Take** into account the relevance of the global climate agenda and the transition to a green economy; **Request** the Secretariat to take the necessary measures in connection with the establishment of a High-Level Dialogue

Platform with the participation of international scientists and experts in the field of the environment;

28. **Welcome** the outcomes of the Second High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028 hosted by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in cooperation with UN as well as other international and regional partners on June 6-9, 2022 in Dushanbe;
29. **Note** that Tajikistan, as a co-host of the UN 2023 Water Conference, is trying to make it historic not only in terms of time, but also in terms of the outcomes;
30. **Welcome** the adoption of Resolution by the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly on December 14, 2022 at the initiative of the Honourable President of the Kyrgyz Republic, H.E. Mr. Sadyr Nurgojoevich Zhaparov regarding “Sustainable Mountain Development”, which determine a “Five-Year Action Plan for the Development of Mountainous Regions” and in this regard; **Call** on the ECO Member States to take active part in the implementation of this resolution that opens up wide opportunities for fruitful cooperation on the development of low carbon economy and sound technologies and access to global financial mechanisms;
31. **Express** gratitude to the Republic of Uzbekistan for holding the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the ECO Member States on July 5-6, 2022 in Tashkent; **Re-emphasize** the need for accelerating the pace of existing cooperation among the Member States to ensure regional food security and the need for implementation of ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS) as per the task given in the Ashgabat Consensus for Action;
32. **Reiterate** support for ECO Coordination Centre for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS); **Express** gratitude for the updated Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS) and two analysis reports on food security in the region (Overview of Food Security in the Countries of ECO 2019 and 2020); **Support** the Centre’s efforts for ensuring food security; **Emphasize** enhancing and strengthening the regional cooperation in the field of food security and Encourage more coordination and cooperation amongst ECO Member States in the field of agriculture;
33. **Welcome** the initiatives of ECO-RCCFS to become a self-sustainable specialized institution affiliated to ECO; **Task** the ECO Secretariat to take follow-up measures on transformation of ECO Regional Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS) to a self-sustainable institution of the ECO and as a specialized agency; **Encourage** the Member States to join the Islamic Food Security Organization with Headquarters in Astana by all Member States; **Welcome** the holding, on the initiative of Turkmenistan, of the



Regional Ministerial Conference jointly with FAO on food security and climate change on March 10, 2023;

34. **Task** the Secretariat to enhance the ECO cooperation with other regional and international organizations, including CICA, SPECA, D-8, etc. by conducting joint events in economic dimension;
35. **Support** the ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) with the mandate to improve harmonization of seed systems in the ECO Region, and ECO Veterinary Commission (ECO-VECO) with the aim of improving animal health activities, prevention of the spread of trans-boundary animal diseases, increasing livestock productivity and trade in healthy animals;
36. **Reaffirm** our resolve to support the Organization's initiatives for the sustainable development of regional tourism; **Support** the commitments aimed at making post-pandemic activities to ensure implementation of the Roadmap on Facilitating Accelerated Recovery, Safe and Sustainable Development of Tourism after COVID-19 in the ECO region approved by 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Tourism virtually hosted by the Republic of Uzbekistan on December 13, 2022;
37. **Welcome** the establishment of Tour Operator's Network in ECO Region by Forum of the ECO Heads of Tourism Associations, Unions and other Tourism Stakeholders virtually hosted by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on June 20, 2022; **Appreciate** the administration of the Mazandaran Province of Iran for their assistance and support with regard to proclamation of Sari as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2022; **Congratulate** the cities of Shakhrisabz in Uzbekistan and Erzurum in Türkiye selected as ECO Tourism Capitals for the years 2024 and 2025 respectively;
38. **Support** the continued implementation and expansion of ECO small, medium and large scale projects and programs in line with the relevant provisions of Ashgabat Consensus for Action as well as the Antalya Communiqué, including the progress monitoring towards quantitative targets and more project-oriented actions to make the ECO more efficiently functional, productive and beneficial for the collective development in the region;
39. **Call for** Member States' genuine attention to ensure all actions necessary for operationalization of the ECO Research Center (ECO-RC) in Baku; **Encourage** the remaining Member States to sign and ratify the Charter of the ECO-RC;
40. **Support** the continuation of activities aimed at transforming the ECO Economic Journal borne by the Chief Editor's office into an internationally recognized, widely disseminated and reputable publication; **Call on** the

Secretariat to accelerate the procedure for financing of the project proposal for the new concept of the journal;

41. **Encourage** cooperation between think-tanks of ECO Member States on the different platforms with the aim to foster and deepen economic and trade relations in the region and achieve common wealth and sustainable development;
42. **Express** concerns over the increasing frequency of natural and man-made disasters in the ECO Region that directly affect the environment, populations and infrastructure; **Encourage** the Member States to approve the Statute of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM) with the aim to promote regional cooperation on risk reduction of natural disasters;
43. **Support** the activities of ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (ECO-RISCAM); **Encourage** the concerned Member States to accelerate the establishment of Technical Management Boards of ECO-RISCAM and the non-signatory Member States to sign/ratify the Statute of ECO-RISCAM at the earliest;
44. **Advise** the promotion of technological synergy and joint investments among ECO Member States to enhance regional cooperation in innovation and technology transfer; **Encourage** the enhancement of cooperation with ECO Nano-Technology Network;
45. **Task** the Secretariat to take necessary action with regard to the establishment of a High-Level Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) to prepare an Action Plan for enhancing Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD);
46. **Welcome** the approval of Action Plan on Health Cooperation in ECO Region and; **Call** for its full and expeditious implementation;
47. **Acknowledge** the efforts of the ECO Secretariat to expand its outreach to relevant regional and international organizations, as well as the enhancement of ECO visibility in the international landscape;
48. **Call for** serious consideration by all Member States to join the ECO Specialized Agencies with a view to increasing the level of ownership by enhancing their cooperation based on the aspirations of ECO Member States;
49. **Reaffirm** our commitment and support to Afghanistan under the ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan; **Call on** the ECO countries to further their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people;

50. **Encourage** the increased coordination between the Secretariat of the ECO and the Secretariats of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO), ECO Supreme Audit Institutions (ECOSAI), ECO Regional Center of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO);
51. **Commend** all ECO Observers for their active participation and contributions to the ECO Meetings and events;
52. **Extend** deep gratitude to the Republic of Uzbekistan and honorable Foreign Minister of the country for exquisitely chairing the ECO in 2022 and making meaningful and result-based proposals for further improvement of the Organization during its chairmanship and for hosting the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) as well as making excellent arrangements to facilitate the visiting delegations in the beautiful city of Tashkent;
53. **Express** appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to assume ECO Chairmanship for 2023; **Extend** our best wishes for the success of their leadership in the ECO;
54. **Thank** the ECO Secretary General and his team for necessary support and preparation of required documents to ensure the successful organization of the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM).

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