



266th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Report

July 31, 2022
ECO Secretariat

Report

The 266th CPR Meeting was held on July 31, 2022 under the chairmanship of Ambassador Bakhodir Abdullayev, Republic of Uzbekistan. The meeting was attended by the Permanent Representatives/Representatives of Islamic Republic of **Afghanistan**, Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, the Republic of **Türkiye**, **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan**. The ECO Secretary General and the relevant Staff of the Secretariat also attended the Meeting. List of participants is enclosed as **Annexure-I**.

The **Chairman** while welcoming the participants formally initiated the proceedings of the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 1

Adoption of the Agenda

2. The **Council** adopted the following Agenda of the 266th CPR Meeting for deliberation:

1. Adoption of the Draft Agenda of the 266th CPR Meeting
2. Adoption of the Draft Report of the 265th CPR Meeting
3. Preparation for the 26th COM Meeting
4. Recommendations of the Brainstorming Session on reform process and prospects of cooperation in the ECO region held on May 23-24, 2022 at the ECO Secretariat
5. Follow-up of the outcomes of the 15th ECO Summit and 25th COM (*continued*)
 - Consideration of the Provisional Terms of Reference of the High-Level Expert Group establishment of which was proposed by the Republic of Uzbekistan
6. Administrative matters:
 - Deferring the effective date of application of the decision of COM as to the post of Russian Translator (P2)
 - Recommendations of the Selection Panel
7. Any other business
8. Date of the next CPR Meeting

Agenda Item No.2

Adoption of the Draft Report of the 265th CPR Meeting

3. The draft report of the 265th CPR Meeting held on June 27, 2022, circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFU/CPR/265th Meeting/2022/931 dated July 3, 2022.

4. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** recalled that, as per discussion held during 265th Meeting of CPR, the matter regarding founding and non-founding status of the Member States was decided to be deliberated during the September's session of CPR due to the unavailability of the Kazakhstan's Permanent Representative till that time. He, however, noted that the given reason for postponing discussion in the matter was not reflected in the draft report of the meeting.

5. The **Council** decided that the final Report of 265th Meeting of CPR may be circulated amongst the Member States after reflecting therein the reason for deferring discussion in the matter in light of the comments made by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Agenda Item No.3

Preparation for the 26th COM Meeting

6. The **Chair** informed that the 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) is planned to be organized and hosted by the Republic of **Uzbekistan**, adding that the exact date of the meeting, preferably in November 2022, will be determined in consultation with the host authorities. As per practice, a Preparatory Committee (**PrepCOM**) will be established for the required coordination, development of the draft agenda and deliberation on the possible outcome(s) of the next COM's Meeting, he said.

7. In addition, the **Legal Advisor** drew the attention of the Council that the draft Agenda of COM shall be prepared by CPR not later than six weeks in advance of the meeting, accordingly PrepCOM will facilitate discussions over the draft Agenda which will be put on the Agenda of CPR for final decision. Furthermore, he added that the PrepCOM also deliberate and discuss on the contents of other outcomes of COM, namely Declaration or Communiqué. In this context he underlined that the PrepCOM could also set some principles for development of the Declaration or Communiqué. He noted that, given the selection of a theme for this year in ECO calendar, the Declaration/Communiqué might also be a theme-based one.

8. The **Council** approved the establishment of the proposed **PrepCOM** to finalize the Draft Agenda/Annotated Agenda and Draft Declaration/Communiqué of the 26th COM to be developed by the Secretariat for consideration by the CPR. The **Council** also decided that **PrepCOM** and ECO Secretariat in consultation with the host authorities, as well as all Member States would ensure finalization of the exact date (s) of the 26th COM.

Agenda Item No.4

Recommendations of the Brainstorming Session on reform process and prospects of cooperation in the ECO region held on May 23-24, 2022 at the ECO Secretariat

9. The Chairman brought to the attention of the Council that the Brainstorming Session on reform process and prospects of cooperation in the ECO region at the level of relevant Deputies Foreign Minister of ECO Member States was conducted on May 23-24, 2022 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. He made a reference to the conclusion made at the 265th CPR Meeting on June 27, 2022, the revised version of the Summary Record concerning the Brainstorming Session, based on the comments and amendments proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Türkiye and Republic of Azerbaijan was circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFU/ECO Reforms/2022/908 dated June 29, 2022. He added that since the Secretariat received no feedbacks from any Member States as to the revised circulated Summary Record, the distinguished members of the Council might share their views, if any, as to the matter. It was noted that since the Brainstorming Session decided to finalize its report through silence procedure, the Secretariat may, once again, initiate a silence procedure to this end.

10. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Türkiye** inquired whether the recommendations made in the Summary Report of the Brainstorming Session will be implemented or to be adopted just. Noting the tangibility of the given recommendations, he emphasized on their implementation.

11. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** proposed that the recommendations of the Brainstorming Session may be considered only as guidelines aimed at accelerating implementation of the Organization's agenda and ensure the accomplishment of the development goals as envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025. While noting the sector-wise comprehensive provisions of ECO Vision 2025 and the method of their execution given in the Vision Document, he discouraged the adoption of any parallel text.

12. The **Legal Advisor** clarified that recommendations of the Brainstorming Session were meant to only facilitate the sectoral bodies of the Organization based on their current mandates. While adding that follow-up measures are taken based on the procedures if the issue is required to be put on the agenda of decision making bodies.

13. Taking into account the views expressed by Iran and Türkiye sides, as well as the explanation made as to the finalization of the Summary Record by the Brainstorming Session, the **Council** recommended observance of a two-week Silence Procedure for finalization of the Summary Record by the Brainstorming Session.

Agenda Item No.5

Follow-up of the outcomes of the 15th ECO Summit and 25th COM (continued)

- Consideration of the Provisional Terms of Reference of the High-Level Expert Group establishment of which was proposed by the Republic of Uzbekistan

14. The Chairman briefed the Council on the matter as follows: the Plan of Work on the proposals and initiatives of the 15th ECO Summit held in Ashgabat on November 28, 2021, finalized by the 263rd CPR Meeting held on April 11, 2022, was circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. PoW/2022/450 dated April 12, 2022.

15. During the 264th CPR Meeting in Sari, the Council advised that the scope of activities and functions that are expected to be discharged by HLEG should be defined in more comprehensive manner. Moreover, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Tehran vide Note Verbale No. ECO-7/28/2022-(A)/35 dated June 6, 2022 requested to share the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the High-Level Expert Group and other related details to proceed further in the matter. The same was circulated among the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFS/15th Summit follow up/2022/823 dated June 15, 2022.

16. The **Council** in its 265th Meeting deliberated in the matter and tasked the Secretariat to draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) in connection with the High-Level Expert Group. The Secretariat prepared the draft Provisional Terms of Reference of HLEG and circulated the same among the Member States vide Note Verbale No. LA/ToR-HLEG/2022/978 dated July 17, 2022.

17. While discussing the draft ToRs for High Level Expert Group (HLEG), the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** sought clarification regarding the Rule 34 of ECO Rules of procedure, inquiring CPR's mandate to establish a Standing Committee in this regard. Questioning the legal status of the proposed HLEG, he discouraged the constitution of any such Advisory Council that may appear, in parallel, to overcome the mandate of the existing bodies of the Organization. He emphasized that scope and topics contained in the draft ToR seem identical to some current mechanisms, including the existing mechanism for the review of ECO Vision – 2025. He, therefore, advised to contain the scope of HLEG's ToR only for the selection of year-wise themes in the Organization.

18. The **Legal Advisor** as to the questions raised explained as follows: i) the HLEG could be established as an ad hoc group, as could be inferred from Rule 34 of ECO Rules of Procedure, i.e. "34. The Council of Ministers, Council of Permanent Representatives, and Regional Planning Council may establish ad-hoc technical committees to discuss matters referred to them whenever needed.", ii) the scope of functions of HLEG was limited to the issues for which the insight of experts could be sought, such as the possible vision of ECO beyond 2025, ways and means for implementation of the theme that might be selected for specific year in ECO Calendar, and the further institutionalization of coordination among focal points at the national level for implementation of regional strategies and policies. He noted that the HLEG's meeting might be convened to address specific issues. He continued as can be observed the draft TOR is a provisional ToR which could be altered if so requires the Council. Looking thoroughly into the matter and given the fact that the HLEG and Session(s) of the Deputies of Foreign Ministers, both have been formed in the light of the same purpose of the proposal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Council agreed to merge them in one framework to set up a High Level Committee.

19. The **Council** tasked the Secretariat to redraft the Terms of Reference based on the deliberations made and the aforesaid conclusion which will be put on the agenda of next CPR.

Agenda Item No. 6

Administrative matters:

- Deferring the effective date of application of the decision of COM as to the post of Russian Translator (P2)

20. "Based on the decision of the Council of Ministers taken through silence procedure (Secretariat's Note Verbal No. COM24/2021/206 dated 25/2/2021), the post of Russian Translator at P2 level (Serial 37 of ECO Staff Strength – Annex I of the Staff Regulations) shall be abolished upon the completion of the tenure of the incumbent staff in accordance with the principle set for the distribution of posts among the Member States. The principle, which has been set out as footnote number 8 under the staff strength provides that "As principle observed for the distribution of posts, those Member States covering the minimum share of contribution (i.e. 1% under the scale of assessments) are entitled to be offered only one post in D1 grade. Upon completion of tenure of incumbent staff, this principle will be applied and the post of Russian Translator will be abolished." Nevertheless, under the current situation of the translation section, the abolition of this post will affect the translation services of the Secretariat.

21. In view of the above, in order to address the current situation in the translation section of the Secretariat, without prejudice to the substance of the aforesaid decision of COM, the Council was requested by the Secretariat to recommend to COM to defer the effective date of the application of the aforesaid principle for a period of six months or till December 31, 2022, along with the extension of service tenure of the incumbent staff.

22. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of **Türkiye** pointed out that any matters regarding appointment as well as extension of staff's services are discussed by the Selection Panel before their referral to the CPR.

23. The Secretariat clarified that Selection Panel is mandated to consider and ascertain its recommendations with regard to the issues of appointments/re-appointments, renewal of tenures and extension of service of staff based on the communications received from relevant Member States in any such cases. Regarding this particular matter, the post of Russian Translator (Category-II, P2) was already abolished on 15 July 2022, as per COM's decision, upon completion of tenure by the incumbent staff. However, due to the exigencies of work in the translation unit, the Secretariat needed the retention of services of the current staff through the postponement of the said decision of the COM for a six-month time or till December 31, 2022. Accordingly, the issue could not be put on the agenda of the selection panel prior to decision of COM regarding the postponement of the effective date of the principle, with retroactive effect as of 15 July 2022. As a result, the whole issue was put before CPR for making the required recommendation to COM.

24. Having gone through the case and given the merit of the proposal, the **Council** recommended the adoption of a two-week silence procedure to secure approval of the COM's to defer their decision on abolishment of the said post of Russian Translator (Category-II, P2) until 31 December 2022. The **Council** also decided that upon approval

of COM on deferring the effective date of the application of the aforesaid principle the tenure of Ms. Muminova Dilbar will be extended with retroactive effect as of the date of completion of her tenure until the new effective date of application of the aforesaid principle.

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

25. The Selection Panel met on July 27, 2022. The Meeting was coordinated by Amb. Dr. Huseyin Avni Bicakli, ECO Deputy Secretary General (Admin, EME, IR & IT) and chaired by Mr. Umit Bobayev, the Representative of the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkiye and Republic of Uzbekistan attended the meeting in-person. However, the Representatives of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan participated in the meeting virtually.

26. The Selection Panel made the following recommendation(s) for consideration by the CPR:

Director for Human Resources & Sustainable Development (Category-I, D2)

27. Mr. Husnu Tekin (**Turkish National**) may be appointed for a full term of three (03) years to be effective from the date of joining at the Secretariat.

Chef de Cabinet (Category-I, D1)

28. Mr. Osman Selcuk Gundogdu (**Turkish National**) may be appointed for a full term of three (03) years to be effective from the date of joining at the Secretariat.

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

Agenda Item No. 7

Any other business

30. The **ECO Secretary General** recalled that the issue of rotation of ECO Chairpersonship for 2023, based on the alphabetical order, was brought to the attention of the Council in its last session held on June 27, 2022, adding that under the current scenario the CPR considered the next Chairmanship of the Organization to be taken over by the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this regard, the ECO Secretariat communicated with the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Tehran vide Note Verbale No. LA/ECO Chairmanship/2022 923 dated June 30, 2022, looking for the completion of their internal procedures as regards assumption of ECO Chairmanship for 2023.

31. The **ECO Secretary General** informed that the esteemed Embassy of Republic of Azerbaijan vide Note Verbale No. 4-419-22 dated July 4, 2022 conveyed the completion of necessary procedures and concurrence of their Government for the assumption of ECO Chairmanship by Azerbaijan in 2023. At the same time, the Government of Azerbaijan proposed to proclaim 2023 as the ECO Year of "**Green Transition and Interconnectivity**", he mentioned. The Concept Note of the Azerbaijan's Chairmanship for 2023 will be received in due course.

32. In addition, the Secretary General acknowledged the services of Dr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi who completed his term of service at the Secretariat as Deputy Secretary General for T&C, HRSD on July 29, 2022.

33. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of **Iran** expressed concerns over irregular or non-participation of some ECO Permanent Representatives in the regular Meetings of CPR. While appreciating and acknowledging the contribution of Deputies Permanent Representatives, he encouraged the Member States to ensure their participation in the Meetings of CPR at the level of Permanent Representatives.

34. The **Deputy Secretary General (T&I/A&I)** expressed his gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan for hosting the 7th ECO Ministerial Meeting preceded by the 6th High Level Experts Meeting on Agriculture on July 5-6, 2022 and organizing this important event, succeeded to make outstanding decisions to ensure smooth implementation of ECO's agenda on agricultural cooperation in the region. He stated that this meeting was a new momentum on a very timely situation, which the global interruption of supply chain, rising food prices and cost of major primary commodities caused by the outbreak of the pandemic, have been affected the entire food system and food security in the region. Indeed, in the current situation of stagnancy and lack of adequate involvement of countries for cooperation on agricultural issues, the convening of this prominent event provided a context for Member States to work together to strengthen cooperation during post-pandemic and secure for sustainable development of the region's agriculture sector. He informed that the Meeting was attended by the delegations from all Member States except Afghanistan. Honourable Ministers from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye and the host country Uzbekistan represented their respective countries at the meeting. While Turkmenistan, Pakistan and Iran attended the meeting with delegations headed by Deputy Minister, Director General and Ambassador, respectively. The representatives of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ECO Regional Coordination Centre for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS), ECO Seed Association (ECOSA), Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), as well as the delegation of ECO Secretariat headed by ECO Secretary General also participated in the meeting. The Turkish Cypriot State, as the observer of ECO, participated the meeting with a delegation headed by Minister of Agriculture. He further added that the ECO Secretary General emphasized on ECO Vision 2025 during the Ministerial Meeting and declared the Organization is deeply dedicated and determined for the establishment of a robust institutional basis for a long-term cooperation with Member Countries, International Organizations and Financial Institutions to expedite the execution of regional/national projects for securing sustainable agricultural development in the region. On the sidelines of the meeting, ECO Secretary General met with Prime-Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Abdulla Aripov, Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Sardor Umurzakov and Acting Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Vladimir Norov. He also held bilateral meetings with Ministers from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan within the margins of the Meeting. The Ministerial Meeting also mulled over certain aspects of food security, intensification of agricultural production and sustainable methods for agricultural development. Food security as well as ensuring food for all was considered as a major

challenge for regional and global communities. In this regards, the Meeting considered and adopted the Tashkent Declaration on cooperation in agriculture and food security in the region. Some of highlights of significant references of Tashkent Declaration are as follows:

- Reiterating on the relevant previous ECO documents including Treaty of İzmir, ECO Vision 2025 and Declarations adopted by the previous ECO Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture in Islamabad (2002), Antalya (2004), Tehran (2007), Baku (2008), Antalya (2012) and Baku (2019);
- Recalling ECO Vision 2025 and the Ashgabat Consensus for Action in 15th ECO Summit (November 28, 2021) on noting the challenges in ensuring food security and underlining the importance of enhanced regional cooperation in the field of agriculture;
- Expressing concern for food insecurity and its negative consequences, malfunctioning of agri-food systems, global interruption of supply chain and rising food prices and costs of major primary commodities arising from recent pandemic and global political escalations;
- Recognizing the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic on food security and importance of urgency of increasing and enhancing cooperation in order to eliminate these effects in post-pandemic era;
- Underlining the need for reduction of food loss and waste, which can improve food security and nutrition and will leads to avoidance of excessive usage of water and land resources, improving income of farmers, agri-food businesses and the household economy;
- Highlighting the important role of harmonized high quality seed trade within the ECO region to increase production efficiency which leads to increase in economic and social welfare;
- Appreciating the efforts made ECO-RCCFS and FAO for preparing the new ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS); endorse the new RPFS for the region and request all Member States to support RPFS for its implementation as mentioned in the Ashgabat Consensus for Action in 15th ECO Summit (November 28, 2021);
- Welcome transformation of ECO-RCCFS to a self-sustainable institution of ECO as a specialized agency and while calling Member States to support this transformation process, request Secretariat to follow necessary legal procedure to this end in accordance with relevant ECO documents;
- Appreciating the activities made by the ECO Seed Association (ECOSA), ECO Center of Excellence for Efficient Water Utilization for Agriculture (ECO-CEEWUA) and ECO Veterinary Commission (ECO-VECO), and encouraging the subject bodies to enhancement of their activities;

35. The **ECO Deputy Secretary General** (Tourism, Project Management, Judicial and Parliamentary Coordination and EAPA) briefed the Council that on the invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan, the ECO Secretary General participated in the International Conference on Afghanistan hosted by Tashkent on July 26, 2022 to explore, discuss and figure out the possible ways and means for addressing the current economic and security challenges of Afghanistan. He further added that the international event held under the title “Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development” was attended by representatives from different countries, including ECO Member States, USA, Russia, China, India, some European and Middle Eastern nations, relevant UN agencies, EU, regional and international organizations, as well as the members of diplomatic community based in Uzbekistan. Afghanistan delegation was represented by country’s Acting Foreign Minister, Mr. Amir Khan Muttaqi. He added that the ECO Secretary General felicitated Uzbekistan for organizing and hosting the gathering of global magnitude, hoping that this significant interaction would discover some feasible remedies to address Afghanistan’s crucial issues of security and economic development. He also appreciated the UN Security Council for deciding to extend the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (**UNAMA**) for the accomplishment of their envisioned targets, particularly the coordination for provision of humanitarian assistance and ensuring essential human needs and requirements, bridging contact between Afghan stakeholders and the international community, as well as continuing efforts to promote good governance and rule of law in Afghanistan. He mentioned that the ECO considers the restoration of peace, security and stability fundamentally necessary for maintaining the process of reconstruction, development and socioeconomic progress in Afghanistan. He further briefed that the programme of the conference also included presentations on two infrastructural projects, including “Termez – Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar” that will cover estimated 760 km of length and cost of around US\$ 4.6 billion, as well as the construction of an electricity power transmission line from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan, having a span of 240 km. The prime goal of the Tashkent International Conference was to blend the global efforts targeted at countering the ongoing humanitarian and economic crisis in Afghanistan, ensuring effective and emergency assistance to the people of the country. The event was further aimed at establishing an effective dialogue of the international community and developing coherence and synergies to oppose any postures that seem to sabotage the overall process of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Agenda Item No. 8

Date of the next CPR Meeting

36. The Council may decide to convene its next (267th) Meeting on **August 29, 2022** at the ECO Secretariat.

Annex-I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Abdul Ghani Farahi, Second Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

- Mr. Khayyam Dashdamirov, Counsellor
- Mr. Subhi Ismayizada, Third Secretary

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, **Permanent Representative**
- Mr. Behzad Azarsa, Senior Expert, Multilateral & International Economic Cooperation
- Ms. Shokoufeh Shadi, ECO Expert, Multilateral & International Economic Cooperation

The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- Mr. Gamzat Khairov, Counsellor

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Ms. Khirat, First Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- H.E. Mr. Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador

The Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye:

- Mr. Mehmet Zahit Uzun, Counselor

The Embassy of Turkmenistan:

- Mr. Kemal Atayev, Third Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- H.E. Mr. Bakhodir Abdullaev, **Ambassador**
- Mr. Umid Babaev, Third Secretary

The ECO Secretariat:

- H.E. Amb. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General
- Amb. Huseyin Avni Bicakli, Deputy Secretary General
- Amb. Jandos Asanov, Deputy Secretary General
- Amb. Mohsen Esperi, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Mahmoud Khoubkar, Legal Adviser