

2015

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ECO CHRONICLE

ECO Region in 2015 and Beyond





Happy Norouz
NOVRUZ BAYRAMINIZ MÜBARƏK!
Nooruz mairamynyz menen
Nevruz Bayramınız Kutlu Olsun

نوروز مبارک
Наурыз мейрамы қутты болсын!
Navruzaton piruz bod!
С ПРАЗДНИКОМ НАВРУЗ (НАУРЫЗ)!



ECO Region in 2015 and Beyond

The year 2015 is an important year for the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), as is the case for the international community. International community is now revisiting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and the United Nations development agenda for post 2015 is emerging. The outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference also triggered work on a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) which will be ultimately endorsed by United Nations in September 2015. The post-2015 global development agenda, with sustainable development at its centre, is supposed to be solid and ambitious.



Within ECO, we are also considering 2015 as a turning point for our Organization. In line with international community, ECO is developing its Vision for the post 2015. The ECO Member States and my colleagues in the Secretariat are engaged in the process of drafting the new Vision document to be endorsed by the next ECO Summit. In parallel, the 2 years old ECO reform process is expected to yield its results in 2015, bringing more regulatory, institutional and operational strengths to the Organization.

The success of our collective endeavors for an enhanced organization in 2015 and beyond relies first and foremost on the support we continue to receive from our Member States. ECO's unique membership constitutes a solid basis for its conducive role in the Region and beyond. Bordering Europe, China, Russia and Persian Gulf, and encompassing countries from Caucasus and Central Asia, South and West Asia signify the ECO's huge untapped potential for national, regional and global impacts.

ECO can play an important role in assisting implementation of international community agenda in this part of the world. This relies on the extent to which international community, particularly UN system, may wish to delegate its regional mandate to ECO. Emerging SDGs; the global drug policy expected as of 2016 UN special Session on global drug problem; the new global framework for action on disaster risk reduction expected from the third UN Conference in Sendai; the new global climate regime to be agreed in the COP21 in Paris in 2015 are among those issues in which the ECO involvement may be seriously considered.

ECO in its grasp of the need for enhanced, but focused, activities is guided by both the needs and requirements of its members and peoples as well as the trending issues at the global level. Let's remain confident and hopeful that 2015 and beyond will bring more economic boost to the ECO Region and more prosperity for its people.

S. Aleskerov
Dr. Shamil Aleskerov
Secretary General



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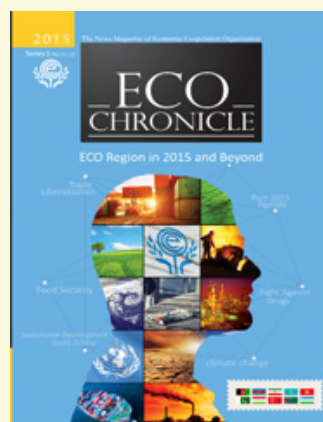
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Major Regional Railway Route Opened

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A long-awaited inter and intra-regional connectivity aspiration of "bridging North-South Corridor missing link" became a reality with the inauguration of railway of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran by the Presidents of these ECO Enroute Member States on 3rd December 2014 in Inche Boroon/Akyayla border. A number of ministers, high dignitaries, ambassadors and high level representatives of the ECO countries and international and regional organizations also attended the Event. A high level delegation from the ECO Secretariat headed by Secretary General Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov also participated in this important regional event.

The inauguration was celebrated in two separate ceremonies across the Iran-Turkmenistan border. The first ceremony was organized by Turkmenistan where President Berdimuhamedov hosted President Rouhani of Iran and President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan. The three Presidents formally inaugurated the rail connection and addressed a high



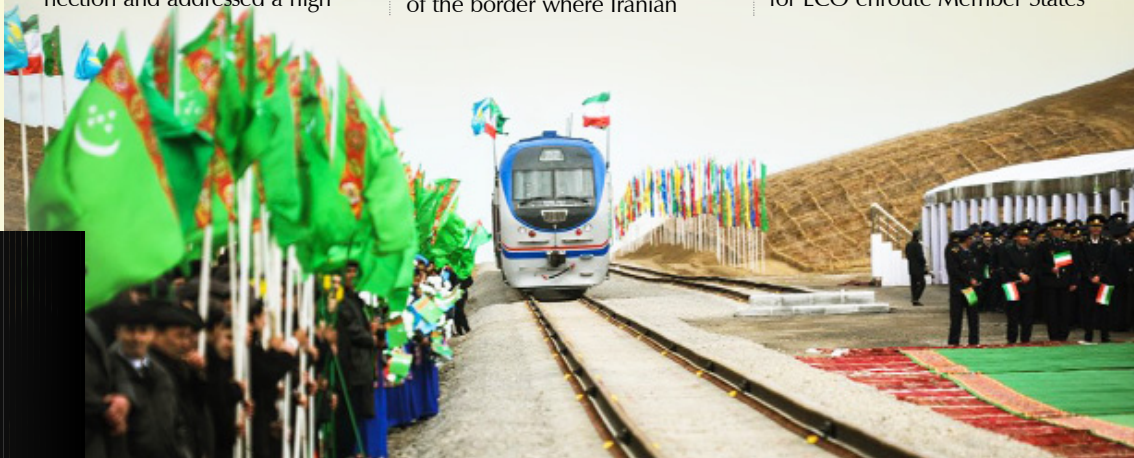
level audience. In their formal addresses, the Presidents highlighted the importance of the Corridor in providing access to global markets through Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, as well as through China and Europe. The importance of the corridor in linking ECO Region to the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was also highlighted. President of Turkmenistan also hosted a formal lunch in the honor of the Presidents of Iran and Kazakhstan.

The three Presidents, the accompanying delegations and ECO Secretary General then crossed the border on a special train through the newly opened link and entered the Iranian side of the border where Iranian

President hosted the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. At the end of the second ceremony, the three Presidents attended a joint Press conference.

The total length of this new railway is around 926 km curtailing the distance of Central Asia with Persian Gulf and Europe, leading to considerable reduction of transportation costs. The railway completed the

North South Corridor through Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran all the way to Bandar Abbas and Persian Gulf. The Project is considered as a major step towards seamless transit transport connectivity, enhanced transit trade, economic growth and better access for all countries specifically the ECO land-locked developing countries providing them with the opportunity to export their goods through economical, efficient and environmentally friendly mode of transport. The Railway route is a promising ground for promoting the level of all-out transit and trade of the ECO region with numerous positive Socio-Economic implications for ECO enroute Member States



and beyond. ECO is celebrating the Event as realization of one important component of its network of planned or under construction corridors intended to provide and facilitate full access and connectivity to envisioned North-South and East West corridors which contributes substantially to the Euro Asian Transport Links (EATL).

Given the need for prerequisite coordination of various technical and operational aspects of the Project, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) had been mandated to serve as a coordinating mechanism and

has done so through organizing three consecutive technical meetings in 2010, 2011 and 2014 in Astana, Ashgabat and Tehran respectively in order to facilitate the implementation of this Project. These meetings were convened in an atmosphere of great understanding, goodwill and cooperation as a result of which the longed-for North-South Corridor reached fruition with promising prospects for transit trade and economic prosperity. The ECO will continue to coordinate and facilitate this project to become an operational corridor.



Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan & Iran

Discussed Road Transport Corridor

ECO CHRONICLE The 3rd Meeting of the High level Working Group (HLWG) of Kyrgyz Republic-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Transport Corridor was held on 27th October 2014 in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

Delegations from enroute Member States, the ECO Secretariat and IRU attended the Meeting. The Meeting discussed at length the measures for establishment of the Corridor and activities mentioned in the related Action Plan, including transit system and permit, customs pro-

cedures, safety and security, insurance, visa, field study, test run, etc. The Meeting agreed that TIR system would be used as the transit system for the Corridor and recommended that the free transit system should be applied along this Corridor to enable launching its smooth functioning.

The Meeting also unanimously adopted the Terms of Reference (TOR), prepared by the ECO Secretariat, for field study along this Corridor.

The next HLWG will be held in Republic of Tajikistan in October/November 2015.



ECO Secretary General attended

Baku International Transport Conference



ECO CHRONICLE

At the invitation of the Government of Republic of Azerbaijan, the ECO Secretary General Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov attended the International Conference on "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway link-new Opportunities in the Development of the Historic Silk Road" held on 15-16 October 2014 in Baku. The Conference was attended by representatives of 22 countries from Europe and Asia, including 8 ECO Member States, 9 international organizations as well as ADB, EBRD, EIB, IDB and World Bank. In his address to the Conference, the ECO Secretary General presented a brief report on the transport activities of ECO. At the Conference, references to the ECO transport projects were also made in the statements of the "Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail" as well as the participating countries. At the end of the Conference, a Joint Declaration was adopted.

ECO Secretariat hosted Regional Conference on Road Transit



ECO CHRONICLE The 3rd ECO/IRU Regional Conference on Facilitation of Transit by Road and TIR Convention was held on 26th October 2014 in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Conference was attended by representatives from Ministries of Transport and Customs Administrations of seven Member States as well as the representatives of IRU, UNECE and the ECO Secretariat.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, the ECO Secretary General. In his statement, Secretary General emphasized on the capacity building programmes and other activities being designed in the interest of facilitation of smooth and efficient transportation among the ECO Member States. Mr. Artur Bouten, UNECE representative, and Mr. Marek Retelski, IRU Head of TIR Department also delivered statements at the opening session.

The ECO Secretariat also presented a briefing on the status of implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement and TIR Convention in the Region and the recent developments in operationalization of ECO Road Corridors as well as the latest activities and studies with regard to facilitation of transit trade in the Region.

UNECE representative briefed the Conference on the status of computerization of the TIR system and e-TIR pilot project as well as its future developments. IRU representatives also presented the status of the TIR operation in the World and the ECO Region and briefed the participants on new products to be used as transport facilitation tools. The Conference concluded its work with concrete recommendations for the development and facilitation of road transit in the Region.



6th Meeting of ECO Insurance Committee in Istanbul

ECO CHRONICLE The 6th Meeting of Insurance Committee of the TTCC and the 5th Meeting of ECO-CB were held from 1st to 2nd September 2014 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey. The Meetings, preceded by a training workshop on the ECO White Card, attended by delegations from six ECO Member States; namely, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, and Republic of Turkey, as well as the delegation of the ECO Secretariat, headed by ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Altaf Asghar.

The Meeting considered and discussed at length the implementation of remaining activities of the Action Plan on the White Card and the arrangements for its enforcement in the Region, particularly the issues regarding guarantee mechanism, bilateral agreement and other essential requirements.

The latest developments in the application of the White Card along the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Corridors were also discussed in separate working groups established by the Meeting.

ECO
CHRONICLE

Three National Capacity Building Workshops on TIR Convention were organized by the ECO Secretariat in collaboration with the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce at Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad on 18, 20 and 22 August 2014 respectively. The Workshops were also attended by representatives of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI), Afghanistan Customs and USAID (Trade Project) based in Kabul.

The Workshop at Karachi was attended by a large number of Customs officials, traders, freight forwarders, and transporters from Sindh and Baluchistan Provinces. The second Workshop in Lahore enabled the stakeholders from the major commercial centers of Punjab to learn about the features of TIR Convention and prepare for its implementation. The third

ECO - IRU Capacity Building Workshops in Pakistan

Workshop at Islamabad was attended by the Government officials and the stakeholders based in the Federal capital. Addressing the inauguration ceremony at Islamabad, the Additional Secretary of Ministry of Commerce stated that

the Government of Pakistan is working to improve its regional connectivity to facilitate trade with the regional countries, especially ECO countries, many of which are landlocked. In the Workshops, the representatives of ECO, IRU and USAID (Trade Project) explained various features of TIR Carnet System and the requirements for implementation of TIR Convention. The representatives of ACCI and Afghan Customs also apprised the participants of their experience of implementing TIR Convention in Afghanistan. Based on the interactive deliberations during the Workshops, distinct recommendations were formulated to enable the stakeholders in Pakistan to make necessary preparations for implementation of TIR Convention when Pakistan accedes to it. The Workshops have been described as instrumental to an imminent accession of Pakistan to the TIR Convention.



2nd ECO Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity

ECO
CHRONICLE

The 2nd ECO Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity was held on 4-5 November 2014 in Antalya, Republic of Turkey. The delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey (host), as well as the ECO Secretariat and the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO IEST) attended the Meeting. The representative of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also participated in the discussions through Video-conference. The Meeting

was instrumental on reviewing and deliberating on national biodiversity policies, sharing best practices and reaching consensus on number of important issues, including revised Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region for 2016-2020, the need for a Trust Fund for supporting high priority projects on environment and biodiversity as well as the establishment of a clearing house mechanism on biodiversity. Under the relevant agenda item, the representatives of the ECO IEST delivered detailed presentations on the projects with regional impact. Mr. Ersin Esen, the representative of United

Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), also delivered a comprehensive

presentation (through Skype) on building development and finance planning frameworks for effective management of ecosystem services.

Dynamic brainstorming sessions provided the participants with excellent food-for-thought to address the collective coherence and synergy in the field of biodiversity and nature conservation.

Republic of Turkey also announced its readiness to host the 3rd Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity back to back with the 2nd Pre-COP Meeting on Biodiversity in first quarter of 2016 in Antalya, Turkey.

Iran hosted the OTIF/UIC/ECO Conference on COTIF



The OTIF/
UIC/ECO

Conference on COTIF was organized jointly by the Railways of Islamic Republic of Iran, the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), the International Union of Railway (UIC), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Tehran from 11 to 12 November 2014. The Conference was attended by representatives from the ECO Member States, namely, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Turkey as well as representatives from Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Representatives of the OTIF, UIC and the ECO Secretariats also attended the Conference.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Dr. Mohsen Pour Seyed Aghaei, Vice Minister and President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways. He welcomed all the delegates to Tehran and emphasized on the importance of railway transport and harmonization of the legal framework for smooth movement of train in the international rail transport with COTIF being an important instrument in this regard.

Mr. Francois Davenne, OTIF Secretary General also addressed the Conference and thanked the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and particularly the Iranian Railways for organizing the Event in cooperation with OTIF and the ECO Secretariat. He highlighted the close ties between OTIF and the ECO Secretariat.

In his short opening remarks, Mr. Jean Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of UIC expressed his pleasure for participation in this important Conference. He further emphasized on the importance of organizing such an event in the Region for promoting and facilitating the transit transport by rail.

In his statement, Mr. Mohsen Esperi, Director of Transport & Communications of the ECO Secretariat welcomed the delegates and mentioned that the cooperation between ECO, UIC and OTIF has been strengthened with the operationalization of the ECO ITI Container train where COTIF/CIM rules were decided to be applied. The Conference came up with a number of concrete conclusions and recommendations for further cooperation to promote, improve and facilitate the international traffic by rail.



ECO Regional Electricity Market



The Trilateral
Meeting between

the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Turkey and the ECO Secretariat on the establishment of "ECO Regional Electricity Market" was held on 25-26 September 2014 in Ankara, Turkey.

The Meeting, hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Republic of Turkey and Turkish Electricity Transmission Company (TEIAS), was an important follow-up exercise to implement the key action points decided by the 1st ECO Expert Group Meeting on Electricity Market (November 2013, Tehran). While discussing the optimal future course of actions, the participating delegations reviewed the features of electricity markets of Turkey and Iran, as well as their technical capacities, policy frameworks, tariff policy, overseas relations and potential for further improvements. The Meeting agreed to continue regular consultations at experts/managers levels within the existing framework, as well as through new platforms for dialogue to be introduced by the ECO Secretariat. It was also decided that two consecutive workshops on sharing the best practices in electricity market will be held in January and March 2015 in Tehran.



The 5th
ECO

Meeting on Environment was held on 15-17 December 2014 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey.

The Meeting was attended by the Ministers/Head of Delegations of ECO Member States as well as high level officials from regional and international organizations. A Secretariat delegation headed by ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov also attended the Meeting.

ECO Secretary General in his address to the Ministerial Meeting provided an overview of ECO's environmental profile as well as an update on the expansion of outreach of the Organization through new partnerships with international and regional organizations, including those within the UN system.

The outgoing Chairperson of the 4th ministerial meeting, Iranian Vice-President Dr. Masoumeh Ebtekar and the Chairman of the 5th ministerial meeting, Minister Idris Gulluce from Turkey also addressed the inaugural ceremony of the Meeting.

The Meeting, the second ECO ministerial meeting on environment in six months, was the first regional environmental ministerial gathering after the recent global climate change negotiations in Lima, Peru.

The ECO Ministers while addressing different aspects of enhancing environmental profile within the ECO Region, decided to shift the

ECO Ministers Adopted Istanbul Declaration on Climate Change & Green Economy



focus of regional cooperation to environmental challenges, particularly the climate change and its negative impacts on sectoral economic activities.

They agreed to designate environment and the impacts of climate change as the cross sectoral priority of the Organization. They also adopted the "Istanbul Declaration on Climate Change and Green Economy".

The Ministers also requested the ECO Secretariat to prepare in cooperation with

ECO-IEST and UNEP, a State of Environment (SoE) report for ECO Region. They also supported the establishment of ECO Environmental Fund. They gave mandate to the ECO Secretariat, in collaboration with the ECO-IEST, UNEP and other relevant agencies, to develop a common regional approach to the green economy in the context of outcome document of Rio+20.

Ministers also mandated the ECO Secretariat to seek observer status in environmental related organizations and conventions, including UNEP. They decided that ECO actively participate in the COP 21 of UNFCCC in

Paris in 2015, including through organizing coordinating meetings and activities on the sidelines of the Conference as well as its preparatory meetings. During the Ministerial Meeting, ECO Green Industry Awards were also awarded to three companies from within the Region.



ECO Secretariat attended the

ECO Science Foundation Conference in Lahore



The ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Hayri Maraslioglu participated in the International Conference on "Emerging Trends in Life Sciences for Sustainable Development", held in Lahore, Pakistan on October 9-11 2014.

The Event was organized by the ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) in collaboration with the Forman Christian College (Chartered University) co-sponsored by the European Commission, COM-STECH, Pakistan Academy of Sciences and Crop Life- Pakistan.

The main objective of the Conference was to facilitate experience sharing and promote collaboration among life scientists from ECO member countries as well as networking within the ECO Region and with the international scientific community.

During the opening session of the Conference, the ECO Deputy Secretary General delivered a statement highlighting the role of life sciences in supporting technological innovation and economic growth of the regional countries. He also expressed ECO's support for similar initiatives in the future as well.

The participants of the Conference included scientists and experts from 15 countries, Dr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel, President of ECO Institute of Environmental Sciences (ECO-IEST), Prof. Dr. Selahattin Turan President ECO Educational Institute, Dr. Marie-Francoise SARON, Bio-safety expert from European

Union.

On 10 October 2014, the ECO Deputy Secretary General participated in an exclusive meeting of the representatives of the ECO Member States. Presidents of ECO Educational Institute and ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) and scientists from the EU also attended the meeting. The Meeting discussed the issues pertaining to promotion of regional cooperation in the areas of biosafety and biosecurity and the future actions in this regard. The



meeting decided to utilize the regional training center in Dushanbe, Tajikistan for training of participants from the ECO countries in the relevant areas. It was also decided to organize a training workshop on "science diplomacy for bio-risk mitigation" and to support the Iranian specialists in this field. It was agreed that ECOSF, ECO-IEST and ECO Educational Institute would work together on capacity building and awareness raising on various issues of interest in the future.

During the three day Conference, over seventy scientific presentations were made focusing on food safety and security, sustainable development, biosafety and biosecurity, health care and nutrition.

As a result of the deliberations, it was agreed to form different networks of scientists to facilitate collaboration among the various countries. The Conference also focused on human genetic disorders and recommended to initiate a collaborative project on autism with institutes in Japan.

ECO Events on Renewable Energy Sources in Kabul



The 3rd Meeting of ECO Experts Group on Renewable Energy Sources (RES) was held on 15-16

September 2014

in Kabul, Afghanistan. The Meeting was attended by delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (host), Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Republic of Turkey, as well as the ECO Secretariat delegation. The representatives of the GIZ-ESRA, the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the KFW, MERCY Corps, and BORDA Afghanistan also participated in the Meeting.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Mr. Ghulam Farooq Qazizada, Deputy Minister of Energy & Water and Mr. Mohammad Tariq Ismati, Deputy Minister of Rural Rehabilitation & Development of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Speakers urged the ECO Member



States for collective efforts and regular exchange of experiences in the field of energy in order to alleviate the energy poverty in the ECO Region. They also emphasized that development of renewable energy sources is an important prerequisite for overall economic development of the Region.

The Meeting agreed to enhance cooperation among the ECO Member States in the field of Renewable Energy Sources (RES), as well as to raise awareness and enhance involvement of key stakeholders to overcome the challenges/obstacles faced by the ECO Member States. It was also agreed that the regular training courses, workshops and meetings may also be held among the ECO Member States. The Meeting also agreed on the need for concrete project pro-

posals on RES and energy efficiency as well as for the joint events with the IRENA and SAARC with a view to better regional and

inter-regional synergy. The Expert Group Meeting was followed by the 5th ECO Workshop on Renewable Energy Sources (RES) on 17 September 2014, attended by the representatives of the above mentioned delegations. The purpose of the Workshop was raising awareness among the relevant stakeholders and policy makers from ECO Member States on the importance of Renewable Sources of Energy for ensuring energy efficiency and conservation and overall sustainable development, as well as sharing best practices in development and deployment of technologies, adapting innovative policies and programmes.

The Workshop was instrumental in reviewing and deliberating on national energy policies and sharing best practices.

ECO Workshop on legal dimensions of Regional

Cooperation against Drug Trafficking



Following meetings

between the international legal consultant and the national focal points of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in Kabul, Tehran and Islamabad, an orientation workshop was held in September 2014 in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.



The main objective of the Workshop was to allow the focal points from counter-narcotics agencies of these three countries to become better acquainted with the international legal standards and their implementation into national laws. The Workshop also provided participants with the

Closing Conference of EU-ECO Project on Drugs

ECO
CHRONICLE

The Closing Conference of the EU-funded Project on "Fight against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan" was held on 17-18 November 2014 at the Secretariat of the

Economic Cooperation Organization in Tehran. The Event was attended by Ambassadors and high level officials from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey, as well as high level representatives from Project's partners, namely, GIZ (German International Development Agency), Interpol, UNODC, BKA (Criminal Police of Germany) and ECO Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (ECO-DOCCU).

Inaugural statements were delivered by Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov, ECO Secretary General, and German Ambassador Michael von Ungern-Sternberg. ECO Secretary General welcomed the participating countries and organizations and appreciated their support in the course of implementation of this important Project.



Ambassador Aleskerov evaluated the outcomes of the Project as benefiting all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels. He further requested the international community to ensure sustainability of the Project's outcomes and emphasized that the nature of the drugs-related offences and the damages they inflict on the societies and economies of the Region requires continued actions. This is a responsibility shared jointly by the international community and the Region, a common but differentiated responsibility.

Ambassador Michael von Ungern-Sternberg expressed his appreciation to the ECO and its partners for the implementation of the Project. He further gave a brief history of unification process in EU in the aftermath of the Second

World War and emphasized that the ECO Region also enjoys common interests among its Member States to follow a successful integration process. While acknowledging the tangible outcomes of the Project, German Ambassador emphasized the importance of the way ahead

and the need for effective follow-up actions. The Conference was organized in five technical panels. In the first day, participants took stock of the achievements of the Project.

Leaders of four components of the Project, namely, ECO-DOCCU, UNODC, BKA and Interpol presented reports on their activities during the Project' period. Representatives of the Member states as well as the Project's coordinator, GIZ, also shared their views on the implementation of the Project. In the second day, the Conference entered into thorough discussions on the challenges of regional cooperation on combating drugs and its related crimes and the ways and means to ensure the sustainability of the Project's outcomes.

opportunity to have bilateral dialogue and exchange of views.

In his opening remarks, the ECO Deputy Secretary General presented a brief introduction on the ECO performance in different sectors, and the role of the Organization in promotion of economic cooperation among its Member States. He also referred to the ECO mandate in the area of drug and organized crime and gave an overview on

ECO activities in this regard.

In its different sessions, the Workshop addressed topics such as history of international responses to drugs; international law and domestic law of counter-narcotics; and the elements of crime, including production, trade and consumption where participants and the international consultant, Professor Ibrahim Afsah from Copenhagen University, got involved in interactive discus-

sions from legal perspective.

National Focal Points from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran could attend the Workshop. Participants from ECO Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (ECO-DOCCU) and GIZ also attended the Workshop. The Workshop was financed by the EU-funded project on "Fight against Trafficking to/from Afghanistan".

ECO Secretary General attended the Baku International Industry Conference

ECO CHRONICLE At the invitation of the Government of Republic of Azerbaijan, ECO Secretary General Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov attended the International Industry Conference held on 26-27 November 2014 in Baku. The Conference was organized jointly by the Ministry of Economy and Industry of Azerbaijan and UNIDO and attended by ministers and high-level participants from a number of countries as well as international organizations, financial institutions and business community.

The Conference addressed issues such as modern industrial policy and development; experiences on the industrial parks and clusters; and investment opportunities in Republic of Azerbaijan

The Conference provided a very useful platform for discussing and exchanging experiences on the modern policies and challenges related to industrial development. At the end of the Conference, industry awards were given to the successful industrial companies. On the sidelines of the Conference, a Framework Programme on Cooperation between the Government of Republic of Azerbaijan and UNIDO was signed.

ECO/UNODC

Regional Workshop on Combating Cybercrime



ECO CHRONICLE The "Second Regional Workshop on International and Regional Cooperation to Combat Cybercrime" was held on 9-10 September 2014 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Workshop was co-organized by ECO Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Interpol of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Event was attended by the representatives from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Republic of Uzbekistan, ECO Secretariat and UNODC. Representatives from Embassies of non-ECO countries; namely, Russia and Japan also attended the opening session of the Workshop.

The main objectives of the Workshop, organized under "UNODC Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries", were to create awareness about cybercrime as a growing worldwide threat; to address the dire need for collaboration with international partners to effectively deal with this issue; and to strengthen the capacities of the participating countries' law enforcement agencies dealing with cybercrime in the ECO Region.

In a series of training sessions con-

ducted by trainers from Iranian Police, UNODC, Poland and Austria, the participants became more familiar with issues, among others, ways and means to combat the use of new technologies for illicit financial flows; investigation of money laundering using virtual currency; international/regional cooperation in cases involving digital evidence; exchange of information between banks and law enforcement agencies; and cybercrime and phishing. The two-day event concluded its work with some recommendations for future actions, including request for UNODC support for information exchange; organization of the conferences, workshops and technical training courses; research and studies on preventing and combating all forms of cybercrime; appropriate digital forensic equipments and trainings; as well as its support for expansion and promotion of cooperation among cyber police of regional countries. The participants also requested UNODC, in cooperation with the ECO, to organize the third regional workshop on International and Regional Cooperation to Combat Cybercrime. The Workshop also requested UNODC to make full use of the capacity and potential of cyber police of voluntary regional countries for establishing/strengthening of cybercrime police in other countries in the region.

ECO Secretariat hosted



The "Second Regional Training on Legal Migration, Labour Migration and Integration" was held on 26-28 November 2014 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Training was jointly organized by International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination Unit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO-DOCCU). It was attended by the representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkey. Trainers from Hungary, Sweden and European Commission conducted the trainings.

The main objectives of this training exercise were to strengthen national frameworks and

Regional Training on Legal Migration



processes towards a comprehensive approach to legal migration governance. Looking into the manifold aspects of legal migration management, the trainings focused specifically on labour

migration concepts, international legal migration frameworks, protection of migrant workers and facilitating social cohesion. Migration typologies, characteristics of legal migration, admission policies in the European Union, emigrant's rights in the European Countries, as well as labour migration and the EU immigration portal were also among the topics raised during the courses. The training event also provided the participants with the opportunity to get familiar with the current systems of the above mentioned countries as regards migration management.

At the end of the 3 day training, participants were awarded "Certificate of Participation".

On the sidelines of the Event, ECO and ICMPD also discussed the possible institutional arrangement for cooperation, including a Memorandum of understanding.





The first High Level Workshop under the 3rd Phase of the ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project was held on February 03-04, 2015 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Workshop was attended by delegates from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, UNIDO and the ECO Secretariat. The 3rd Phase of the ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project aims at drawing up a Regional Quality Policy, providing guidelines for national quality policies and strengthening the overall Quality Infrastructure (QI) in the ECO Region.

Progress towards a Regional Quality Policy

The Workshop was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Shamil Aleskerov, ECO Secretary General. In his inaugural address, ECO Secretary General underlined the importance of removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in the Region. He observed that to ensure that the

standards and technical regulations serve only legitimate policy objectives and do not constitute barriers to trade, it is necessary not only to build up the capacity of national standards related institutions but also to promote regional and international cooperation in the relevant areas. The working sessions of the Workshop were chaired by Mr Hayri Maraslioglu, Deputy Secretary General (T&I, AIT, IR), while Dr. Geoffrey Roland Visser, UNIDO's International Consultant, conducted the proceedings. Presentations were made by representatives from participating countries, ECO Secretariat and UNIDO. Intensive group discussions were also held. In the light of the discussions, the Workshop agreed on a roadmap for drawing up a regional quality policy.

ECO High Level

Working Group on Standards in Tehran




The "6th Meeting of the ECO High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation & Metrology" was held on February 01, 2015 in Tehran. Delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey as well as ECO Secretariat attended the Meeting. In his opening statement, Mr. Ali Abazari, Deputy President of the Institute of Standard and Industrial Research of Iran

(ISIRI) emphasized the crucial role of standards in promoting industrial and trade relations and further stressed the importance of establishment of the "ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology" (RISCAM). He also mentioned that standards are the technical language in production, delivering services and implementation of systems. Mr. Hayri Maraslioglu, the ECO Deputy Secretary General also made inaugural remarks highlighting the mandate by the leaders of the ECO Member States to develop regional cooperation for harmonization of standards and elimination of the technical barriers to trade and movement of goods and services. He also informed the Meeting regarding the preparation of the draft basic documents, including Rules of Procedure, Staff Regulation and Financial Regulations of the RISCAM by the ECO Secretariat and Interim Coordination Unit of RISCAM. He also availed the opportunity to request all participants to help expedite signing/ratification of the Statute of RISCAM which will greatly help operationalize the Institute and further contribute to the goal of trade capacity building.

A technical workshop on conformity assessment was also organized by the Institute of Standard and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) in cooperation with the ECO and UNIDO on 2nd February 2015 during which different topics of the conformity assessment were discussed and deliberated. Experts from ISIRI and UNIDO conducted the training sessions of the Workshop.

ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting

 The 5th ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting was hosted by the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) on 16-18 November 2014 in Iranian cities of Tehran, Yazd and Isfahan. Co-organized by the ECO Secretariat, the Meeting was attended by the delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran (host), the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey. The Meeting reviewed progress since the 4th ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting (2011) and focused on developing new frameworks to enhance coherence and synergy among key stakeholders and policy makers for realizing otherwise untapped regional potential in mineral and mining sectors.


Among its outcomes, the Meeting proposed to establish a consortium of mining companies within the ECO region with special focus on competitive advantages, objectives and needs of the Region, and to arrange capacity building programme for the Afghani Geoscientists, mineworkers and supervisory/technical staff. On 17-18 November 2014, the participants attended technical site visits to Iran Central Iron Ore Company in Bafgh, Iran Potash Mineral factory in Khor-Biabanak and Mobarakeh Steel Company located in Yazd and Isfahan provinces, where they got opportunity to see main facilities and infrastructure, operating capacities, on-site laboratories and learned first-hand knowledge on how technologies are employed in various applications.

At the end of the Meeting, all participants were awarded "Certificate of Participation".



ECO Workshop on "Ferrous & Mineral Processing"



 The Workshop on "Ferrous & Base Metal Mineral Processing" was held on 9-10 September 2014 in Karaj, Iran. Hosted by the Mineral Processing Research Center (IRMPRC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ECO Secretariat, the Workshop was attended by the participants from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran (host), the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Republic of Turkey, as well as a delegation from the ECO Secretariat. The purpose of this Workshop was awareness-raising among the ECO Member States about ferrous & base metal mineral processing through exchanging their experiences and developing regional cooperation frameworks in the said field.

The Workshop recommended that the similar workshops should be arranged in this field by other interested ECO Member States so that the Member States may further share their knowledge and experiences with each other. It was also recommended to boost the cooperation regionally and internationally to meet the needs of the ECO region in the field of mineral processing.

The participants also visited the different laboratories of the mineral processing in Karaj and got familiar with the work of the IRMPRC and exchanged their experiences in the said field.

ECO-FAO Regional Training on Statistical Methods and Information System Technologies

ECO CHRONICLE

The "Regional Training on Statistical Methods and Information System

Technologies for Implementing CountrySTAT in the ECO Countries" was conducted jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) from 10 to 13 November 2014 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The training workshop was attended by delegations from eight ECO Member States. The Workshop was organized in the framework of a FAO project for the ECO countries aiming at development of agriculture statistics in the Region. The Project, in the first step, is being implemented in Afghanistan as pilot country in the region and will be extended to other ECO countries at the later stage.

In the opening session of the Workshop attended also by delega-



tions from Embassies of ECO Member States and Japan as well as FAO Country Office in Iran, ECO Secretary General Ambassador



the new CountrySTAT and the linkages with FAOSTAT, Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS) and other

Shamil Aleskerov referred to the joint cooperation between ECO and FAO in different areas and appreciated the FAO for its continuous support to the ECO work programme and projects, including the ongoing CountrySTAT project for establishment of integrated national food and agriculture statistical information system in the Region. In his welcoming statement, Mr. Serge Nakouzi, FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran referred to recent food crisis and ongoing food price volatility and impacts of climate change and highlighted the increasing needs for capacity development to produce agricultural data and reports. He also reviewed the specific benefits derived from the CountrySTAT system.

The training sessions were conducted by FAO experts addressing various topics including overview of

FENIX applications, introduction to the new CountrySTAT metadata and data management system, geospatial components of CountrySTAT, preparation of Supply and Utilization Account (SUA), compilation of Food Balance Sheet (FBS) and methodology of imputation of missing data. Moreover, through conducting a number of practical sessions and exercises, participants were acquainted with the use of metadata and data management tools, international standards and data uploading and imputation of missing data. The Workshop was concluded by statement made by Mr. Hayri Maraslioglu, ECO Deputy Secretary General. The first training workshop of CountrySTAT had been organized on 21-25 October 2013 in Ankara.





The "2nd Forum of the ECO Economic Think Tanks" and the 2nd International Conference on "Energy, Regional Integration and Socio-economic Development" were held on 1-3 October 2014 in Baku. The events were hosted by the Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms of Republic of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

The Forum was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Shahin Mustafayev, the Minister of Economy and Industry of Republic of Azerbaijan. In his welcoming speech, he noted the role of the Events in bringing together the academicians, researchers and experts from inside and outside the ECO Region to share their views for expansion of economic relations among countries of the Region. He also highlighted the importance of establishment of ECO Economic Research Centre in Baku as the regional centre for closer link among ECO Economic Think Tanks. The ECO Secretary General, Dr. Shamil Aleskerov in his opening statement referred to the establishment of the ECO Economic Research Centre by the 21st ECO Council of Ministers

ECO Economic Think Tanks Forum



and highlighted the function of the Centre on formulating the strategies for economic development of the Region and encouraged Member States to show their support for activating this regional Centre to design the most accurate, trustworthy, science-based and practicable economic models for economic integrity and unification in the Region

The 2nd Meeting of ECO Economic Think Tanks reviewed the activities of "ECO Directorate on Project, Economic Research and

Statistics" in the area of economic research including the implementation of ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research, progress in implementation of ECO Joint Economic Research Programme, capacity building programme on economic modeling and project training and ECO economic publications. The Conference received papers/articles/reviews by participants from 24 countries from within and outside the ECO Region. Three roundtables on key economic research and development topics created brainstorming sessions with participation of representatives of ECO Economic Think Tanks and professionals and experts from regional and international organizations. In the closing ceremony attended by H.E. Ms. S. Hasanova, Deputy Minister of Economy and Industry of Republic of Azerbaijan, a contract on research project "Exchange of Experience on Strengthening Inter-agency Cooperation on the Development of the Ecologically Clean Agriculture in the ECO Member Countries" were signed by the ECO and the Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms of Republic of Azerbaijan, as the Project Implementing Agency.

Turkey & ECO Secretariat Reviewed DRR



A delegation of Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) visited the ECO Secretariat on 29 September 2014 and met with the ECO Deputy Secretary General and his team.

At the outset, ECO Deputy Secretary General welcomed the AFAD delegation and made brief introductory remarks on ECO activities on disaster risk management and referred to the ongoing contacts with relevant regional and international organizations like UNISDR, UNESCAP and GIZ to develop possible partnerships on the topic. He highlighted the

imperative of disaster risk reduction for the ECO region as one of the most disaster-prone areas of the world and emphasized the importance of the annual ECO International Conference to enhance cooperation among Member States to address disaster-related challenges in the ECO Region. ECO Deputy Secretary General informed the AFAD delegation of the emerging trend in the ECO to develop multi-sectoral approach to disaster.

The AFAD delegation briefed about objectives of the visit and requested the ECO Secretariat to assist AFAD in organizing the 8th

ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management in Turkey and expressed hope that it will be held at the highest level possible. The AFAD delegation also welcomed the idea of an ECO regional strategy on disaster risk reduction pursued by ECO Secretariat.

The ECO Deputy Secretary General also proposed that ECO Secretariat, AFAD and other interested ECO Member States make joint arrangements on the sidelines of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction on 14-18 March 2015 in Japan.



ECO Events on Health Tourism

 The "First ECO Confobition (Conference+ Exhibition) on Health Tourism" was held on 18-20 August 2014 in Ramsar, Iran. The Event was hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran in coordination with ECO Secretariat and ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI). The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan were represented in the Event.

The Confobition was inaugurated by H.E Mr. Masoud Soltanifar, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Head of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO). The ECO Deputy Secretary General also delivered his statement at the opening ceremony. The Event was organized in two segments; a Conference and an Exhibition. The Conference, structured in 6 panels, addressed issues such as "development and diversification of health tourism products and services"; "Land Management and Health Tourism Zones"; "Development and Training of Human Resources for Health Tourism"; "Economy of Health Tourism"; "Information and



Communications Technology (ICT) and Health Tourism"; and "Customer Relationship, Health Tourism Marketing". The Conference also concluded a Declaration agreed by the participants.

In a parallel Exhibition, the health tourism companies and hospitals also showcased their services to the participants of the Conference as well as the local and international visitors.

The participants also attended the inauguration of the newly constructed "Shomal Specialized Hospital" in the City of Amol, Mazandaran Province. The Hospital is designed to offer highly specialized medical services to the domestic and international patients with its highly skilled professionals and modern equipments.

ECO Regional Seed Workshop in Istanbul



 The "Regional Workshop on Seed Sector Development" was held on 5-8 January 2015 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey. In the Workshop, organized by the FAO-SEC in cooperation with the ECOSA and ECO Secretariat, representatives from FAO-SEC, ECO Secretariat and 9 ECO Member States the current status of seed sector and the seed policy at the global and national levels and the potential for enhanced agricultural cooperation in the ECO Region. A regional seed policy document was also developed and a draft agreement among ECO Member Countries on variety testing, registration and protection was prepared by the participants.

The participants also visited the "Seed Fair" organized by "Seed Industries, Producers and Growers Association of Turkey" on 8-10 January 2015 in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey.

Tehran hosted the 3rd Meeting of the ECO High Level Experts Group on Health-related MDGs

ECO CHRONICLE The "3rd Meeting of the ECO High Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)" was held on 21-22 January 2015 in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Meeting was attended by the delegations of ECO Member States as well as representatives of international organizations.



A Secretariat delegation headed by ECO Deputy Secretary General also attended the Meeting.

ECO Deputy Secretary General in his address to the Meeting provided an overview of ECO health cooperation, including on the health-related MDGs (Reduce Child Mortality, Improve Maternal Health and Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases). He underlined the timelines of the HLEG meeting which provided the ECO Member States with an opportunity to develop cooperation frameworks as and when international community is developing post-2015 development agenda, including the emerging Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iran, Dr. Jihan Tawila also made a statement in the opening session of the Meeting and presented a report on WHO activi-

ties and the global health related trends. The Meeting was inaugurated by Dr. Reza Malekzadeh, Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the two day meeting, the participating delegates reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the MDGs in the ECO Region and discussed

the ways and means to enhance coherence and synergy among key stakeholders and policy makers for realizing otherwise untapped regional potential in health sectors. They also discussed issues such as international health regulations (IHR), diseases of poverty, prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), emergency preparedness & response (EPR), monitoring & surveillance, health technologies, medicines, blood transfusion, vaccine, medical equipment, health tourism, universal health coverage (UHC) & strengthening health systems in the Region. They also discussed the possible outline for an ECO Plan of Action on Health Cooperation for the years to come.

The Meeting also requested the ECO Secretariat to explore the possibility of an ECO Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of the upcoming WHO Assembly scheduled for May 2015 in Geneva.



Workshop on Commercial Arbitration in the ECO Region

 The first "Workshop on Commercial Arbitration in the ECO Region" was held in Tehran on 1st December 2014 at the Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

The Workshop was jointly organized by ECO, ICCIMA, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), McNair Chambers and Shearman and Sterling.

It was attended by the representatives the ECO Member States, as well as university international law students.

The Workshop was inaugurated by opening statements by Mr. Shafei, ICCIMA President and Mr. Alavi Sabzevari, ECO Deputy Secretary General.

Mr. Shafei in his remarks referred to the initiative of ECO Chamber of Commerce for ECO arbitration center and highlighted the benefits of this Center for business community of the Member States. ECO Deputy Secretary General also raised the importance of a settlement system, particularly arbitration, for the reliability and predictability of commercial interactions among countries, including the business community.

The main objectives of Workshop were raising awareness, creating a better understanding of issues involved in commercial dispute settlement and furthering the development of arbitration practice in the ECO Region.

The Workshop provided the participants with the opportunity to get more familiar with the latest developments in International legal instruments on investment arbitration (in particular UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules on Transparency 2014; ICSID Convention), enforcement of arbitral awards and its challenges (UNCITRAL Guide on New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards; Due Process; Public Policy; and Arbitrability) and the role of regional arbitration centers in settlement of commercial disputes.



New Turkish Ambassador visited the ECO Secretariat



ECO CHRONICLE The New Ambassador of Republic of Turkey in Tehran, Mr. Riza Hakan Tekin, paid a visit to the ECO Secretariat in Tehran on 9 November 2014. He was welcomed by the ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov. Ambassador Tekin presented his credentials to the Secretary General as the Permanent Representative of Republic of Turkey to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The Secretary General congratulated the Ambassador on his new assignment and thanked him for the active role of Republic of Turkey in the ECO works and activities. Secretary General briefed the new Permanent Representative about the state of affairs of the Organization and its activities. He requested a closer attention to the re-organization and reform process of the Organization.

Ambassador Tekin expressed his gratitude to the Secretary General and showed his eagerness to continue cooperation between Republic of Turkey and the ECO. He also assured Secretary General of his support for the ongoing reform process.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues pertaining to the ECO and exchanged views on how to enhance the ECO's role in the Region.



New Tajik Ambassador Presented Credentials to ECO Secretary General

ECO CHRONICLE The new Permanent Representative of Republic of Tajikistan, Ambassador Emomzoda Nematull paid a visit to the ECO Secretariat in Tehran on October 8, 2014 and was welcomed by the ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov. The Tajik Ambassador presented his credentials to the Secretary General as the Permanent Representative of his country to the ECO. The Secretary General congratulated the Ambassador on his new assignment and thanked him for the active role of Republic of Tajikistan in the ECO works and activities. The Tajik Permanent Representative expressed his support to continue cooperation with ECO. The two sides also discussed a number of issues of common interests including ways to enhance the ECO's role in the Region.

Qazvin Hosted the 200th CPR Meeting



**ECO
CHRONICLE**
The ECO
Council of
Permanent
Representatives
(CPR) convened
its 200th meeting
on 18 February

2015 in city of Qazvin, the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ambassadors and Representatives of the ECO Member States in their monthly meeting discussed state of affairs of the Organization.

They also reviewed the preparatory process for the upcoming meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) as well as the 25th ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC).

The Ambassadors and Representatives of

the Member States and the ECO Secretary General and his delegation also participated in different visits and events

organized by the Municipality of Qazvin including historic sites such as Qajar Bathhouse and Museum, Sa'd al Saltane Carvansaray and Kolahfarangi Palace, as well as Nature Village.

They also visited the Qazvin Islamic Azad University where different briefings on the scientific and technological achievements were presented by the Chancellor and students.





The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov participated in the sixty-ninth regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York from September 22-26, 2014 and represented the Organization in the capacity of observer in the session's meetings.

On the sidelines of the General Assembly session, the Secretary General held meetings with Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS), and Mr. Li Yong, Director General

ECO Secretary General participated in the UN General Assembly

of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). During these meetings,

the Secretary General discussed the issues of mutual concern and explored the ways to enhance the existing cooperation between ECO and the two organizations.

The ECO Secretary General also held some other bilateral meetings, including with Mr. Ramil Hasanov, Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council).

The two Secretaries General signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations. He also met with H.E. Mr. Özdil Nami, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Cypriot State and discussed the participation of the Turkish Cypriot State in its capacity as an observer within the framework of ECO.

ECO Secretariat in the United Nations Symposium on Sustainable Tourism

A high level delegation from the ECO Secretariat attended the UN Symposium on "Mainstreaming Sectoral Policies into Integrated National Sustainable Development Planning: Enhancing Sustainable Tourism, Urbanization, Resource Efficiency, Biodiversity, and Environmental Protection" on 14-15 October, 2014 in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Event, co-organized by Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN-DESA) and Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism

Organization (ICHTO), was attended by representatives of the national, regional and international tourism related stakeholders from different countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, private sector, academia and media.

ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov attended the formal inauguration of the Symposium. The delegation of the ECO Secretariat also actively participated in different panels of the Symposium. In an exclusive panel on the regional dimension of the sustainable tourism, a comprehensive presentation on the ECO's initiatives for promotion of sustainable economic development in general and sustainable tourism in particular was presented by ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Hayri Maraslioglu and his colleagues, followed by questions and answers.





ECO Secretary General addressed **International Energy Conference** in Tehran

The ECO Secretary General Dr. Shamil Aleskerov attended and addressed the "10th International Energy Conference" on 24th August 2014, organized by the Ministry of Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran.

The Conference was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, and H.E. Mr. Hamid Chitchian, Ministers of Petroleum and Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition to ECO Secretary General, Dr. Christopher Frei, the Secretary General of World Energy Council (WEC), Dr. Adnan Z. Amin, Director General of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Mr. Suleiman Jaser Al-Herbish, Director General of OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) and Dr. Urban Rusnak, Secretary General, Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) were also among the keynote speakers of the Conference.

In his statement, the ECO Secretary General presented a brief overview about ECO and its activities and expatiated upon the ECO profile in the field of energy and environment. On the sidelines of the Event, the Secretary General had bilateral talks with heads of some international organizations, including OPEC Fund for International Development and Energy Charter Treaty where possible areas of cooperation were explored.

ECO Secretary General Attended the Ashgabat Conference on **Transport & Transit**

The ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov attended the "International High-level Conference on the Role of Transport and Transit Corridors to Ensure International Cooperation and Sustainable Development" on 3-4 September 2014 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. The Conference was jointly organized by Turkmenistan and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the OSCE, the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the Intergovernmental Commission on Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA). It was attended by more than 200 representatives from 33 countries and 16 international organizations. The Conference was opened by the President of Turkmenistan H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, who emphasized that taking an active part in international affairs, Turkmenistan is making a worthy contribution to promote cooperation in the field of transport on a global scale by putting forward a number of important initiatives. Issues such as financing transport infrastructures, legal framework for international transport, infrastructure development, border crossing facilitation and security, role of Central Asia in the global logistics and integrated supply chains, and the role of transport and transit corridors in sustainable development were among topics discussed in the Conference. At the conclusion of the Conference, the "Ashgabat Declaration" on the role of transport and transit corridors was adopted.

In his address to the Plenary Session of the Conference, the ECO Secretary General briefed the Conference about the activities of ECO in the field of transport in the ECO Region. Ambassador Aleskerov was also received by the President of Turkmenistan H.E Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

At the invitation of the Heads of the "UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States" (UN-OHRLLS) and UNIDO, the ECO Secretary General Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov attended the Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the Second UNIDO Forum on Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) held from 3 to 5 November 2014 in the Vienna International Centre.

The UN Conference was attended by more than 1000 representatives of the countries from all regions of the world, including Heads of State and senior representatives from governments, UN system, international organizations and financial institutions.

A stocktaking of the activities and progress made by the world's 32 Landlocked Developing Countries since the adoption of the Almaty Program of Action in 2003 was presented. In his statement at the Conference, the ECO Secretary General presented information on the relevant activities of ECO, whose membership includes 7 landlocked and 3 transit countries, with particular emphasis on the role of the regional cooperation in providing the landlocked member states with transit transport facilities to reach the international markets and ensure connectivity within the region as well as trade facilitation. At the end of the Conference a new

ECO S.G. attended major UN Conferences in Vienna

10 year action-plan (2014-2024) aimed at accelerating sustainable development in the world's 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) was adopted.

This Vienna Program of Action with six clearly defined priorities encapsulates a unified stance by the international community on a broad array of crucial issues, including concrete

steps towards the structural transformation of LLDCs' economies and infra-structural development for improving international trade and bolstering regional integration and cooperation. It attaches a special importance to the regional economic cooperation and integration.

The UNIDO Forum was devoted to the consideration of the new partnership-based pilot approach for the inclu-

sive and sustainable industrial development (ISID), with particular examples of the pilot cases of Senegal and Ethiopia. Proposals for the way forward to enhance partnerships for ISID investments at national and/or regional levels were also discussed in the Forum.

In the course of the ISID Forum the ECO Secretary General had a discussion with the UNIDO's Energy Director on possibilities to expand the ongoing cooperation between the two organizations to the energy field, and raising the needed funding from such partners like GEF, particularly for the projects for enhancing energy efficiency and use of renewable sources of energy in the ECO Region.



ECO in the Ashgabat Forum on Energy Transit

The Ashgabat Energy Charter Forum was jointly organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan and Energy Charter Secretariat in Capital City of Ashgabat. Ministers and high level officials from countries as well as high level representatives from the regional and international organizations attended the Forum. ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari represented the ECO Secretariat in the Event. The Forum was aimed to discuss the issue of reliability and stability of Transit of Energy.

The Forum was inaugurated by Honorable President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. While expressing his satisfaction on the joint initiative of Turkmenistan and Energy Charter Secretariat for addressing this important issue in the Forum, the esteemed President presented a comprehensive account of the Turkmenistan policy towards the security, reliability and stability of energy and energy transit. He emphasized on the willingness of Turkmenistan to bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including through cooperation with international organizations to explore the solutions for the challenges facing the more secure and stable energy transit. The esteemed President also referred to the initiative of his country in the UN General Assembly which resulted in the adoption of a UN resolution in 2013 on the subject.

In their statements in the Forum, ministers, deputy ministers and high level officials from Armenia, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, China, Georgia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, European Commission, OSCE, IRENA and International Energy Agency presented their views and policies on the energy transit and its reliability and stability.

ECO Deputy Secretary General also made a statement in the Forum and presented an overview about the ECO involvement in energy and related issues. Acknowledging the important role of ECO energy-rich countries in ensuring arrangements for more reliable and secured energy transit and exchanges, he highlighted the ECO interest to work jointly with countries like Turkmenistan in areas of interest and benefit for the Region. He also referred to interest shown by Energy Charter Secretariat to explore possible cooperation with ECO and said that ECO would welcome possible arrangements with Energy Charter and Turkmenistan.

ECO Secretariat participated in the Fifth IRENA Assembly



The Fifth Session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly was held in Abu Dhabi on 17-18 January 2015.

The Meeting brought together key stakeholders and policy-makers from around the globe to fast-track the global renewable energy expansion and to address global challenges such as energy access, energy security and energy-environment-water nexus in view of Rio+20 outcomes. Assembly was attended by representatives from 150 countries and 115 regional and international organizations. ECO Director of Energy, Minerals and Environment attended the Event.

ECO-IRENA bilateral consultations were also held on the sidelines of the Assembly sessions where two sides discussed new partnership frameworks and possibilities to enhance regional synergy and dialogue. Both sides agreed to explore the possibility of organizing ECO Ministerial Meeting on Renewable Energy on the sidelines of the next IRENA Assembly in January 2016.

ECO Secretariat participated in the **Ministerial Meeting on Afghanistan**

The 4th Ministerial Meeting of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process

was held on 31 October 2014 in Beijing, People's Republic of China. High-level delegations from 46 countries and regional

and international organizations attended the Meeting. ECO Deputy Secretary General represented the Organization in this important gathering.

The Ministerial Meeting was jointly inaugurated by Chinese Premier, H.E. Li Keqiang and Afghan President, H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. In their opening addresses, both leaders articulated principles and guidelines for addressing security and prosperity in Afghanistan, as pursued in the context of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

The Ministerial Meeting was co-chaired by Minister of Foreign Affairs of China and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. Ministers of Foreign Affairs and high ranking officials from 14 "Heart of Asia" countries and 16 supporting countries as well as high level representatives from 12 regional and international organizations in their statements made stocktaking of the achievements since last



in Istanbul with a ultimate goal of security and prosperity in Afghanistan and in the "Heart of Asia" region as a whole. Nine out of 14 Heart of Asia countries are ECO Member States

Ministerial meeting and informed the Meeting about their future assistance to Afghanistan.

In his statement, the ECO Deputy Secretary General briefed Ministers and high level officials of the participating countries and organizations about ECO's involvement in programmes related to Afghanistan. Highlighting the fact that 5 out of 6 Afghanistan neighbours are ECO Member States, he enumerated some areas of ECO activities with direct and indirect bearing on Afghanistan, including transport, energy, drug control, natural disaster, etc.

Acknowledging the importance of Afghanistan's development needs for ECO as well as the prominence of ECO for Afghanistan, he expressed readiness of ECO to contribute to the relevant activities in the framework of "Heart of Asia" initiative.

The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process was launched in 2011

(except Uzbekistan). The Process further elaborated, in 2013, six areas of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to help ensure the above mentioned goal. Disaster management; counter-narcotics; counter-terrorism; regional infrastructure; trade, commerce and investment; and education are the six areas of the confidence building measures coordinated by the lead countries.

The 4th Ministerial Meeting concluded its deliberations by adopting the "Beijing Declaration on Deepening Cooperation for Sustainable Security and Prosperity of the Heart of Asia Region". The Meeting also defined 64 activities to be followed under the 6 CBMs. On the sidelines of the Meeting, the ECO Representative also discussed with some participating organizations the possible cooperation on issues of mutual interest and potential benefit for Afghanistan.

ECO
Secretariat
attended

Migration meeting
in Tajikistan



At the invitation of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and Ministry of Labour and Migration of Republic of Tajikistan, a delegation from the ECO Secretariat led by ECO Deputy Secretary General attended the "5th Meeting of Budapest Process Working Group on the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration" on 10-11 November 2014 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.

The Meeting was attended by more than 30 representatives of the countries from ECO Region as well as representatives from Hungary, Iraq, Bangladesh, European Commission, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Organization on Migration (IOM) and International Labour Organization (ILO). The purpose of the Working Group was to address specific issues of importance for the Silk Routes Region as regard migration, including illegal migration. Exhaustive discussions also took place on the issues related to labour migration. There was an exclusive panel on the ECO Region and Migration where two presentations were delivered by the ECO and ICMPD delegations. On the sidelines of the Meeting, ECO and ICMPD delegations also discussed the possible cooperation in the future, including a regional training as well as a workshop for ECO Region. It is to be noted that the a proposed draft of a possible Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had already been submitted by ICMPD to the ECO Secretariat which is under consideration by the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR).

ECO
Secretariat
attended
Paris Pact
meeting

A delegation from the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) participated in the 11th meeting of the "Paris Pact Policy Consultative Group" on 29-30 September 2014 in Vienna, Austria. Organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Meeting was attended by representatives of 33 countries and 9 international organizations. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Juan Luk Lemaheu, Director for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs of UNODC.

In the course of 2-day meeting, the participants were briefed about the outcomes of the different expert working group meetings on various topics related to the opiates originating from Afghanistan. The Meeting also provided, inter alia, an opportunity to different partners to share their experiences gained from their activities in these areas. The ECO delegation from its specialized Unit (ECO-DOCCU), also briefed the participants about ECO activities and achievements as relate to addressing the menace of illicit drugs in the ECO Region.

Initiated in 2003 in Paris, "Paris Pact Initiative" is a partnership of more than 70 countries and international organizations in the fight against opiates originating in Afghanistan. It aims at the reduction of illicit traffic in opiates including opium poppy cultivation, production and global consumption of heroin and other opiates, and at the establishment of a broad international coalition to combat illicit traffic in opiates.

ECO & IRU signed a 5-year Action Plan for Cooperation



Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and International Road Union (IRU) agreed on a 5-year "Action Plan for Cooperation and Transit Development". Mr. Umberto de Pretto, IRU Secretary General and Mr. Mohsen Esperi, ECO Director of Transport and Communications signed the Document in a ceremony held on 4th February 2015 at the IRU Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The 5-year Action Plan is aimed to strengthen the already existing successful cooperation between ECO and IRU and is geared to facilitating the international road transport and enhancing economic development and social progress in the ECO Region and beyond.

ECO Director of Transport and Communications also attended the 139th session of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP30) and the 60th session of the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention (AC.2) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

ECO and IDB agreed for a Work Programme for 2015-2017



The ECO and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) reviewed the state of play of bilateral relations.

The ECO delegation headed by ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Altaf Asghar visited the IDB Headquarters in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 16-17 December 2014 and had meetings with IDB officials, including the IDB President Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani. The ECO Deputy Secretary General conveyed the message of the ECO Secretary General to the President of IDB and gave an overview of existing and potential areas of cooperation between the two sides. The IDB President while welcoming the ECO delegation, emphasized on the need for cooperation with the ECO as IDB's Sister Organization coordinating an important sub-region of OIC community. He extended his support to the ECO initiatives and projects and termed those projects as IDB projects and assured full support of IDB to the ECO activities.

The ECO delegation also held meetings with relevant departments/entities of IDB where the two sides had detailed deliberations on existing and proposed areas of bilateral cooperation. In the area of transport and ongoing

cooperation on implementation of Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) project, the outcome documents reflecting the successful completion of the three components of the Project were reviewed.

In the area of trade, IDB expressed its readiness to support the Trade Capacity-Building Project in Standardization and Quality Policy in the ECO Region and agreed to continue to support the ECO program on facilitating the accession of the Member States to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the area of Statistics and proposal of the ECO for joint cooperation on Implementation of CountrySTAT Programme in the ECO region, IDB welcomed the main objective of the Project for harmonization of data and statistics on agriculture and food security and implementation of globally accepted statistical standards in ECO countries and supported for co-organizing statistical training events in the framework of IDB Statistical Capacity Building Programme (IDB STAT-CAP) for its members, including the ECO Region.

In the light of two days detailed discussions, the two sides agreed on drawing up "Programme of Work of ECO-IDB Cooperation for 2015-2017".



ECO and FAO Signed Project Document on Livestock Diseases

The Economic Cooperation Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) signed a Project Document for technical assistance for formulation of strategies to control the peste des petits ruminants (PPR) at global and regional levels. The document was signed by Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov, the ECO Secretary General and Mr. Serge Nakouzi, FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Acknowledging the growing cooperation between ECO and FAO in the agriculture and food security sectors, the Secretary General expressed his appreciation for the support of FAO for ECO's initiatives in these areas. While emphasizing the need for joint efforts between the two organizations in areas of mutual concern, the Secretary General expressed his confidence that the Project would play an important role in addressing major transboundary livestock diseases.

Keeping in view the problems of water scarcity and deteriorating water quality being faced by countries in the Region, the Secretary General also welcomed the FAO proposal to initiate cooperation on water issues. In this context, he also referred to the "Center for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture"



initiated with the technical support of FAO which is currently under the process of establishment in the ECO Region.

The FAO Representative on his part expressed his gratitude to the ECO for supporting the FAO agenda in the region and mentioned that the signing of this project document demonstrate the importance of collective efforts in addressing the new and emerging challenges. He mentioned that the Project would reinforce the mechanism for collaborating on the issue of transboundary animal and livestock diseases.

The FAO Representative also mentioned that the problem of water scarcity is a complex one that requires a holistic and multidisciplinary approach by the concerned parities as well as coordinated measures at governance and technical levels. He also assured the Secretary General of FAO's continued support for addressing the emerging challenges of environmental degradation and water scarcity in the region.

The two sides agreed to work together for building the institutional capacity, human capital and technical expertise for addressing the regional challenges in the areas of food security and agriculture in the coming time period.

ECO and ICMPD Explored Cooperation

A delegation from International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) visited the ECO Secretariat on 15 September 2014 and discussed the potential areas of cooperation with the ECO officials. During their visit, Mr. Martijn Plum, Director for "Eastern Dimension" and Mrs. Cecilia Lunstroem, the Head of "Budapest Process Secretariat" had meetings with ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov and his Deputy where both sides reviewed the regional and international developments in the area of migration, especially trending issues in the ECO Region. The ICMPD delegation also briefed ECO officials on the "Budapest Process" and

the "Silk Route Partnership for Migration". The Delegation was in return briefed about ECO activities, including those related to migration, as mandated by the ECO Member States.

During the technical discussions, the two sides examined the possible cooperation on migration in the context of regional economic development.

The ICMPD delegation also expressed its interest to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with ECO.

The two sides agreed to attend each other's relevant events and continue contacts for further elaboration on the possible cooperation.

ECO and OPEC Fund discussed Cooperation



On the Sidelines of the 10th Tehran International Energy Conference, the ECO Secretary General discussed areas of possible cooperation with Mr. Suleiman Jaser Al-Herbish, Director General of OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).

Referring to their discussions in Vienna, ECO Secretary General briefed OFID Director General on the state of play of ECO projects and activities in different sectors and areas. He also highlighted some areas that OFID support may be sought and considered.

Explaining that most of the OFID activities are in the forms of loans which cannot be applicable for the ECO, Mr. Suleiman Jaser Al-Herbish, Director General of OFID expressed possibility of OFID grant support for research and studies in some areas in the ECO Region.

The two sides agreed that a high level delegation from the ECO Secretariat may visit OFID Secretariat to continue discussions on the future cooperation.

ECO-UNEP high level talks in Tehran



On the occasion of visit by the UNEP Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Kaveh Zahedi to the ECO Secretariat on 19 January 2015, ECO and UNEP officials discussed the state of play of bilateral ties. In discussions with the ECO Deputy Secretary General and his colleagues, the two sides reviewed the developments since "ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment" held on the sidelines of United Nations Environmental Assembly on 25 June 2014 in Nairobi. The ECO official briefed also UNEP envoy on the recent meeting of the ECO Ministers of Environment in Istanbul and the important ministerial decisions on enhancing the ECO environmental profile. Mr. Zahedi also presented the current state of play in UNEP in the light of ongoing global environmental agenda, including the post Rio+20 era and the emerging Sustainable Development Goals. Technical presentations on the ongoing ECO projects and programmes were also delivered by representatives of the ECO Secretariat and the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO IEST).

The two sides agreed to develop list of priority areas for time-bound bilateral cooperation. They agreed that issues such as ecosystem services, dust haze and sand storm, energy efficiency, air pollution as well as environmental capacity buildings and fund raising for ECO projects can be followed jointly. UNEP will also help ECO Secretariat through preparation of a State of Environment (SoE) Report for ECO Region. ECO and UNEP will also consider cooperation on renewable energy.

The UNEP Regional Director was also received by the ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov. While referring to the ECO environmental profile, Secretary General highlighted the important decision by the Istanbul Ministerial Meeting on designation of environment and the impacts of climate change as cross sectoral priority of the Organization, applying environmental dimension to policy making and activities of all economic sectors within the ECO.

Briefing the Secretary General on his talks with ECO officials, Mr. Zahedi highlighted the momentum generated following the ECO ministerial meeting in Nairobi held on the sidelines of UNEP Assembly in June 2014. Secretary General also acknowledged the importance of this initiative which was in line with the policy of the Organization to enhance partnerships with international and regional organizations and expressed readiness and hope to co-organize the same event on the sidelines of the next UNEP Assembly in 2016.

ECO & WHO discussed Health in the ECO Region



Dr. Jihane Tawilah, the Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iran participated in an ECO Secretariat's open-ended brainstorming session on 9th October 2014 and shared with the participants the global health trends. The main purpose of the brainstorming was to discuss the proposed outline for an envisaged ECO plan of action on health for 2015 and beyond. The plan of action is expected to be approved by the 2nd ECO Health Ministerial Meeting.

In the session, attended also by the ECO Deputy Secretary General and relevant staff of the Secretariat, the WHO Representative expressed views on health cooperation in the ECO Region and emphasized on the need to view health as a cross-cutting and multidisciplinary sector in addressing the health problems in the ECO Region.

The participants, including the representatives of the Ministry of Health of the Islamic Republic of Iran (the host country of the Ministerial meeting), exchanged views on the elements of an optimal ECO plan of action on health cooperation, as mandated by the 24th meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council.

ECO and Energy Charter Treaty explored Cooperation



On the sidelines of the 10th International Energy Conference in Tehran, the ECO Secretary General Dr. Shamil Aleskerov met with Dr. Urban Rusnak Secretary General of Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). ECT Secretary General briefed ECO official on the recent and current efforts and developments aimed at expansion and strengthening of the Charter. ECO Secretary General also briefed his counterpart on ECO energy profile, including the current initiative of establishing "ECO Regional Electricity Market" where ECT contribution may be considered. Both sides agreed to continue coordination on optimal framework for cooperation. Dr. Urban Rusnak also invited ECO Secretariat to participate in the ECT Ashgabat Energy Forum. ECO Secretary General in return expressed ECO readiness to contribute to the Ashgabat Conference.

Heads of ECO & CICA discussed Relations

On 17 December 2014 and on the sidelines of the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Istanbul, ECO Secretary General Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov had a meeting with Ambassador Gong Jianwei, Executive Director of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) where both sides discussed possible frameworks for bilateral cooperation as well as the ways and means to enhance regional synergy through accumulating the capabilities, opportunities and resources available in both Organizations.

ECO Secretary General briefed Ambassador Jianwei about the ECO's recent efforts and activities for stimulating more interaction among the ECO Member States for development of regional ECO strategy on combating climate change and its adverse effects. He underscored the policy of the ECO to seek collaboration with other regional and international organizations and financial institutions for strengthening interregional dialogue and coherence.

Ambassador Gong Jianwei reiterated CICA's



support to ECO and mentioned that there is a wide convergence among objectives and principles of CICA and ECO in the area of environment.

Both sides agreed to continue working for exploring areas of cooperation and coordination among both Organizations, particularly in the fields of environment and energy.

FAO Representative visited ECO Secretariat



Dr. Serge Nakouzi, the Representative of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to the Islamic Republic of Iran called upon the ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov on October 28, 2014 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran and presented to the Secretary General a letter of credence from the Director General of FAO introducing him as a Representative of FAO to ECO. Ambassador Aleskerov extended his sincere felicitations to Dr. Nakouzi on commencing his assignment in the Islamic Republic of Iran and commended the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in assisting the regional countries in the areas of agriculture and food security. The Secretary General also appreciated the existing collaboration between ECO and FAO in various areas and expressed his hope that this cooperation would be strengthened in the future. Dr. Nakouzi in return pointed to the partnership between ECO and FAO and stated that he was looking forward to the enhancement of this cooperative relation in a number of areas. He informed that FAO was seeking to reinforce its presence in Iran and aimed to reach out to other regional countries in the areas of common interest. Dr. Nakouzi also mentioned that FAO was pursuing a more program-focussed approach in addressing the issues of concern to the ECO countries. He informed that FAO would be concentrating its efforts on promoting cooperation with the regional countries in the areas of food security, nutrition, water and sustainable management of water resources and sustainable agricul-

tural development. Highlighting the importance to the region of efficient utilization of water and land resources, promoting effective agricultural practices and increasing food productivity, he mentioned that there was a need to address these issues in a more concerted and coordinated manner.

The FAO Representative stated that he would be looking forward to working together with ECO and its member countries to reinforce their capabilities and institutional capacities in different areas, especially for the introduction of efficient agricultural practices in the Region. In this regard, he requested the support of ECO and its Member States for FAO's initiatives in various fields. The Secretary General further briefed the FAO Representative about the ongoing ECO-FAO cooperation, including the Regional Program for Food Security and the regional project for seed sector development. He sought the support of FAO for the establishment of the ECO Centre for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture. He also requested FAO's assistance to ECO in initiating agro-industrial projects in Afghanistan as part of its alternative development efforts.

The two sides agreed to jointly mobilize their resources in building the institutional capacity, human capital and technical expertise for addressing the regional challenges in the areas of food security and agriculture in the coming time period.

ECO & D-8 reviewed Cooperation

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the ECO Secretary General held a meeting with Dr. Seyed Ali Mohammad Mousavi, Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation. During the Meeting, the Secretaries General discussed various issues of mutual concern, reviewed the current status of cooperation between the two sides and considered ways to further enhance the cooperative relation-

ship between the two Organizations. They also focused on proposals to jointly organize events such as workshops and training courses in the areas of transport, communications, agriculture and food security, industry and tourism. The Secretaries-General also agreed to ensure greater engagement of two organizations in each other's relevant events and activities in the aforementioned areas.

The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking States (TURKPA), Mr. Jandos Asanov, visited the ECO Secretariat on October 22, 2014 and held a meeting with the ECO Secretary General, Dr. Shamil Aleskerov. The Secretary General welcomed the visiting dignitary and presented a brief overview of the activities and programmes of ECO in various areas, including trade, transport, agriculture, energy and drugs control. The ECO Secretary General informed Mr. Asanov about the recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding with the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States. He also briefed the TURKPA Secretary General about the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Countries (PAECO) which

TURKPA and ECO Talks

was established in February 2013 during the First PAECO Conference held in Islamabad. The Secretary General highlighted the parliamentary dimension of regional cooperation and emphasized its importance for supporting the regional



initiatives for promoting economic growth and development. Mr. Asanov also briefed about the activities of TURKPA. He mentioned that TURKPA assists the development of political dialogue among the member countries and provides legislative support to their activities in various areas. The TURKPA Secretary General stressed on the need for using regional institutions and forums for creating greater awareness about the regional countries and their development challenges. Emphasizing the increasingly important role of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting economic growth, Mr. Asanov mentioned that parliamentary forums like TURKPA and PAECO have great potential for supporting efforts for regional cooperation and economic development.

IRENA Director General visited ECO Secretariat



Dr. Adnan Z. Amin, the Director General of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and his delegation visited the ECO Secretariat on 25th August 2014 and met with Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, the ECO Secretary General. ECO Secretary General welcomed the IRENA delegation and presented a brief overview about ECO and its

activities, including in the energy and environment sectors. He referred to the policy of the Organization to enter into partnership with other international and regional organizations in addressing global and regional challenges and issues and expressed readiness for partnership with IRENA on areas of common interests.

Mr. Amin also briefed Secretary General and his team on the genesis of IRENA and highlighted the importance given by this young Agency to regional arrangements on renewable energy programmes. He further referred to the recent climate change and environment related developments at the international level which have impacted the imperative of the renewable energies. He recalled that 6 ECO Member States are already member parties to IRENA. He also referred to the country profiles on

renewable energy prepared by IRENA for these 6 ECO countries. Dr. Aleskerov requested the IRENA to prepare a renewable energy profile for ECO Region. He also proposed cooperation in capacity building and experience/best practice sharing, policy advice and planning assistance and implementation of joint projects which can be elaborated in the context of a cooperation framework such as MoU. Dr. Amin welcomed cooperation with ECO. While appraising the ECO initiative to have meetings on the sidelines of the international meetings, he proposed to have an ECO ministerial meeting on the sidelines of the IRENA Assembly sessions. Two sides agreed to continue coordination to prepare the grounds for meaningful cooperation.

German Environment delegation visited ECO Secretariat

A delegation from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety visited the ECO Secretariat on October 9, 2014 in Tehran and had a meeting with the ECO Secretary General. The ECO Secretary General Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov in his meeting with the German delegation informed them about the structure and the current activities of the Organization including its brief history. He informed the German delegation on recent actions undertaken by the Secretariat in promoting regional dialogue on environment, raising environmental awareness and sustainable development. ECO Secretary General also briefed the delegation about the planned activities in this field. Secretary General emphasized on recent efforts to enhance policy coherence, adaptation of existing institutional arrangements and establishing new frameworks/platforms among key stakeholders and policy makers for long-term safety of ECO Region environment. In this regard he noted the important role ECO could play as a region-



al node for mobilizing relevant stakeholders across the Region to formulate and submit environmental projects to appropriate funding instruments.

Mr. Jürgen Keinhorst, German Director of Cooperation with Eastern European Countries, Central Asia and South Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa expressed his confidence about the comparative advantages of ECO as a suitable platform for regional dialogue and promotion of effective environmental cooperation in the ECO Region. He also briefed the meeting about possible cooperation areas such as energy efficiency, generation of electricity, combating desertification and water shortage and their negative economic consequences. Mr. Keinhorst stated that the German Government already has many ongoing initiatives with other regional organizations and ECO could easily be one of them to cooperate in nature conservation and environment. Both sides agreed to start cooperation in this field at the earliest convenience and to plan to have concrete projects to begin with.

GIZ top Manager in ECO

A high-level delegation from the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) headed by its Managing Director, Dr. Christoph Beier, visited the ECO Secretariat on 9 October 2014 and discussed the state of play of ECO-GIZ cooperation with Dr. Shamil Aleskerov. ECO Secretary General thanked Dr. Beier for the support given to the EU funded project on drug trafficking in the ECO Region.

Referring to the possible involvement of ECO in alternative development projects for Afghanistan, Secretary General appreciated interest shown by GIZ to cooperate with ECO in this

regard, including the GIZ-ECO workshop to be held in the ECO Secretariat. ECO Secretary General also enumerated some other areas of potential GIZ-ECO cooperation, including environment, disaster risk reduction and Health. Dr. Beier in return made an overview about GIZ and stated that the yearly turnover of the GIZ is more than 2 billion Euros, mostly relying on the



German Government. He expressed GIZ interest in the regional cooperation, including with ECO. He also stated that there are several ongoing projects in the member states of ECO with the support of GIZ. Those projects could be linked to ECO and could be carried on jointly in a wider range. He also stated that one of the most important projects conducted globally by GIZ is the Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Reduction. This project could be also linked to ECO.

The two sides agreed to continue contacts for setting durable framework for bilateral cooperation.

Tehran Diplomatic Corps briefed on EU-ECO Project on Drug Trafficking



The Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO-DOCCU)

organized on 20 August 2014 a briefing session for some of the Tehran-based ambassadors and representatives of the international organizations where the participants were informed about the ECO-DOCCU and its activities, particularly the state of play of the EU-funded Project on "Fight against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan".

In his opening remarks, Dr. Shamil Aleskerov, the ECO Secretary General while touching upon the history of the Organization and the Unit, considered the fight against tragic menace of drug as a responsibility jointly shared by Region as well as international community.

He also addressed the key issues related to

the current drug situation in the ECO Region and the ongoing cooperation with relevant international organizations.

The Event also included three presentations on "ECO and DOCCU in a Nutshell", "EU-funded Project on "Fight Against Trafficking to/from Afghanistan" and "Narcotics in the Golden Crescent" delivered by the ECO Deputy Secretary General, Project's Technical Coordinator from GIZ, and Project's International Consultant, respectively.

The presentations were followed by Q&A session where non-ECO ambassadors/diplomats were given further information about the Project. It is to be noted that the EU-funded Project on "Fight against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan" came to an end in December 2014.





H.E. Mr. Harri Kämäräinen, the distinguished Ambassador of Finland in Tehran in his interview with the ECO Chronicle kindly shared with us his country's experiences from regionalism and offered interesting views for cooperation in the ECO Region:

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Economic Cooperation Organization is a regional arrangement for promoting economic development of its 10 Member States. Republic of Finland is also party to some regional arrangements, notably the European Union. You joined

Union is facing, but tend to forget about the achievements that have brought tangible changes to the lives of hundreds of millions of Europeans. Creating the Schengen area- an area without borders- and allowing the free movement of people and goods is a remarkable success story and a unique achievement in the world. So is the European Monetary Union. Standardization and harmonization of laws, rules and regulations have improved the quality of life of millions. And not the least, regional cooperation has strengthened peace.

For Finland, the Nordic cooperation has even longer roots and traditions than the EU. We believe that small is more powerful when we join our strengths

masters in overcoming the obstacles that may arise from our differences.

As a matter of fact, the success story of the Nordic cooperation has been extended to cover also the three Baltic States; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The new Nordic model has proven strikingly successful. In international comparisons such issues as well-being and international competitiveness score very high in all Nordic countries.

Other areas where the Nordics do particularly well are innovation and social inclusion.

Our populations are known for their eagerness to try new things. Finland led the world in intro-

Interview with Ambassador of Finland in Tehran

EU in 1995. This is quite interesting for our readers from ECO Region to know more about Finland's experience of being member of a regional grouping.

■ **Ambassador:** This year marks the 20th anniversary of Finland's joining the European Union. A vast majority of Finns regard the membership in the Union as a clearly positive thing. In the media we hear a lot about the problems and challenges the

together with our neighbours. Collectively, the Nordic countries have a population of nearly 30 million. Each country has their own specifics, traditions and history, but together we form a strong economic region. Finland is the only one of the Nordic countries that is a member of both the EU and the euro area. Denmark, Norway and Iceland are Nato members, but outside the euro area, like Sweden- another EU member. These differences do not hamper our close cooperation or prevent us from doing things together. On the contrary, we have become

ducing the mobile network in the 1980s and the GSM standard in the 1990s. Today we are ahead in the transition to cashless economy.

Practically everything today- from a cup of tea to taxi rides- are paid by card.

To put it short, regional cooperation has brought and continues to bring many assets to the countries concerned. Together we are stronger.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** What are the current priority areas of Finland in promoting economic and sustainable development at the regional and global levels?

■ **Ambassador:** Today, more than ever, the threats and challenges the nations of the world are facing, are of a global character and they do not recognize borders. Climate change, lack of fresh water, diseases, rapid population growth and terrorism are our common concerns and we need to find sustainable solutions for these and other challenges.

Due to its harsh climate and scarce natural resources Finland

has had to develop innovative solutions how to save energy- particularly during the cold winter months- and how to take profit of the environment without harming it. Finland is a land of high technology and social innovations and has a lot to offer particularly in the field of energy efficiency and clean technologies. Finnish innovative solutions supporting sustainable development are today used in many parts of the world.

For many years, nature and the environment have been at the center of scientific research in



Finland and environmental sciences have a long tradition in our academic life. We try to find pragmatic solutions to environment related problems.

One concrete example of addressing environmental chal-

Managing the scarce water resources is one area where Finland hopes to be of support for those countries who face this problem. Finland has also invested massively in water footprint technology which allows to model and measure the need for water in the production of goods and services.

water usage technology and waste management Finnish companies are among the most advanced in the world. Clean technology represents already near to 10 percent of Finland's exports.



■ **ECO Chronicle:**

Would you please name the main areas of interest for Finland in West and Central Asia and the Caucasus, namely, in the "ECO Region"?

■ **Ambassador:**

In 2009 the Government of Finland launched its first bilateral development programme called Wider Europe Initiative for the Central Asian countries and the South Caucasus. The programme covered 11 countries - from Belarus to Tajikistan. The second phase of this programme was launched in 2014 and it will reach until 2017. The programme covers two main areas: (i) a partnership programme "Green Economy in Central Asia" and (ii) support for democratic development.

The Green Economy Programme comprises projects that are designed and tailor made for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The main focus is on supporting local business

lenges is the story of Finnish water. Finland has become one of the world's leading nations in the research and development of the use and purification of water.

Another example is the story of Cleantech Finland. This is a wide-reaching network of companies, working in 40 countries. It primarily promotes the exchange of information and competence in environmental affairs. In the fields of energy efficiency, clean industrial process development,

activities, creating jobs and developing labour laws and legislation. Sustainable use of natural resources is in the focus of many activities. For example, in

Kyrgyzstan, Finland has assisted in reviving the fishing industry. In Tajikistan, the main focus is on water issues.

In all five Central Asian countries Finland has actively supported the Rule of Law, as part of the democratic development programme. Here, main focus has been on the most vulnerable groups of each society.

Based upon a midterm evaluation conducted in 2012, the projects of the Wider Europe Initiative have had a positive impact on the countries in the region. Therefore, the Finnish Government decided to launch the second phase of the programme, this time with a clear emphasis on the Green Economy and support for democratic development.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO Ministers have recently decided to upgrade environment as a cross-sectoral priority in the ECO. They also adopted a declaration on green economy and climate change, aligning further the ECO environmental policy with the trending global issues. Given the long commitment by Finland to promote sustainable development and green economy, can we think of any ECO-Finland partnership on these issues?

■ **Ambassador:** The specific projects within the Wider Europe Initiative are being supported by a number of local actors in the region, including international organizations. As the goals and

aims of the ECO coincide with those of the Wider Europe Initiative, particularly in the areas of green economy and climate change, I see no reason why we could not seek synergy if and where possible. Activities and projects that share the same goal should be mutually supportive. Yet, the implementing partners for the current phase 2014-2017 of Wider Europe Initiative have already been chosen.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO has emerged as a regional partner for global initiatives and programmes. ECO areas of regional



cooperation include a diverse spectrum of sectors ranging from trade, transport and energy to health, food security, disaster reduction, drug control and tourism. For Finland, as a major donor in "development" domain, how ECO can help implement your country's agenda in the Region?

■ **Ambassador:** As I mentioned earlier, development projects that share the same goals and objectives should be mutually supportive. ECO is an important actor in the region and is well placed to support regional

cooperation and development between its Member States.

The first visit by the Secretary General of ECO to Finland in October 2013 was a manifestation of the mutual interest to exchange information and experience in this economically and strategically important region.

I do not think it was by chance that SG Aleskerov paid a visit to the Finnish-Russian border. It is a border with approximately 10 million border crossings per year and I suppose it is justified to say that it is one of the best functioning external borders of the Russian Federation.

The technical facilities and the good cooperation between Finnish and Russian border authorities can serve as an example for any border within the ECO Region and elsewhere. Properly functioning borders and border formalities is a prerequisite for good neighbourly cooperation in any region, including the ECO region.

Another area of mutual interest is, of course, transport. I remember that during my student years it was possible to buy a train ticket

from Helsinki to Tehran. I sincerely hope this train link- Tehran-Moscow-Helsinki - will soon again be re-established. Linking the Gulf of Finland with the Persian Gulf by rail is a project that will bring benefits to a great number of countries. I often say that I will not leave Tehran until I can take the train back to Helsinki.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Thank you very much for your time.

Interview with Ambassador of the I.R. of Pakistan in Tehran

H.E. Ambassador Noor Muhammad Jadmani is Pakistan's Permanent Representative in the Economic Cooperation Organization. He was so kind to accept ECO Chronicle invitation for an interview which follows:

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Pakistan has played an important role in creation and flourishing of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

How important are the regional economic arrangements such as ECO in Pakistan's foreign policy?

■ **Ambassador:** Pakistan's close engagement with regional economic arrangements like ECO and

SAARC remains crucial in its foreign policy.

It is one of the core objectives of our foreign policy to consolidate commercial and economic cooperation with international community.

In the face of changing global and regional context, Pakistan's balanced approach in avoiding interference in internal affairs or intra-regional affairs has been widely appreciated.

The revival of Pakistan's economy during the last one year has significantly expanded the prospects for a deeper economic cooperation with the regional economic organizations, including ECO.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** As a founding member of the



Organization, do you think ECO is still fit for its purpose?

■ **Ambassador:** As one of the founding member, Pakistan attaches high importance to the efficacious functioning of ECO. Together with other member states, Pakistan has played its constructive role in the Organization, generating the needed momentum and driving forward the Organizational agenda.

Pakistan feels that this organization has a lot of potential for future cooperation. With vast resource base and positive fundamentals, ECO can contribute significantly to its own members, but also to the global economic upsurge.

However, for that, a more focused approach with strong political will is required.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** What are the main priority areas which in your opinion serve the interests of ECO Region and its Member States, including Pakistan?

■ **Ambassador:** The trade among the ECO member states in terms of their total trade is very low. There is an urgent need to increase it.

Other areas could be road and rail connectivity, easier visa regime, science and technology, disaster management, food security and energy cooperation.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO is now undertaking a reform process.

Eminent Persons Group has made recommendations for a more effective Organization. In your opinion, what the most immediate changes needed in the Organization are?

■ **Ambassador:** Pakistan appreciates the work of the EPG. Pakistan believes that EPG had very rightly identified the areas needing attention. However, active participation in the activities of the ECO by all the member states, strong political will to honour and



implement the decisions, and payment of contributions in timely manner shall be given preference.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Pakistan will host the next ECO Summit and the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. This will be the beginning of Pakistan Chairmanship in ECO.

What will be the main issues Pakistan may push for during its Chairmanship?

■ **Ambassador:** As I have earlier stated that being founding member, Pakistan gives high importance to all activities of the ECO. During its chairmanship, Pakistan would like to push for the implementation of ECOTA, revival of ECO container train, evaluation of the performance of bodies/organizations working under the umbrella of ECO, and streamlining of ECO Audit process.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Last, but not the least. Please share with our readers your other views and comments not addressed in previous questions.

■ **Ambassador:** The ECO reform process is in progress. It is the time to review scale of assessments and re-distribution of posts, post 2015.

After revised scale of assessments, member states having less or nil representation in the ECO Secretariat shall be given an opportunity to nominate their officials. It will not only give them a "we" feeling, rather also give them a responsibility to honour and own the decisions of the Organization. Moreover, there are number of agreements which have not been signed by all member states. It would be in the interest of the Organization, if all members could sign and ratify them.

number of agreements which have not been signed by all member states. It would be in the interest of the Organization, if all members could sign and ratify them.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Thank you very much for your time.

Interview with Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic in Tehran



H.E. Ambassador A. Osmonaliev is representing the Kyrgyz Republic in the Economic Cooperation Organization. Ambassador Osmonaliev kindly accepted our request for interview which is translated from Russian:

■ **ECO Chronicle:** In 1992, seven countries, including Kyrgyz Republic, joined the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

What made your Government to decide to become a member of a regional arrangement such as ECO? What is your assessment of ECO membership for more than 2 decades?

■ **Ambassador:** As you know, after gaining independence, the Kyrgyz Republic started paving its sovereign way towards political and economic integration with outside world. Membership of the Kyrgyz Republic in such organization

as ECO pursued a number of goals: be involved in the process of regional economic integration to solve the issues of national economic development; revival of ancient historical, cultural and humanitarian relations with nations of the region, including the Islamic Republic of Iran.

ECO is a big regional organization with high potential, rich natural resources and communication networks, uniting the states of the Eurasian continent with total population more than 440 million people.

In the wide range of cooperation fields within the Organization, the priority ones for the Kyrgyz Republic are such fields as transport and communications, trade and energy.

Correlations in agriculture, science and technology, environment and health care and fight against illicit drug trafficking are also quite important. In this regard I would like to emphasize that according to the Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015 was declared as a Year of Strengthening National Economy.

Priority direction of cooperation, bilateral as well as multilateral, should be considered as the essential task for strengthening of statehood and national economy.

Intentions of ECO member states to increase the efficiency of its activity and transformation of Organization into a reliable instrument of multilateral cooperation in the Region are fully supported by Kyrgyzstan.

An increasing role of ECO in the system of global economic relations gives grounds to allege that

membership of the Kyrgyz Republic in ECO is perspective and politically promising.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Regional cooperation on transport and transit has always been a priority area within ECO.

The special needs and requirements of its land-locked Member States have also been addressed in the ECO planning for rail and road corridors. As a land-locked country, what do you expect more from ECO?

■ **Ambassador:** One of the priority directions of cooperation within ECO for the Kyrgyz Republic, as a land-locked country, is transport. Development of regional infrastructure is a necessary condition for effective intra and inter regional cooperation in all other spheres of interaction.

Together with other ECO member countries we actively participate in development of "East-West"

and "North-South" transport corridors which provide Central Asian countries including Kyrgyzstan an access to high seas through the Persian Gulf of Iran.

We attach great importance to promotion of "China-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran" railway construction project which is included in the ECO Plan of Actions on development of transport and communications in the ECO Region.

We also support measures for extension of the route of the "Istanbul-Almaty" Container Train to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Speaking of trade and investment, it should be noted that in 2012 intraregional trade in the





ECO Region was 8.9%, whereas in 2002 it was 5.3%.

Unfortunately, trade development during ten years is slight and impeded by tariff and non-tariff barriers, high transport costs, lack of sufficient information on potential trade opportunities of member states.

Kyrgyzstan also shows interest in the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) but final decision on the accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Agreement will be made only after the Republic joins the Customs Union.

The Kyrgyz Republic is also much interested in becoming a member of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) which can grant loans for implementation of large regional projects. It should be noted that in 2013, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic submitted its application for membership in ETDB which was positively considered by the management of the bank. At the moment Kyrgyzstan is following up domestic procedures on joining ETDB.

As far as energy is concerned, it should be mentioned that energy cooperation is a priority for Kyrgyzstan as a country with rich hydro energy resources and it is not a secret that ECO Region has huge potential in this area.

For example, two projects: "ECO Regional Electricity Market" and "Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market" (CASAREM) - "CASA-1000" covers six ECO member states. We are interested in the operationalization of these projects not only separately but also having joint activities in future. For the Kyrgyz Republic these markets create excellent prospects to develop energy sector at regional level.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** ECO Region is one of the unique regions in the world neighbouring Europe, China, Russia and the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf.

China is bordering five out of 10 ECO Member States, making ECO-China relationship extremely important. As an ECO country with relatively long border with China, how Kyrgyz Republic perceive an envisaged ECO-China partnership?

■ **Ambassador:** China is the World's Economic State as of today. Since the Great Deng Xiaoping' period (1978) China has been rapidly developing (more than 10% per annum) for the past 30 years and becoming a Global World Power.

It supports political, economic and trade rela-



tions with the all neighbouring ECO countries. So, for the Central Asian countries China is the investor-country participating in major economic projects. Bilateral trade of the Kyrgyz Republic with the PR China is about 4 billion US Dollars. Its commodity circulation with the other Central Asian countries is also substantial.

Iran's import-export operations with China amounted to 48 billion US Dollars for the end 2014. So, ECO-China partnership can only be considered as an objective factor and complementary element. As the Germans say, "do not fight whom I am dealing with".

■ **ECO Chronicle:** As the last question, Mr. Ambassador, how do you see ECO in the future as it is undertaking a reform process now?

■ **Ambassador:** The need for reforms in the ECO is stipulated by the challenges and needs of today. ECO possesses all the necessary potential to become an effective mechanism for regional integration as well as a platform for enabling the member countries of the Organization to enter into the world economy.

Kyrgyzstan considers ECO as the promising Organization and intends to continue active participation in its activities. Today the ECO is an important component of our country's tendency in the development of multilateral cooperation with the ECO countries and in the regional integration processes.

ECO member countries represent one of the richest regions in the world.

ECO member-countries in the future are to cooperate in all economic parameters and build joint capacity for the opportunities offered by energy reserves, mineral resources and human potential.

The political platform for our cooperation is reliable and is tested by time. In terms of economy, the economies of the ECO member-states are mutually complementary. So taking into account these determinants we should outline the good dynamics of cooperation between the ECO countries for foreseeable future.

■ **ECO Chronicle:** Thank you very much for your time.

Lack of consensus on the best practices, along with the ambiguous nature of environmental issues are two of the factors hindering sound decision making and policy setting in this field and makes the outcomes and consequences of these decisions and policies hard to justify. Accurate measure and scale in hand, as a base and criteria for justification and comparison, can make policymakers more confident about sustainability and objectivity of their choices.

in order to harmonize national strategies and achieve a common understanding of the importance of protecting the environment and promoting best practices among Member States; collecting and comparing national reports sometimes could cause misunderstanding or even be misleading.

The Millennium Development Goal number 7 gives a high priority to ensuring environmental sustainability in the global policy agenda. Having this in mind and in order to

EPI is constructed through the calculation and aggregation of 20 indicators reflecting national-level environmental data. These indicators are combined into nine issue categories, each of which fits under one of two overarching objectives, i.e. Environmental Health and Ecosystem Vitality. These two are further divided into nine issue categories that span high-priority environmental policy issues, including air quality, forests, fisheries, and climate and energy, among others (Figure 1).



Trends of Environmental Performance in the

Due to the different assessment methods, measurement robustness and inconsistency database credibility, when it comes to gaining a regional view, and in case of working in the framework of a regional organization such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO),

monitor trends of changes, the Environmental Sustainability Index and Environmental Performance Index (the EPI) have been developed by the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy (YCEL) and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) at Columbia University in cooperation with the World Economic Forum.

The 2014 Environmental Performance Index ranks 178 countries on how well they perform on high-priority environmental issues in two broad policy areas: protection of human health from environmental harm and protection of ecosystems (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Environmental Performance Index 2014 (Source: epi.yale.edu/)

Among ECO Member States, Republic of Azerbaijan with the EPI Score of 55.47 has had the highest global rank (63), closely followed by Turkey (score= 54.91) in 66th; whereas Iran (score 51.08) and Kazakhstan (score= 51.07) in neighbouring 83rd and 84th places are the third and fourth regional performers. On the other end of the spectrum, one of the ECO Member States, i.e. Afghanistan, suffering

from decades of war, insecurity and instability, is among the five worst global environmental performers in this year.

While the Country apparently faces numerous environmental challenges, a few signs of hope has emerged as Afghanistan at the same time has by far the highest 10-Year growth (12.17%) in the region, and signs of hope have already appeared in the form of improvement in the

access to clean drinking water and dramatic declines in the child mortality rates(Figure 3).

Comparing Environmental Health index among ECO Member States shows that Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkey have the best regional scores (Figure 4), but, in Ecosystem Vitality, Republic of Azerbaijan (score= 52.87) is the conspicuous regional top standing.

By: Asghar Mohammadi Fazel

ECO Region

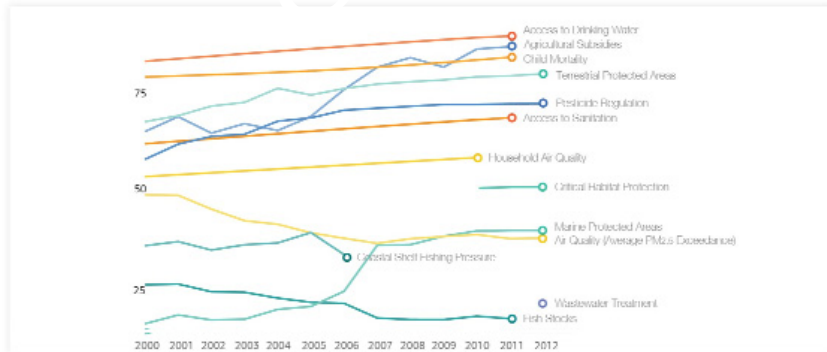


Figure 2. Global indicators for most of the policy issues assessed by the EPI (Source: epi.yale.edu).

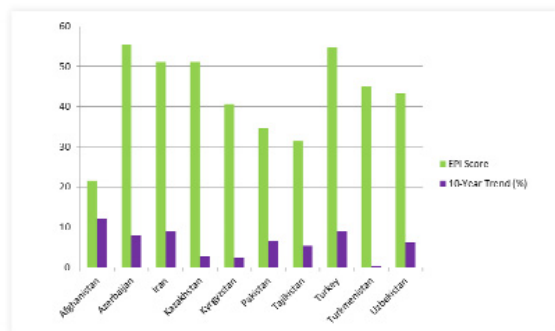


Figure 3. EPI Score and 10-Year trend of EPI among ECO Member States in 2014

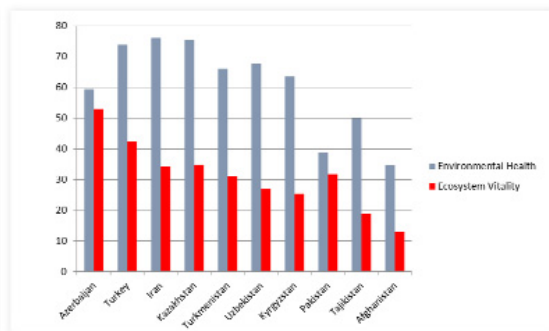


Figure 4. Environmental Health and Ecosystem Vitality among ECO Member States in 2014

In Health Impacts which deals with the probability of death between a child's first and fifth birthdays, the region's performance is worryingly lower than Eurasia and Middle East. Reducing child mortality was declared the fourth Millennium Development Goal by the UN in 2000 and as it is strongly influenced by environmental factors, including air pollution, airborne particulates, and lack of access to clean drinking water, achieving it will require great improvements to environmental performance along with access to improved health care.

In terms of Air Quality which measures population-weighted exposure to fine particulate matter and percentage of the population burning solid fuel for cooking, Figure 5 illustrates striking differences among Member States from the 24th rank of Turkmenistan (score= 98.2) which is higher than any other Asian state except

Singapore (score 98.33), followed distantly by Kazakhstan (score 95.92) and Iran (score 88.81) in 44th and 58th ranks respectively, to Pakistan in 175th place, i.e. just 3 ranks above the bottom most of the table. Also, thanks to the first global rank in the Average Exposure to PM 2.5 and Household Air Quality with 100 scores both, the best score a Member State has got in a single indicator is 98.2 of Air Quality in Turkmenistan.

In Water and Sanitation, as the last Environmental Health index that tracks percentage of population with access to improved drinking water sources and improved sanitation, including pit latrines and toilets, despite considerable fluctuation among different Member States, Iran(score=75.21), enjoying a steady rise in the access to drinking water and sanitation since 1990, leads the region at the 47th rank, ahead of Turkey (score= 71.43) and Uzbekistan (score=

68.59) in 53rd and 58th places.

Among Ecosystem Vitality Indices(Figure 6),the best ECO performer in Water Resources tracks how well countries treat wastewater from households and industrial sources before releasing it back into the environment, is Turkey (score= 48.93) at 42nd rank, distantly followed by Kazakhstan (score 30.5) and Republic of Azerbaijan (score= 13.15) in 53rd and 77th positions while 7 other Member States have disappointingly less than 10 scores.

Also, as it can be seen on Figure 6, in 2014 Kyrgyzstan (score=94)at the 10th global ranking and Iran (score=92) at the 17th global ranking are by far the leading ECO performers in Agriculture index which assesses policies related to the effects of intensive agriculture, specifically farm subsidies and pesticide regulation and Kazakhstan (score=37.13) stands at the 165th global level.

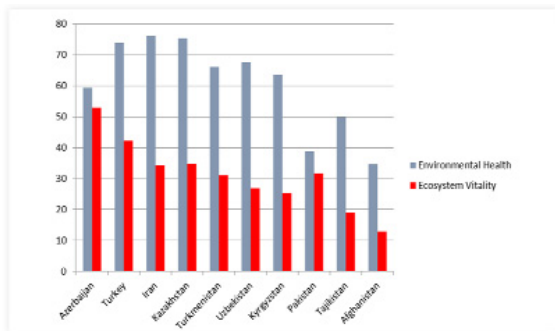


Figure 5.Environmental Health Indices in ECO Member States in 2014

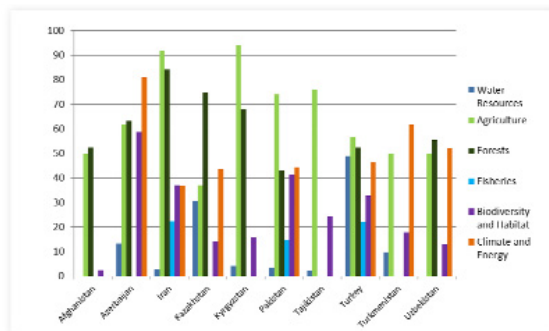


Figure 6- Ecosystem Vitality Indices in ECO Member States in 2014

The Change in Forest Cover indicator measures the percent change in forest cover between 2000 and 2012 in areas with greater than 50 percent tree cover, including forest loss, reforestation (forest restoration or replanting), and afforestation (conversion of bare or cultivated land into forest) and the region's leading country, Iran (score= 84.12), shares Georgia and Bulgaria at the 16th global rank, followed by Kazakhstan (score=74.82) and Kyrgyzstan (score= 68.23) in 19th and 23rd global ranks. Data of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are not provided in this list.

The next Ecosystem Vitality sub index is Fisheries that assesses countries' fishing practices - both the use of heavy equipment and the size of the catch and globally only 2 percent of the countries meet the goal for Coastal shelf Fishing Pressure. Considering the Caspian Sea as a lake (closed water body), seven ECO Member States are landlocked so they are not compared in the EPI list, and just Iran (score= 22.41), Turkey (score=21.9) and Pakistan (score= 14.61) are at 68th, 70th and 90th global ranks.

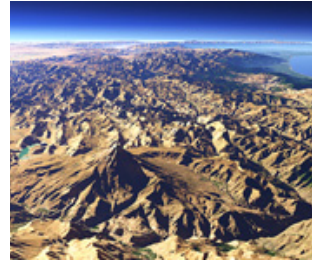
Moreover, Figure 6 also shows that the Republic of Azerbaijan (score= 58.66) at the 96th global place is the obvious highest ranking regional country in the Biodiversity and Habitat index which tracks the protection of terrestrial and marine areas as well as threatened or endangered species, followed by Pakistan (score= 41.43), Iran (score= 37.06) and Turkey (score= 32.62) in 120, 128 and 133 global ranks and Afghanistan with a score of 2.52 is the 169th Country of the world in this index.

According to EPI 2014, Climate and Energy assesses mitigation

actions and access to energy relative to a country's level of economic development. Whereas other indicator scores reflect the degree to which a country meets a target, there are no globally agreed-upon targets for CO2 reduction. Therefore, the Climate and Energy indicators should not be interpreted as proximity-to-target, but rather a relative position globally. Instead, these indicators measure countries' ability to reduce the intensity of carbon emissions over time.

Climate and Energy of Azerbaijan (score= 80.88), the clear regional leader, in the 5th rank is the highest place an ECO Member State has among different indicators in global stage. Azerbaijan enjoys the first global rank in Carbon Intensity (Score=90) and Access to

and Technology should maximize efforts to enhance cooperation and concerted actions among the Member States under the Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming and coordinate the regional efforts



Electricity (Score=100) and is by far ahead of runner-up Turkmenistan (score= 61.61) in the 36th global rank. Unfortunately, information of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan on this index are not provided.

In conclusion, it could be said that the Environmental Performance Index in 2014 provides strong evidence that generally the environment in the ECO Region is not in a very good condition and in majority of the indices needs taking more decisive actions at national and regional levels. As recognized in the Istanbul Declaration, in order to address this situation, the Economic Cooperation Organization and ECO Institute of Environmental Science



towards development of environmentally sound mechanisms and innovating solutions for facing the prevailing challenges.

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Regional integration in ECO: an overview

By: Hussain Haider

Over past few decades, regional economic integration has gained tremendous momentum and bilateral and plurilateral trading arrangements have emerged as arguably the most powerful factor in international trade. Countries across the globe are entering into such arrangements with regional partners as the most logical choice.

Enhanced regional trade and investment cooperation leading to economic integration of the member countries also lies at the heart of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Reference may be made to the Treaty of Izmir, the founding document of ECO, which commits the member countries to take "measures towards progressive removal of trade barriers within ECO region and expansion of intra and inter-regional trade." Since

regional and multilateral integration go hand in hand, ECO attaches high importance to the integration of its members into the global economy. One of the objectives of the Organization as outlined in the Treaty of Izmir is "to provide for gradual and smooth integration of the economies of the Member States with the World Economy to ensure their fuller participation in the globalization process." The ECO Region has a significant potential to become more integrated through greater intra-regional trade and investment flows. ECO countries can provide easier access to each others' markets because of geographical proximity, as well as the shared economic, social and cultural characteristics.

However, ECO lags behind most other regions in terms of trade and economic integration. Besides, the global trade and investment inflows into the Region are well below the desired level and potential. In this write-up, an attempt has been made to (a) glance at the major trade and investment related indicators of ECO countries; (b) outline the ECO



initiatives and programmes to promote regional trade and investment cooperation; and (c) make suggestions to deepen the process of regional trade cooperation and integration as well upgrade the trade profile of the Region. The cumulative world trade of the 10 ECO countries reached US\$ 827 billion in 2013. This included exports of US\$ 371 billion and imports of US\$ 456 billion. ECO accounts for 2.2 percent of global exports, which, needless to emphasize, is well below the potential. For last several years, ECO's share in global exports has stuck between 2 and 3 percent. Within the ECO, the top exporter is Turkey, which accounts for nearly 49 percent of the total exports of the Region. The other major exporters are Kazakhstan, Iran, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan. Taken together, these four countries make up 94 percent of ECO's total exports. ECO's global trade between 2008 and 2013 is given in Table 1.

Table 1- ECO global trade

Year	Value in Billion US\$		Total Trade
	ECO global imports	ECO global exports	
2008	404	319	723
2009	266	234	500
2010	333	310	643
2011	431	423	854
2012	422	396	818
2013	456	371	827

Source: Comtrade data

It may be useful to look at ECO's export portfolio. The Region is endowed with a tremendous wealth of energy resources. Therefore, not surprisingly, mineral fuels have the lion's share (over 44 percent) in the Region's total exports. In all, ECO is principally an exporter of primary products and labour intensive manufactures, such as textiles and clothing. The share of high value-added, middle-to-high technology content products in the export basket is rather low. For instance, the share of machinery and mechanical appliances and electrical equipment in total ECO exports is as low as 3.3 percent and 2.5 percent respectively. One of the indicators to assess the performance of a regional economic organization is to look at the share of intra-region trade in world trade of the Region.

On this indicator as well, ECO needs a lot of improvement. The share of intra-ECO trade in total trade of the members is about 10 percent only.

Table 2: Intra-ECO Trade: Percentage share in Region's world trade

Year	Share in global exports of Members (%)
2010	7.7
2011	7.1
2012	11.1
2013	9.8

Source: Comtrade data

ECO has undertaken various initiatives to further the cause of trade cooperation and integration in the Region. These include putting in place the necessary legal and institutional frameworks, project and programmes to overcome supply-side constraints and raise export competitiveness and studies to point out the right policy measures. These initiatives can be briefly explained under the following four heads:

■ a. Trade Liberalization:

ECO is fully alive to the need to substantially reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers



(NTBs) to trade in the Region. ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), a preferential trading arrangement concluded in 2003, is the flagship trading arrangement of the ECO. Signed by five out of 10 Members of ECO, namely, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Tajikistan, ECOTA provides for reducing tariffs in the Region to a maximum of 15 percent over eight years on 80 percent of the traded goods. In addition, the Agreement covers NTBs, trade defence measures, and dispute settlement. The implementation of ECOTA will pave the

way for the members to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA). According to the 2011 ECO-PIDE Study on Trading Patterns in the ECO Region, trade in ECO can increase by a factor of eight in case of an FTA among the Member States. In addition, ECO is running a trade capacity building programme in the area of standardization and quality in collaboration with UNIDO, which constitutes an important step towards enhancing export competitiveness of Member States and elimination of NTBs.

Since bilateral and multilateral trade liberalization go hand in hand, ECO is also supporting the accession of its members to WTO through seminars. The accession to the WTO is important, because at present only four members of ECO are also members of the WTO.

■ b. Trade Facilitation & Promotion

Trade facilitation compliments trade liberalization by reducing the cost of doing business. ECO has two agreements for cooperation among the Members in customs matters, while preparation of a comprehensive ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement in pursuance of the decision of the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign is in progress. Building/up-gradation of rail and road network in the Region is also underway.

ECO also attaches high importance to collaboration among Members in trade promotion, particularly with regard to dissemination of commercial intelligence and projecting the enormous trade potential of the Region. The forum of ECO Heads of Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) has been set up to oversee trade promotion cooperation. An agreement on promoting cooperation among TPOs of Members is being drawn up.

■ c. Private sector cooperation

All over the world, private sector has emerged as the main engine of growth and trade promotion. Strengthening private sector cooperation is an important element of efforts for promoting regional trade. ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been encouraging coopera-

tion among private sectors of Member States. The ECO Business Forum has been institutionalized as a mechanism for shoring up cooperation and strengthening interaction among the private sectors of the Member States. These forums provide a useful platform for the private sector representative bodies to explore avenues of expansion in regional trade and multilateral cooperation.

■ d. Trade Finance

ECO is always looking out for ways and means to provide sufficient finance to support its programmes and activities. In this regard, the Organization seeks to avail itself of both internal and external resources. To its credit, the ECO has set up ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECOTDB) to serve as a principal source of trade finance in the Region. Based in Istanbul, ECOTDB aims at mobilizing resources for expanding intra-regional trade and accelerating economic development of the Member Countries. At present, five out of 10 Member States are Members of the Bank. Over last couple of years, the membership of the bank has been on the increase. In addition, ECO has a good record of collaboration with notable international organizations and institutions in trade project financing.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned initiatives, a lot of ground needs to be covered for a significant increase in intra-region and global trade of the Members. Here are a few suggestions. One, ECO countries need to implement the principal agreed instrument of regional integration, namely, ECOTA. ECO is arguably the only region where Members do not grant preferential market access to exports from one another.

Two, ECO is largely an exporter of primary products and low-technology content labour intensive manufactures. ECO countries need to move towards export of high value added, medium-to-high technology content exports. ECO countries by and large depend on a handful of products for their export earnings. They need to broaden their export profile by upgrading and diversifying their industrial structure. A country's export profile and performance largely reflects its supply-side constraints, so the same need to be removed.

Finally, as in the case of various other regional blocs, the ECO countries can establish regional production networks whereby different stages in the manufacturing of a product can be carried out in different countries as per their comparative advantage. This will not only promote intra-region trade but also drive up global trade of member countries. Products relating to auto and textiles industries may be considered for this vertical integration.

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 About the author: Mr. Hussain Haider is Director for Trade & Investment in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

ECO's

External Relations

By: Jehanzeb Khan



The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) represents a unique intergovernmental platform that brings together countries from Central Asia, Caucuses, South and West Asia. Because of its diverse membership, location and the potential to contribute to the economic growth of the member countries, ECO is drawing renewed interest of the regional and global partners for jointly addressing the socio-economic development needs of the region. In order to support its agenda and activities in a variety of areas, enhancement of close cooperative relations with regional and international organizations and relevant non-member

states is considered an important priority of ECO.

In view of the directives of the various decision-making bodies of the Organization, ECO has been engaged in developing and promoting long-term and mutually beneficial relations with a host of regional and international partners in a focused and sustained manner. Over the period of more than two decades, ECO had strived to develop its cooperative relations with major international and regional organizations in line with the 'Treaty of Izmir', the Organization's basic document. The Organization has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with more than forty regional/international organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

The main objective guiding ECO's efforts in developing cooperative relations with international and regional organizations is to secure

their technical and financial assistance for ECO's activities in the priority areas including, among others, trade, transport, agriculture, energy, environment, disaster reduction and drugs control. Such cooperative relations with regional and international organizations and relevant non-member states also help ECO in fulfilling its socio-economic agenda aimed at enhancing growth and prosperity of the member countries.

In ECO's efforts to achieve regional integration and socio-economic development, the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations have been the former's main partners. The Economic Cooperation Organization enjoys

observer status at the UN General Assembly and participates in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in this capacity. Biennial resolutions adopted by the General Assembly provide the mandate and basis for deepening the existing cooperation with the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations for the purpose of accelerating regional integration and ensuring sustainable development in the ECO Member States.

Among the partners of ECO within the United Nations system, the major ones include the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

These UN agencies and programmes have been extending the required support to the ECO for the implementation of its projects and activities in a number of important sectoral areas. The assistance is aimed at ensuring food security, achieving MDGs, trade promotion, environmental sustainability, cooperating in the field of agriculture, addressing the special needs of the land locked countries and combating drug trafficking and organized crime.

For the purpose of enhancing

trade capacities of the ECO Member States, ECO is currently being supported by UNIDO for strengthening the Standards, Metrology, Testing and Quality infrastructure of the countries. After successful completion of the project's first two phases, the third phase of the project is currently under implementation. ECO remains committed to broadening its collaboration with organizations like UNIDO for ensuring growth

Region, joint initiatives are being explored in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) that can promote cooperation in the transit trade and transport areas in this region.



and prosperity through inclusive and sustainable industrial development. ECO is pursuing a long-term cooperative relationship with FAO for implementation of regional projects under the Regional Programme for Food Security aimed at supporting sustainable agricultural development of the member countries.

In order to address the development challenges faced by the seven landlocked countries in the ECO

Recently the Secretary General represented ECO at the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the Second UNIDO Forum on Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) held on November 3-5, 2014 in Vienna, where he highlighted the role of regional cooperation in addressing

the special needs of the region's landlocked Member States.

Contacts have also been reactivated with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for developing a new framework for cooperation in the areas of environment and biodiversity conservation. A meeting was held between ECO and UNEP officials at Nairobi, Kenya in June 2014 on the sidelines of the first "United Nations Environment Assembly".

In addition to its cooperative relations with the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations, the Economic Cooperation Organization also maintains contacts with other regional and international organizations for supporting the development activities in the areas of common interest. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ECO held their 14th Joint Ministerial Meeting in September 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the sidelines of the General Assembly session. In view of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two sides, joint events and activities are planned to be held by the two organizations for developing cooperation in the areas of tourism and business promotion.

ECO is also exploring ways and means to establish cooperation with the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in areas of common interest, specifically in the areas of environment and energy. Earlier, the Secretary General represented ECO at the 4th Summit of the CICA, held in Shanghai, China on May 21, 2014, where he highlighted the role of ECO in supporting the initiatives aimed at sustainable development of the member coun-

tries. The Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination Unit of the ECO has been an implementing partner of the EU-funded Project on "Fight against Trafficking from/to Afghanistan", which was recently brought to successful completion. The project has played a vital role in strengthening regional cooperation for the purpose of combating drugs trafficking and organized crime that have the potential to adversely affect the regional economies.

In September 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ECO and the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) that envisages cooperation in a number of important areas including trade, transport, tourism, environment and sustainable development among others.

ECO has recently initiated cooperation with the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) with an objective to cope with the migration phenomenon in an effective manner and to promote innovative migration governance in the regional countries. A regional training within the framework of the Silk Routes Partnership project was co-organized by ECO and ICMPD on 26-28 November 2014 at the ECO Secretariat. The training focused on the themes of legal and labour migration and integration and was attended by the representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and relevant experts from the European Union, the Swedish Migration Board and ICMPD.

Non-ECO member states that share common goals of regional integration are being engaged to support the development activities in the Region. The ECO Council of Ministers (COM), in its 20th Meeting granted observer status to the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS) and the

Turkish Cypriot State. On the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the UN General Assembly, the ECO Secretary General held bilateral meetings with the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Cypriot State during which it was agreed to strengthen the cooperation of ECO with the two observers in the coming period.

Contact Groups of ECO Ambassadors in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Rome, Nairobi, Bangkok, Jeddah, and Jakarta are in place to secure technical and financial assistance of the agencies and organizations based in these cities for ECO's projects and activities. Keeping in view the ECO Region's diverse membership, its potential to contribute to the overall regional growth and the breadth of the sectoral areas it covers; there is a general willingness on the part of regional and international organizations to engage with ECO in contributing to the growth and prosperity of the member countries and supporting the regional development agenda. There exist synergies and complementarities between ECO and other international and regional players which are being exploited to realize ECO's overall goals of socio-economic development through regional cooperation. ECO remains committed to building upon these synergies in the period ahead for the betterment of the Region and the world.

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ECO Countries Health Profile Report 2015

Review: by Javad Heidari ¹

This publication is a contribution to the ECO attempts to address health condition in the Region. Published by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Report also constituted a timely contribution to the discussions of the ECO High Level Experts Group Meeting on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) held on 21-22 January 2015.

The Report has started by the messages of Dr. Hasan Hashemi, Minister of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Dr. Shamil Aleskerov the ECO Secretary General. The Report contains health related data and indicators of ten ECO Member States. It provides a general overview about the health status of the ECO Region utilizing both national and international sources and studies.

Each country profile begins with a general information on history, culture, political system and economy continued by titles such as health system and health status. Indicators such as Maternal and under-5 Mortality rates, All-cause Mortality rates, Cause of Premature Deaths, Years Lived with Disability (YLDs), Disability-adjusted Life Years (DALYs), and Risk Factors are among those addressed in the Report for each country.

Tables, figures and graphs have been widely used in the Report to support its findings.

The Report shows clearly that there is still disparity among ECO Member States in health sector. Disparities in health indices in the ECO Region will make a strong case for regional collaboration.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are approaching their deadlines. In the meantime, the international community is setting new goals, the so called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Health related goals will remain on board when SDGs are endorsed by the UN General Assembly in Fall 2015.

ECO countries, as firmly shown in the recent HEGM on Health- related MDGs

in Tehran, are determined to develop regional arrangements for joint actions.

Any efforts to that end should be supported by researches and analysis. This is why reports such as "ECO Countries Health Profile Report 2015" can be instrumental provided that they can accommodate also the researchers' and analysts' needs.

As hoped by the ECO Secretary General in his message at the beginning of the Report, it is expected that this timely novelty by Iran can stimulate interests within the ECO for making this Report and reports as such more frequently published.

¹. Programme Officer in Charge of Health in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.



ECO Chess Cup 2014

Tehran- September 2014



Final Ranking crosstable after 9 Rounds

Rk.	Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts.
1	GM Ghaem Maghami Ehsan	2591	IRI	*	1	1/2	1/2	1/2	1	1	1	1/2	1	7.0
2	GM Dzhumaev Marat	2528	UZB	0	*	1/2	1	1	1/2	1	1	1/2	1	6.5
3	GM Mirzoev Azer	2553	AZE	1/2	1/2	*	1/2	1/2	1	1	1	1/2	1	6.5
4	IM Khusenkhojaev Muhammad	2402	TJK	1/2	0	1/2	*	1/2	1/2	1	1	1	1	6.0
5	GM Khusnutdinov Rustam	2482	KAZ	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	*	1/2	1/2	1/2	1	1/2	4.5
6	FM Tologontegin Semetey	2382	KGZ	0	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	*	1/2	0	1	1	4.0
7	IM Lodhi Mahmood	2330	PAK	0	0	0	0	1/2	1/2	*	1	1/2	1	3.5
8	Bayramgeldiyev Yusup	2216	TKM	0	0	0	0	1/2	1	0	*	1/2	1	3.0
9	FM Emiroglu Cankut	2359	TUR	1/2	1/2	1/2	0	0	0	1/2	1/2	*	1/2	3.0
10	Amini Habiboullah	0	AFG	0	0	0	0	1/2	0	0	0	1/2	*	1.0

Annotation:

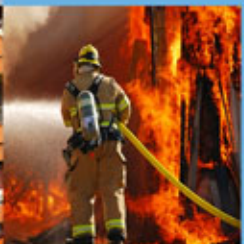
Tie Break1: Direct Encounter (The results of the players in the same point group)
 Tie Break2: The greater number of victories
 Tie Break3: Sonneborn-Berger-Tie-Break variable





UN World Conference on
Disaster Risk Reduction
14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan

Post-Sendai Global Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: An Active Regional Role for ECO



ECO

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