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ECO CHRONICLE

ECO Vision

Connectivity

Productivity

Integrity

Sustainability

Farewell

ECO Secretary General hosted a farewell dinner honouring services and support rendered to ECO by H.E. Ambassador Javanshir Akhundov, the outgoing Ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan.

This issue of the ECO Chronicle reflects ECO activities and events in the time of trending and emerging processes at the regional and global levels.

At the ECO level, the process of developing the new so-called "ECO Vision" started to get shape at different layers and stages, to be concluded later this year. At the global level, seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and post 2015 development agenda as well as Paris climate agreement were products of lengthy intergovernmental negotiating processes, concluded in September and December 2015 respectively, aiming at ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice and tackling challenges emanating from climate changes. In the meantime, ECO continued interactions with its existing partners within and outside UN system with a view to implementing joint activities of regional importance, and further expanding the ECO outreach. I have also shared some views on the above trends in detail in pages 48-51.

The activities and programmes of the ECO in the period above, which include those within ECO and between ECO and its partners in outside world, have also been partly reported through media and other ECO publications.

Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca
ECO Secretary General

CONTENTS

2-3 Contents

4-29 News in ECO

- ECO Secretary General in Baku
- Secretary General met with the Iran's Head of the Department of Environment
- ECO Secretary General paid an Official Visit to Republic of Tajikistan
- 2nd ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Nairobi
- ECO Ministers of Health convened their meeting in Geneva
- Third Meeting of Heads of ECO Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) was held in Ankara
- ECO Women Entrepreneurs Council visited the ECO Secretariat
- ECO Secretary General Attended ECO-CCI Meetings in Turkey
- ECO Secretary General visited the ECO-IEST in Karaj
- ECO Secretariat hosted the 26th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)
- Extraordinary Session of the ECO Council of Ministers
- ECO convened its Coordinating Meeting in Paris
- ECO Regional Training Workshop on Informal Economy
- ECO Day was celebrated in Tehran

...

30-47 External Relations

- ECO Secretary General attended the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference
- ECO Secretary General addressed the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs
- ECO Secretary General addressed NAM Health Ministerial Meeting in Geneva
- ECO and UNISDR Regional Office reviewed Cooperation
- ECO attended the ESCAP annual Ministerial Session
- ECO-UN Workshop on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis in Tehran

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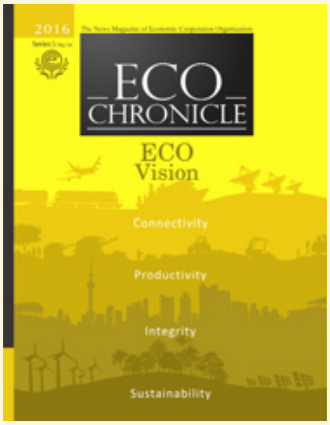
In The Name Of God

Front Cover



ECO
Vision

48-51 View
- ECO Vision

52-55 Interview
- Interview with H.E. Ambassador Javanshir Akhundov Permanent Representative of Republic of Azerbaijan in ECO

56-59 Report
- Positive Outlook towards D-8 Economic Development

60-65 Paper
- Millennium Development Goals in ECO Region

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ECO Secretary General in Baku

ECO CHRONICLE

ECO delegation led by the ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca paid an official visit to Baku on 27-29 January 2016. During the visit Secretary General was received by H.E. Ilham Aliyev, President of Republic of Azerbaijan. In his meeting with ECO Secretary General, President Aliyev highlighted that Azerbaijan is keen to pursue regional cooperation within ECO framework.

President also stressed the significance of economic cooperation, particularly enhancement of intra-regional trade among the Member States at a time when economic difficulties and crisis affected the world economy and assured that Republic of Azerbaijan will continue supporting ECO activities, particularly those pertaining to trade facilitation and investment promotion.

Describing Azerbaijan as one of the active members of ECO with strong sense of ownership, ECO Secretary General presented a report on ECO ongoing activities including the ECO reform process and preparation of ECO Vision 2025.

In his meeting with Azeri Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, the Secretary General expressed his satisfaction over the current state of ECO-Azerbaijan affairs and for active involvement of Republic of Azerbaijan in various ECO activities. He also recalled last ECO Summit in 2012 in Baku which opened new horizons and ambitious goals for Organization to become more dynamic and project-oriented regional grouping.

Ambassador Akca also referred to the efforts to implement projects of interests as well as the ongoing process of establishment of ECO Research Center. Minister Mammadyarov highlighted the great potential in the fields of intraregional trade, transport and multimodal corridors, connectivity and information technologies, including Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) - transnational fiber-optic line, energy, particularly transmission of electricity lines and power trade among ECO

Member States.

Minister further noted that development of transport infrastructure will enhance integration trends and in this regard emphasized the special importance of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara-Astara and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway routes for the Region.

In their bilateral discussions, ECO Secretary General and Azeri Minister of Economy H.E. Mr. Shahin Mustafayev reviewed the bilateral cooperation and explored areas of interests for further involvement of Republic of Azerbaijan, including in transit and trade facilitation, investment and export promotion.

Minister also highlighted the special interest in North-South and China-Central Asia-Europe transport corridors and Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) with three essential components - South Caucasus Pipeline, Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP).

ECO delegation also visited the "Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms under the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan" and exchanged views with Dr. Vilayat Valiyev, Director of the Institute and Editor-in-Chief of ECO Economic Journal on ways and means for early operationalization of ECO Research Center.

Secretary General met with the Iran's Head of the Department of Environment

ECO CHRONICLE

On October 26, 2015 the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca, paid a formal visit to the Department of Environment (DoE) of the Islamic Republic of Iran and met with H.E. Dr. Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Head of DoE.

During the Meeting the two sides discussed the environmental policies in the context of the sustainable development of the ECO Region, taking into account the challenges the Region is facing as well as the global trends. Secretary General also briefed about the Organization and its various environmental activities, including upcoming ECO events, the ongoing projects and the institutional capacity of ECO in the field of environment. The Secretary General sought the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ECO environmental activities.

ECO Secretary General paid an Official Visit to Republic of Tajikistan

ECO CHRONICLE

A high level ECO delegation headed by Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca paid and official visit to Republic of Tajikistan from 11 to 13 May 2016 and discussed with the Tajik authorities the status of ECO-Tajikistan relations as well as potential partnership frameworks within the priority areas of ECO.

The Delegation was received by H.E. Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan who welcomed Secretary General and other officials of the ECO Secretariat and stated that cooperation with ECO is a priority for his Government and Tajikistan has been taking necessary measures to further strengthen cooperation in the framework of ECO. He also briefed about recent infrastructure and energy development projects in the Country. ECO Secretary General in return thanked the Prime Minister for receiving ECO delegation and said that Tajikistan is a key member of ECO participating in all activities. Ambassador Akca further highlighted the priority areas of ECO, including trade, connectivity and energy and solicited active support of Tajikistan. He also briefed the Prime Minister about ongoing reform process within ECO and informed about ECO Vision-2025 preparation process. He underscored the importance of contributions and submissions from Member States during preparation of new Vision and informed that prior to the ECO Summit and COM, the Secretariat is planning to convene Meeting of ECO Ministers responsible for development and planning to consolidate and wrap-up all Vision-related contributions submitted by concerned stakeholders.

The Secretary General also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov who acknowledged a great potential for cooperation among ECO Member States and informed about three strategic goals for sustainable development of Tajikistan's economy, including ensuring energy independence; break in the communication deadlock and achieving food security. Secretary General also highlighted the good level of relations between Tajikistan and ECO which will be further increased through further collaboration. During the Meeting three priority issues were discussed in more details, namely, ECO Trade Agreement, KTAI project, and ECO Electricity Market. Minister for Foreign Affairs also invited ECO Secretariat to participate in a Symposium on Water for Sustainable Development to be held in August in Dushanbe.

ECO delegation also held bilateral talks with Minister of Economic Development and Trade, H.E. Mr. Ne'matullo Hikmatullozoda, which were mostly focused on ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA). The two sides expressed their concern about the low level intra-regional trade among ECO countries. Minister

Hikmatullozoda mentioned that removing trade barriers is of vital importance for ECO Region and Tajikistan has developed a strategy on simplification of import and export regulations. Ambassador Akca informed that the Secretariat has conducted researches on benefits of preferential trade within the Region which show substantial benefits for Tajikistan. Secretary General also raised other issues of bilateral interests such as Tajikistan's membership in ECO Trade and Development Bank and hosting the 4th Investment Forum. Tajik side assured the ECO delegation that Tajikistan is positively disposed to these proposals and after comprehensive study of the issues the Secretariat will be informed about the outcome.

In the Meeting with Minister of Transport Mr. Gandzhalzoda Rahmon Sherali, Secretary General highlighted that since majority of ECO Member States are LLDCs, connectivity and communications constitute very important areas of cooperation in the Region. Minister Gandzhalzoda in return emphasized the need for railroad connectivity, in particular KTAI project, and further development of logistic centers in the Region. He proposed to organize trainings/workshops on 'logistic center development'. Both sides were of the view that development of transport infrastructure will enhance integration trends, especially trade turnover, and in this regard highlighted special importance of KTAI project. The issue of holding of the ministerial meeting of the KTAI enroute countries was also discussed at the Meeting. Ambassador Akca further informed that there will be ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport where all transport related issues including KTAI Railway corridor will be comprehensively discussed.

During the visit to Tajikistan, the ECO delegation also met with the Minister of Energy and Water Resources, H.E. Mr. Usmonzoda Usmonali Junusali. At the beginning, Minister Usmonzoda provided brief information about the state of play of electricity supply of the Country, as well as the existing electricity exchange lines and power transmission lines projects. He reiterated a need for ECO Region Energy/Electricity Market and stated that Tajikistan is ready to work with all stakeholders in this regard. The ECO Secretary General presented an overview of energy profile of ECO and expressed hope that Tajikistan will lead the process of establishing ECO Energy Market. Minister Usmonzoda expressed Tajikistan's readiness to be actively involved in the process and to work with all concerned stakeholders for more energy connectivity within the Region and beyond.

On 12th May 2016, on the invitation of the Government of Republic of Tajikistan the ECO delegation headed by H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, known as CASA-1000, held near Dushanbe. The CASA-1000 represents landmark cooperation among four ECO Member States; namely, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Project is designed to transmit 1,300 MW of electricity from Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Initially, 1,000 MW will be provided, out of which Afghanistan and Pakistan will be receiving 300 MW and 700MW electricity respectively through a 1,222 kilometer transmission line. This transmission system envisages the creation of Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market that would eventually lead to intra-regional cooperation and integration.

ECO Ministers of Health convened their meeting in Geneva

The ECO Health Ministerial Meeting was held on 24 May on the sidelines of 69th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. It was attended by honorable Ministers and high level officials from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan. A delegation from the ECO Secretariat headed by Secretary General also attended the Meeting.

At the beginning of the Meeting, the Chairman Dr. Seyed Hasan HASHEMI, the Honorable Minister of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca, made opening remarks. In his opening remarks, Secretary General welcomed the participants and presented a comprehensive policy picture on ECO state of affairs and the prospects for the future in the context of the ECO Member States' immediate needs and concerns as well as the global development agenda, including SDGs. ECO Secretariat also briefed the Meeting about the latest situation of health cooperation in the ECO Region, including the MDGs achievements. Ministers and high level officials of the participating Member States also made their national statements depicting the current national health status and the future prospects for regional cooperation.

The Meeting had before it the draft "ECO Plan of Action on Health Cooperation for 2016-2025". The draft had been prepared by ECO Secretariat in cooperation with Ministry of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran and circulated among the Member States for their feedback. The Meeting discussed the draft and requested the Secretariat to incorporate the feedbacks of the Member States for further consideration for approval.

2nd ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Nairobi

ECO CHRONICLE

The 2nd ECO Consultative Ministerial Meeting on Environment was held on 27th May 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya, on the sidelines of the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA2). High ranking officials from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan , Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey as well as Deputy Executive Secretary of UNESCAP participated in the Meeting.

The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Dr. Ma'soumeh Ebtekar, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Head of Department of Environment. In her opening remarks, the Chairperson emphasized the importance and timeliness of this meeting as an opportunity for ECO Member States to discuss the common regional strategy on environment and climate change as we entered the post-Paris global climate architecture. She also touched upon common environmental challenges and urged the ECO Member States to adopt measures to tackle those challenges in a most coherent and synergic way via proper implementation of previously adopted decisions. While noting enhanced visibility and expanded outreach of the Secretariat within global climate community, the Chairperson called for closer interactions between ECO and relevant environmental bodies, particularly UNEP.

ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Alavi Sabzevari also briefed the Meeting on the state of play in ECO. He particularly referred to the ongoing preparation of the new ECO Vision where environment is expected to be granted a cross sectoral priority. He considered this Meeting a timely contribution into the ECO Vision Process. Deputy Secretary General also referred to the timeliness of this ECO ministerial consultations on the sidelines of the UNEA as an opportunity to enhance ECO`s visibility and outreach at the international level and to align the ECO agenda with the global trends.

The Meeting was also briefed by Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment about the work done and progress achieved since first consultative meeting in Nairobi in 2014. Recalling the important decision by the extraordinary meeting of ECO Minister of Foreign Affairs in New York on designating environment as a cross-sectoral priority of the Organization, he referred to two ECO environment ministerial meetings in Istanbul and Safranbolu as well as high level ECO coordinating session on the sidelines of the COP21 in Paris which together generated new momentum and driving forces for ECO environmental profile in post 2015. He also informed on recent projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing regional dialogue on common issues and challenges, including in the forestry, biodiversity, desertification and dust and sand storms, etc. It was highlighted that ECO has been granted observer status in UNEP, UNCCD, UNCBD and IPCC, and observership to UNFCCC is under consideration by the Convention. Moreover mutually beneficial cooperation with UNFF, UNESCAP, UNESCO and UNIDO has been reinvigorated.

Heads of delegation of ECO Member States also delivered statements on the current status of environment in their countries and shared their views on the possible ways of enhancing regional cooperation on environment. The Meeting agreed on a set of action points, to be followed by the Secretariat and the Member States, which included among others issues such as the imperative of streamlining of ECO environmental profile with SDGs, including the health and financial aspects; the need for early finalization of the "State of Environment (SoE) Report"; the need for coherent and synergic measures to implement the "Work Plan on Biodiversity in the ECO Region for 2016-2020"; timely and effective implementation of the ECO regional project on combating desertification and dust and sand storms; collective work on air pollution and waste management; continued expansion of ECO relationship with relevant international organizations and conventions; and importance of green economy and the need for securing green financing for ECO Region. The Meeting also decided to convene again on the sidelines of the next UNEA.

Third Meeting of Heads of ECO Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) was held in Ankara

ECO CHRONICLE

The 3rd Meeting of Heads of ECO Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) was held on May 11, 2016 in Ankara, Republic of Turkey. The Meeting was attended by representatives from Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Turkey. The representatives of ECO Secretariat and ECO-TDB also participated in the Meeting. Mr. Hakan KIZARTICI, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Economy of Republic of Turkey inaugurated the Meeting by his welcoming remarks and inaugural address. He highlighted that this meeting constitutes a great opportunity for the enhancement of economic relations among Member States. He further emphasized that joint trade promotion activities help to promote and strengthen economic partnerships within the Region, and act as a platform for the development of multilateral trade. At the opening session, Mr. Kanan NAZAROV, the Deputy Secretary General of ECO also delivered a statement and expressed his profound gratitude to the Government of Republic of Turkey for hosting this meeting and for the excellent hospitality extended to participants. He highlighted that the intra-regional trade is far below the potential the Region really possesses. He underscored the significance of expansion of trade for socio-economic uplift of the Region as envisaged in the Treaty of Izmir and ECO Vision-2015. He added that trade can create economies of scale and efficiencies which can lead to value addition and quality improvement.

In this regard, he mentioned the importance of the trade promotion tools, innovative marketing, trade financing and trade facilitation.

He underscored the expansion of membership of ECO Trade and Development Bank and stated that new trade promotion measures and early finalization of the agreements related to visa simplification and customs cooperation will play key role in achieving the Organization's objectives. In addition to this, he mentioned that enhanced role and activities of private sector and ECO-CCI in the Region, along with regular holding of Business Forums, Buyer-Seller meetings and Trade Fairs will further be beneficial. He emphasized that there is a need for strengthening and regular holding of meetings of the ECO Heads of Trade Promotion Organizations with high-level participation for making result-oriented and substantial contributions towards enhanced and true regional economic cooperation.

The Heads of the delegation from the Member States in their remarks underscored the importance of the "Draft Regional Protocol on Organizing Joint Trade Promotional Activities". It was decided that the ECO Secretariat would circulate the updated draft amongst the Member States so that they can complete the administrative formalities in their Capitals. Discussions on expansion of membership of ECO Trade and Development Bank and holding of Trade Fairs, Business Forum, etc. were made in the Meeting and some decisions were also made. The next Meeting would be held in Pakistan.

ECO Women Entrepreneurs Council visited the ECO Secretariat

ECO CHRONICLE A delegation of Women Entrepreneur Council of the ECO-Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI-WEC) visited the ECO Secretariat on 19 April 2016 and was received by ECO Secretary General Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca. The delegation, composed of Mrs. Seyedeh Fatemeh Moghimi from the ECO-CCI Iran Chapter and Ms. Safak Civici from ECO-CCI Turkey Chapter, informed the Secretary General on the activities of ECO-CCI Women Entrepreneurs Council, including their forthcoming events in Kayseri, Turkey which include "Workshop on Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurship and Capabilities of the ECO Region"; "Seminar on Balancing Family Life and Work or Role Model of Women"; "Exhibitions" where women participants can display their products; and tours to women entrepreneurs industries.

The visiting delegation highlighted that these events would be held with the objective to create awareness and to provide training and encouragement to women entrepreneurs to play greater role in the Member States. It was underlined that these events would provide an opportunity to interact with the entrepreneurs of other countries and to share the experiences. TOBB of Turkey has offered to host the events spanned over two days in the end of September or first week of October 2016 and hospitality package will be provided for 30-50 women (minimum 3 up to 5 women entrepreneurs from each Member State).

The delegation thanked H.E. Secretary General for his support for active participation and enhanced role of businesswomen in ECO trade.

The ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry Women Entrepreneur Council (ECO-CCI-WEC) was established on 24 July 2008 in Karachi in conformity with the decision made in the General Assembly Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The Women Entrepreneur Council was created with the aim to activate and tap the true potential of the Women Entrepreneurs in the ECO member countries in order to help increase the intra-regional trade of ECO and to promote the improvement of the skills of the Women Entrepreneurs of ECO Region through collaboration at the intraregional, interregional and international levels.

ECO Secretary General Attended ECO-CCI Meetings in Turkey

ECO CHRONICLE

The ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Hilal Ibrahim Akca attended the meetings of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) hosted by the Union of Chambers of Industry and Commodity Exchanges of Republic of Turkey (TOBB) in Ankara on 21-23 December 2015. The Secretary General addressed the inaugural and concluding sessions of six Specialized Committees, Executive Committee and General Assembly meetings where delegations of seven ECO Member States headed by the Presidents/ Representatives of National Chambers of Commerce and Industry actively participated in the Meetings and deliberated to explore the ways of further cooperation with the private sector. Six Sectoral Committees Meetings on Transportation; Trade Facilitation; Industry and Investment; Women Entrepreneurs Council (WEC); Tourism; and Arbitration as well as Business Rating Program (BRP) reviewed the progress made during the last year and decided on the future course of action.

The CCI Executive Council Meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Cevdet Yilmaz, Honourable Minister of Development of Republic of Turkey on 23 December 2015. He highlighted that ECO Region is one of the least integrated regions and intra-regional trade is not comparable with other regional blocs. He underlined the need for speeding up the preferential trading arrangements on priority basis with a view to ultimately moving towards Free Trade Area. He also urged on modernization of customs offices; standardization of working hours of customs offices; simplification of processes; as well as more investments in physical infrastructure and human resources which play key role in the growth and development of the economies.

ECO Secretary General in his statement underlined that the intra-regional trade of 8.1% is below the immense potential of the ECO Region despite having strong cultural ties and commonalities and existing complementarities in trade in the Region. He further highlighted that promotion of trade, better connectivity and energy are the highest priority areas of the Organization and through progress in these areas ECO objectives can be achievable. He maintained that for early implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), the key initiative of the Organization, more cooperation of all the stakeholders is imperative. He also referred to a set of agreements on trade liberalization; investment promotion; customs cooperation and "Customs Offences Databank"; visa facilitation; transport and other sectors which are in the process of signing or ratification and need due consideration of the Forum.

He added that with better understanding and keeping the long term aims in view, we can devise an effective strategy and introduce mechanisms for maximizing trade and economic growth with the private sector in the lead role. He shared with the delegates that the "ECO Vision 2025" is being drafted and requested for the ECO-CCI contributions.

ECO Secretary General visited the ECO-IEST in Karaj

ECO CHRONICLE

The ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca visited the "ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology" (ECO-IEST) and the "College of Environment of Iran" on February 16, 2016 in Karaj, Iran. During the visit, the Secretary General gave a lecture to an audience of faculty members and students of College of Environment. Secretary General and his delegation also had bilateral consultations with Dr. Fazel, President of ECO-IEST and his team on prospects for future cooperation.

In his address to the faculty members and students of "College of Environment" the Secretary General emphasized on the role of ECO Region and its individual Members in advancement of global post-2015 development agenda through institutional arrangements and regional outreach. He underlined that time has finally come for decision-makers and concerned stakeholder groups in ECO Region to shift from a development paradigm that focuses only on the rate of economic growth to one that will embrace all aspects of sustainable development guided by a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), resulting in shared prosperity, social progress and environmental sustainability.

He added that ECO gives specific priority to the environmental issues and common regional challenges and underlined the urgent need for crafting inclusive, sustainable and resilient climate agenda for ECO Region and mobilizing resources for adaptation and mitigation related actions.

During bilateral discussions with the ECO-IEST officials, the Secretary General was briefed by the President of ECO-IEST, Dr. Asghar Fazel, on recent activities of the Institute and the mandates given by ECO to ECO-IEST. The two sides reviewed the implementation status of ECO projects including the "Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming for ECO Member States (2016-2020)" and the "Regional Project to Combat Desertification with a Special Emphasis on Dust Haze and Sand Storm in the ECO Region".

They also elaborated on issues of coordination and synergy within the environmental profile of the ECO, including the upcoming ECO Biodiversity Week in Antalya (1-7 March 2016) and the next ECO Working Group on Environment in Islamabad, as well as other projects of regional importance.

ECO Secretariat hosted the 26th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)

ECO CHRONICLE

The Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) was held on 13-17 December 2015 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The Meeting, attended by the delegations from all the Member States and observers as well as ECO specialized agencies, regional institutions and affiliated bodies, was inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Seyed Abbas ARAGHCHI, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his inaugural address he warmly welcomed the distinguished delegates of the ECO Member States and said that the ECO has achieved many important milestones in its work for regional development through common efforts, building on the Member States' close cultural ties, shared historical past and joint plans for the future. During the inaugural session, the ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça also presented a comprehensive overview of the main activities of the Organization during 2015.

In the first plenary of the Meeting, the Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States and observers made their statements

outlining their country's policies and views on the programmes and activities of the Organization and highlighted the progress achieved on the implementation of the decisions taken during the 25th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council. The participating delegations were also briefed by the ECO regional institutions, specialized agencies and affiliated bodies on their activities and progress achieved since last RPC Meeting.

The Meeting continued its deliberations in the eight sectoral committees where the ongoing programmes and projects were thoroughly discussed and the ECO Work Programme for 2016 were developed.

On the sidelines of the RPC Meeting, a day-long Brainstorming Session on ECO Vision 2025 was also held on 15th December 2015 at Tehran Azadi Hotel. It was attended by the RPC Heads of Delegation, Permanent Representatives of ECO Member States, Heads of ECO institutions and officials from the ECO Secretariat. The participants shared their views on an optimal ECO Vision and deliberated on ECO priority areas for the next ten years.

Extraordinary Session of the ECO Council of Ministers

ECO CHRONICLE

An extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in New York on 2nd October 2015 on the sidelines of the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his capacity as the Chairman of the ECO Council of Ministers. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers/Representatives of the ECO Member States. The ECO Secretariat was represented by H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim AKCA, Secretary General of the Organization who briefed the Council on the recent activities of the Secretariat and progress made in various fields, inter alia, trade and investment; transport & communications; agriculture and food security; energy and environment; and international relations. Secretary General also presented a draft of ECO Vision for the period of 2016-2025. The Council appreciated the progress done by the Organization in various sectors and exchanged views about the on-going and future projects with potentially regional impact.The Member States acknowledged the efforts made by the Secretariat to expand its outreach and visibility via enhanced synergy and new partnership frameworks with other regional and international organizations.

The Meeting also deliberated and gave guidance for the new ECO Vision for the period of 2016-2025 initiated by the Secretariat and currently considered by relevant bodies of the Organization. The new Vision focuses on sectoral priorities of the Organization capturing key elements from the global post 2015 development agenda in line with recently adopted SDG's. The Council also exchanged views on the current situation of the Organization including its financial difficulties and necessary regulatory, institutional and budgetary reforms needed to make ECO more efficient and dynamic Organization.

In their concluding remarks, the Ministers/Representatives renewed their commitment to promote regional cooperation among the ECO Member States, as envisioned in the "Treaty of Izmir" and resolved to play an active role for the realization of the Organization's aims and objectives in various spheres. The Ministers/Representatives expressed their gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the current Chair of the ECO Council of Ministers, and in particular the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations and to the Secretariat for organizing the Meeting in a successful manner.

ECO convened its Coordinating Meeting in Paris

ECO CHRONICLE

ECO Senior Environment Officials convened their Coordinating Meeting on 7th December 2015, on the sidelines of the 21st UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Paris. Delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan as well as the representatives from the ECO Secretariat participated in the Meeting.

During the Meeting held under the chairmanship of Dr. Majid Shafipour from the Islamic Republic of Iran, participants discussed issues of common interest within the framework of global climate process. Issues such as the need to address, in a balanced and equitable manner, all three elements of climate change (adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation), with particular emphasis on adaptation; common trans-boundary and emerging challenges, like dust haze and sand storms; management of high carbon terrestrial and coastal ecosystems; academic cooperation for dissemina-

ECO Regional Training Workshop on Informal Economy

ECO CHRONICLE

The Regional Training Workshop on "Measuring the Informal Sector and the Non-observed Economy for ECO Member States" was jointly conducted by the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) from 4 to 7 October 2015 in Tehran. Seven ECO Member States attended the Workshop.

In the opening session of the Workshop, Dr. Rezaee, Head of the Statistical Research and Training Centre, ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Ali Ahsan Mangi and Mr. Alick Nyasulu, course coordinator from the UNSIAP made their opening statements and highlighted the impacts of organizing the Workshop on the promotion of knowledge of the ECO National Statistical Offices in compilation of National Accounts and macro-economic aggregates.

The 4-day Training Workshop was aimed at enhancing the capacity of participating organizations to take practical steps in improving their measurement of the contribution to the economy by the informal sector and non-observed economy.

It was coordinated by four resource persons from the United Nations Statistic Division (UNSD), the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UNSIAP), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and National Statistical Office of Slovakia.

The Workshop covered different topics related

tion of knowledge and awareness raising purposes; and cooperation on the enhanced use of renewable energies, specially hydropower were among those agreed by participants as areas for regional cooperation. The participants also requested the ECO Secretariat to continue to organize such ECO meetings on the sidelines of major global events, particularly next UNFCCC COPs meetings.

The ECO Coordinating Meeting concluded its work with common understanding that efforts and regional dialogue are needed to tackle adverse impacts of climate change in ECO Region and agreed to continue cooperation and coordination within ECO`s environmental dimension for the benefits of all Member States.

With 196 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has been ratified by 192 of the UNFCCC Parties.

The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

to the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA), recognition of Informal Sector and Non-observed Economy and its impacts on the labour market and employment as well as on the production of goods and services.

The Workshop also shared the experiences of participating counties on the implementation of the 2008 SNA and their initiatives for the measurement of the Informal Sector and the Non-observed Economy and provided the opportunity to the participants for group working and sharing the ideas for drafting the action plan for improvement of methodologies for coverage of Informal Sector and Non-observed Economy in their respective countries.

ECO Day was celebrated in Tehran

ECO CHRONICLE

In a ceremony on 30 November 2015, the "ECO Day 2015" was celebrated with the participation of the ambassadors and representatives of the Tehran diplomatic corps as well as authorities from the host country, the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his remarks to the high-level audience, the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca welcomed the participants and highlighted the core features of the regional cooperation within ECO framework in the last 3 decades. He also underscored that in the future ECO will be guided by the priorities of the Region while taking into account the emerging and trending global agenda.

H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaee, President of the Organization for Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran also made his statement at the Event. He referred to the ECO performance and achievements and assured the Organization of the continued support by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Event marked the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), created by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan in 1985 and enlarged to a 10-country organization in 1992 embracing 7 new members, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

ECO

ECO Biodiversity Week in Antalya

ECO CHRONICLE

The "ECO Biodiversity Week" was held in Antalya from 1-7 March 2016. The Week consisted of "Workshop for Capacity Building and Sharing Best Practices on Biodiversity", "2nd ECO Pre-COP Meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)", the "3rd Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity" and a field visit to different biodiversity and ecosystem areas in Antalya, including coastal nature conservation and national parks, Beydag National Park and Chimaira forest point.

Senior officials and experts from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey as well as a delegation from the Turkish Cypriot State (ECO observer), and the representatives of the ECO Secretariat and ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) attended the Antalya events.

The representatives of the UNESCO and Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) also joined the Meeting through Skype.

In his inaugural statement, the Deputy Governor of Antalya, Mr. Halil Serdar Cevheroglu, warmly welcomed all delegates to these timely events and emphasized on the need for adopting a holistic ECO regional approach in addressing biodiversity matters in the ECO Region.

He also assured the participants of the Turkey's support to ECO in facing biodiversity matters at regional and global levels. In the inaugural session, Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment briefed the participants about ECO`s environmental profile, including biodiversity.

ECO 5-Year Biodiversity Work Plan

The "3rd ECO Experts Group Meeting on Biodiversity" while reviewing the state of play of the regional cooperation on biodiversity finalized and approved in principle the "Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2016-2020)" which, inter alia, addresses issues such as establishing regional Clearing House Mechanism (CHM); enhancing public awareness and capacity building on trans-boundary cooperation, nature conservation & sustainable use of biodiversity; transfer of technology; integrated reporting system; sustainable pastoralism, rangeland and forest management; which will also help in achieving the objectives of the UNCBD and the Inter-Governmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

2nd ECO Pre-COP Meeting of the CBD

The "2nd ECO Pre-COP Meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)" was actively participated by the senior biodiversity officials from ECO Member States, as well as the representatives of the UNCBD, ECO Secretariat, and ECO-IEST.

The Meeting focused on ways and means to adopt common regional approaches during COP 13 with particular emphasis on transboundary challenges.

The Meeting produced key recommendations on, inter alia, genetic forest diversity in the ECO Region; synthesizing IPBES thematic assessments across the ECO Region (land degradation and restoration, sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services and invasive alien species); coherent approach in inter-agency coordination at the national level; integrating biodiversity and wildlife issues into potential ECO State of Environment (SoE) report; introduction of innovative solutions; integration of cross-cutting considerations on biodiversity, sustainable wildlife, agriculture and forest management; need for joint projects on managing terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems; revenue generation through legal hunting; common regional approaches towards interdicting illegal trade of endangered species; approaches towards Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols of UNCBD; coherence between Strategic Plan on Biodiversity and Aichi targets and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and coordinated approach within reporting mechanisms at national, regional & global levels.

ECO Joint Regional Training Course on Economic Modeling in Bishkek

The "Second Joint Regional Training Course on Economic Modeling for ECO Member States" was held on 22-26 February 2016 in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. The Training Course, themed "Impact Analysis for Economic Policy", was organized in collaboration with the "Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms (ISRER)" and "AEEC Research and Training Centre" of Republic of Azerbaijan as well as "Training Centre of the Ministry of Finance" of Kyrgyz Republic with the financial support of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Experts/officials from economic ministries, central banks, and leading research institutes of nine ECO Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic (Host country), Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan participated in the Training Programme. The ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by Director for Projects, Economic Research and Statistics (PERS) also participated in the Event.

The Training Course was inaugurated by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyz Republic. The President of the "Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms (ISRER)" and Mr. Akim Urmantayev, Director for Projects, Economic Research and Statistics of the ECO Secretariat also made introductory remarks in the opening session. Master trainers from Republic of Azerbaijan conducted the trainings.

The Training Course was concluded by H.E. Mr. Adylbek Kassymaliyev, the honorable Minister of Finance of Kyrgyz Republic who highlighted that it is the first occasion that nine ECO Member States have taken part in a training activity held at the Training Centre of the Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyz Republic and explained the need and usefulness of such trainings for the ECO Member States, especially the Central Asian States.

Wrap up
Meeting on
the ECO/IDB Customs Project in Turkey

ECO CHRONICLE

The "Wrap-up Meeting / Workshop on the ECO/IDB Feasibility Study on Implementation of Customs related provisions of TTFA and Preparation of Regional Programme for Modernization of Border Crossing Points" was held on 2nd March 2016 at the premises of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) in Istanbul.

The Representatives/National Consultants from nine ECO Member States and ECO International Consultant participated in the Meeting. The representatives of Islamic Development Bank and International Road Transport Union as well as the ECO Secretariat also attended the Event.

The Meeting was addressed by a number of participants, including Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi, the ECO Deputy Secretary General, Representative of Turkey (host), ECO International Consultant, IDB Representative and IRU representative.

The Meeting further continued its agenda with looking into the questionnaires completed by the National Consultants with a view to finalizing them as a major component of the final report to be provided by the International Consultant for the consideration and decision of the next meeting of the ECO Customs Transit Committee of the TTCC.

The Meeting also considered and discussed in details the National Transit Procedures in the ECO Member States with the inputs provided by the National Consultants, as well as analysis made by the International Consultant.

On 3rd March 2016, a field visit to Kapikule border crossing point (between Bulgaria and Turkey) was organized for the participants. Kapikule border crossing point has been set as a model under the Project.

The participants were welcomed by high officials from Turkey at the Kapikule border where the details of operations at the border were fully illustrated for the participants.

ECO Steering Committee on **Economic Research in Ankara**

ECO CHRONICLE

The 4th Meeting of the Permanent Steering Committee on Economic Research was jointly organized by the ECO Secretariat and the Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey on 3rd December 2015 in Ankara. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of seven Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Turkey (host). The delegation of the ECO Secretariat was headed by the Deputy Secretary General Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Dr. Ahmet Sabri Eroglu from Ministry of Development of Republic of Turkey. While highlighting the main points for economic development, he noted that the Meeting would provide the ground for ECO Member States to initiate and implement the projects and proposals for maintaining the sustainable economic growth in the ECO countries. In his statement, the ECO Deputy Secretary General also highlighted that the Meeting would play a very important role in further strengthening mutual cooperation in the field of economic research of the Region and underlined that this forum would also provide vital input for the ECO Vision 2025 and would give insights and set agenda for the coming years for economic research, policy and strategy of ECO Region in light of recent changes in the global developmental agenda through newly adopted "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) as well as new Paris Agreement negotiated under UNFCCC COP21.

The Meeting discussed a range of topics, activities and areas such as implementation of the ECO Joint Economic Research Programme and new proposals for regional projects; review of structure and content of ECO Annual Economic Report (AER); follow up to ECO capacity building on economic research; and the 3rd Forum of ECO Economic Think Tanks in 2016.

After deliberations, the Steering Committee decided on the topics to be chosen as themes for future research. The Meeting also reviewed ECO Plan of Action on Economic Research, the Work Plan for 2016 as well as early functioning of the ECO Research Centre in Baku (ERC) and also emphasized on early completion of Roster of ECO Leading Economic Research Institutions (ECO Economic Think Tanks) and its utilization in the priority areas.

ECO Transport Meetings in Ankara

7th Meeting of TTCC

ECO CHRONICLE The 7th Meeting of ECO Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) was held in Ankara on 12th November 2015. Delegations from nine ECO Member States as well as the representatives of the ECO Secretariat, International Road Transport Union (IRU), International Transport Companies Associations (ITCA) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (TOBB) participated in the Meeting.

The Meeting took concrete decisions and agreed on a number of measures for effective implementation of TTFA, including approval of the Work Programme of the TTFA Fund and preparation of a regional programme for implementation of customs provisions of the TTFA and the way forward; approval of the revised ECO Rail and Road Transit Routes Maps which shall remain valid for the next three years; and ways to promote accession to the relevant international conventions. The Meeting also considered at length and approved the Reports of the Auxiliary Bodies of TTCC including 6th Meeting of the Railway Committee (Tehran, May 2015), 4th Meeting of Customs Transit Committee (Kabul, August 2015), 6th Meeting of Insurance Committee (Istanbul, September 2014) and 7th Meeting of Road Committee (Ankara, November 2015).

7th Meeting of the Road Committee of TTCC

ECO CHRONICLE The 7th Meeting of the Road Committee of the ECO Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) was held in Ankara on 11th November 2015 with the participation of delegations from nine ECO Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan. The representatives of the ECO Secretariat as well as delegations from International Road Transport Union (IRU), International Transport Companies Associations (ITCA) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (TOBB) also attended the Meeting.

The Meeting considered various subjects related to implementation of the road related provisions of the TTFA, including exemption of traffic-in-transit by motor vehicles from customs duties, taxes and other levies and charges; issuance of annual multiple entry and transit visa for drivers and transport operators; issuance of road permit without any quotas/limitation; implementation of technical requirements for vehicles; mutual recognition of driving licenses and certificates of road worthiness of vehicles; review of progress on ITI and KTAI Road Corridors; and consideration of recommendations of the Regional Workshop on ADR. The Meeting also adopted the revised ECO Road Transit Routes Map and mandated its publication. The new map will remain valid for the next three years.

Antalya hosted the ECO "Final Regional Seed Workshop"

ECO CHRONICLE The "Final Regional Workshop on the Project of Seed Sector Development in the ECO Region" was organized by the "FAO Sub-regional Office for Central Asia" (FAO/SEC) in cooperation with the "ECO Seed Association" (ECOSA) on November 4-6, 2015 in Antalya, Turkey. Delegations from Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey and Uzbekistan as well as representatives of ECO Secretariat, FAO-SEC and FAO participated in the said Workshop.

During the Workshop, the status of the seed policy documents was discussed for finalization of the ECO Regional Seed Strategy. A possible regional seed agreement among ECO Member States was also discussed and recommended by the Workshop for further consideration by the Member States. During the Workshop, representatives of FAO-SEC briefed the participants on the objectives, framework and components of the project on Seed Sector Development in the Countries of the ECO. The representatives of Member States also presented information on the status of seed sector and seed policy in their countries.

ECO Workshop on Technology Parks

ECO CHRONICLE The "1st ECO Workshop on Management of Technology Parks and Commercialization" was held on 4-6 October 2015 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The Workshop was organized by the Pardis Technology Park (PTP) in cooperation with the ECO Secretariat. The representatives from Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran (host) and Kyrgyz Republic, as well as ECO Secretariat delegation participated in the Workshop. The Workshop was inaugurated by Mr. Mahdi Saffaarinia, President of Pardis Technology Park and Mr. Hayari Marasliogl, Deputy Secretary General of the ECO.

During the Workshop Iranian instructors, namely, Professor Darius Mahjoubi, Mr. Mohammad Reza Nazari, Mr. Mostafa Naghipourfar, Mr. Javad Hosseini and Mr. Hossein Dabbaghian delivered presentations on the challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship in developing countries, as well as on the entrepreneurship & enterprise development and financial aspects of commercialization. The participants from Republic of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyz Republic also delivered their country reports and presentations on policies with regard to science and technology and techno-parks in their countries. Participants also attended a technical visit arranged by the host organization to the Nano Exhibition in Tehran.

1st Meeting of ECO Geomatics Committee was held in Tehran

ECO CHRONICLE

The 1st Meeting of the ECO Geomatics Committee, hosted by the National Cartographic Center of Iran, was held in Tehran on 20-21 October 2015. The Meeting was attended by representatives from Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran (host), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkey. The ECO Secretariat Delegation led by Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment (EME) also attended the Meeting.

The Meeting reviewed and approved Terms of Reference (TOR) of the ECO Geomatics Committee and appointed Prof. Dr. Alireza A. Ardalan, Director General of the National Cartographic Center of Iran as the Secretary of the Committee for 2 years. The Meeting also deliberated on issues of ECO Economic Atlas and ECO Geomatics Journal and proposed establishment of 3 working groups for proper implementation and follow-up of the key actions agreed in the Meeting.

The participants also visited the National Cartographic Center of Iran (NCC) and became familiar with the main activities, functions and the capacities of the NCC, including the land registry services, cadastre services, map and atlas services, archive services, human resources management and land registry and cadastre modernization projects.

Second meeting of Attorneys General of the ECO Member States

ECO CHRONICLE

The 2nd meeting of Attorneys / Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States was co-hosted by the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Cassation and the Ministry of Justice of Republic of Turkey on 3-4 November in Antalya. It was attended by Attorneys/Prosecutors General and high level officials from Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey (host country). A delegation from Turkish Cypriot State also attended the Meeting as observer. A delegation of ECO Secretariat, headed by the Deputy Secretary General, also attended the Meeting.

The Meeting discussed the possible ways and means to enhance regional cooperation in fight against cross-border crimes. The Meeting also reviewed the recommendations made at the first meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General in 2012. The Meeting also adopted the "Antalya Declaration" where the participants expressed the resolve of the ECO Member States to devise effective regional mechanisms to combat transnational organized crimes, in particular, cybercrimes and human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Regional Workshop on ADR and Modernization of Border Crossing Points

ECO CHRONICLE The "Regional Workshop on ADR, Modernization of Border Crossing Points and Digital Tachograph System" was held at the headquarters of the "Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges" (TOBB) of Turkey in Ankara on 10 November 2015. The delegates from ECO Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan as well as representatives from the ECO Secretariat, IRU, International Transport Companies Associations (ITCA) and TOBB attended the Workshop.

The ECO International Consultant on customs transit under the ECO/IDB Feasibility Study for implementation of customs related provisions of TTFA also attended the Workshop.

The Workshop was meant to familiarize the Member States with functions and benefits of the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road and the process of Digital Tachograph System in Turkey.

The practical experiences of Turkey concerning modernization of border crossing points were also shared with participating delegations.

The Workshop was opened by Mr. Bülent Suloglu, from Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs, and Communications of Republic of Turkey. Mr. Mohsen Esperi, Director of Transport and Communications of the ECO Secretariat also made his remarks at the inauguration.

The Workshop comprised a process of dialogue and exchange of experiences among the concerned officials, national and international resource persons.

A site visit to TOBB Digital Tachograph Research and Application Center (STAUM) and Weight and Dimension Control Station was also arranged by the host authorities.

At the said Station, a vehicle was examined in presence of participants according to procedure of ADR and the related vehicle's requirements for carrying dangerous goods.

Iran-Turkey Bilateral Meeting on "ECO Regional Electricity Market" held in Shiraz

ECO CHRONICLE

The 2nd Bilateral Meeting between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Turkey, organized by the ECO Secretariat and hosted jointly by the Ministry of Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (TAVANIR) and Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC) was held on 10-11 May 2016 in Shiraz, Iran.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Mr. Abdolaziz Karimi, Head of Fars Regional Electricity Company and Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Director for EME. ECO Director briefed on the progress achieved so far since the inception Meeting in Tehran back in 2013, inter alia, consultations on hiring local consultants from Iran and Turkey under the supervision of an international consultant, preparation of a feasibility study for harmonizing and merging the electricity markets with financial and technical support of relevant IFIs/donors, ToR for a feasibility study, and possible allocation of seed money by Iran, Turkey and ECO Secretariat. He also underscored the need for the synergic work by concerned stakeholders to define roadmap for further action and accelerate the implementation of the project from current position.

The Meeting reviewed in detail the capacities and features of electricity markets of Turkey and Iran, including policy frameworks, auction mechanisms, certification, metering and data exchange, transmission charges, settlement and clearing, marketing structure, cross border electricity trade, technical capacities, services, tariff policies, price variations, transmission policies, data sharing, and the role of public and private sectors.

The Meeting, while discussing the way forward and possible roadmap, recommended to define criteria and guidelines for hiring the 3 consultants (2 local and one international) to prepare Feasibility Study for establishment of ECO REM. It was also decided to get approval of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives for funding the Feasiblity Study from ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund, with possibility of Iran and Turkey providing additional seed funding for hiring local consultants. The Meeting decided that the 3rd Iran-Turkey Bilateral Meeting will be held at the Managers Level in Turkey in 2016.

6th ECO Working Group Meeting on Environment in Islamabad

ECO CHRONICLE

The 6th ECO Working Group Meeting on Environment was hosted by the Ministry of Climate Change of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 1-2 June 2016 in Islamabad. The Meeting was attended by the Senior Environmental Officials from ECO Member States and observers, as well as UNESCO, ECO-IEST, ECO Science Foundation and the ECO Secretariat.

During 2-day extensive deliberations, the Meeting generated key outcome decisions on, among others, the Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2016-2020); establishment of Ad- hoc Task Force for "ECO Regional Adaptation Programme"; implementation of the key action points agreed by the 2nd ECO Consultative Meeting in Nairobi; ECO regional policies on addressing grave impacts of air pollution and waste management and trans-boundary water issues; ECO State of Environment (SOE) Report;

Seminar on Trade Patterns in the ECO Region and Accession of ECO Member States to WTO

ECO CHRONICLE

The Seminar on "Trade Patterns in the ECO Region and Accession of ECO Member States to WTO" was organized by the ECO Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and ECO Trade & Development Bank (ECOTDB) on May 02-03, 2016 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan, ECO Secretariat, World Trade Organization(WTO) and ECO Trade and Development Bank participated in the Seminar.The resource persons made presentations on various issues relevant to the Seminar. Each presentation was followed by discussion including questions and observations raised by the participants.

H.E. the Minister of Commerce of Pakistan Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan and H.E. the Director General of the WTO Mr. Roberto Azevêdo attended the morning session of the first day of the Seminar and addressed the participants. Both dignitaries, in their statements, underlined the importance of WTO membership in increasing the trade of the Member States and assured provision of full support and technical assistance to ECO Member States for their accession to WTO.

In the last session, the participants made recommendations for consideration of ECO Member States and the Secretariat after taking into account the statements, presentations and the views expressed during the Seminar. In the closing remarks, H.E. the Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan, Mr. Azmat Ali Ranjha, thanked the representatives for their participation as well as for their recommendations made during the course of deliberations. He appreciated the ECO Secretariat and ECO Trade and Development Bank for their contributions. He also handed out to each participant the Certificate of Attendance prepared by the host authorities of Pakistan.

SDGs implementation and access to funding from GCF and GEF; capacity building for the optimal ECO approach to green economy; etc.

The participating delegations also called on H.E. Mr. Zahid Hamid, Minister for Climate Change of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan who welcomed the delegates and appreciated ECO's efforts to stimulate regional dialogue on environmental concerns. H.E. Minister Hamid also briefed the visiting ECO delegates in detail about Pakistan's achieved goals, ongoing and future activities in various areas of environment, including organizational structure, constitutional amendments being carried out by the Government of Pakistan in climate change policy, biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management at provincial and federal levels, as well as on actions aimed to increase the current level of 5% forest coverage ratio in the Country. The honourable Minister called for robust cooperation among ECO Member States and requested the ECO Secretariat to put efforts in formulating regional policy frameworks for climate resilient pathways, with particular emphasis on coping with desertification problem in ECO Region. He assured the Secretariat and Member States of Government of Pakistan's full cooperation in environmental domain.

ECO Secretary General attended the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference

ECO CHRONICLE

ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca attended the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on 9 December 2015 in Islamabad. The Foreign Ministers of China, Iran, India, Turkey, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Latvia attended the Ministerial Conference which was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to Prime Minister of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs, and H.E. Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. Deputy Ministers of seven countries as well as high level officials from other countries and regional and international organizations also attended the Conference.

The Conference, themed as "Enhanced Cooperation for Countering Security Threats and Promoting Connectivity in the Heart of Asia Region", was jointly inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In his inaugural address, honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan reiterated Pakistan's firm commitment to Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and expressed his country's full support to enable an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process. Honourable President of Afghanistan, in his inaugural address, recognized Pakistan's important role for peace in Afghanistan and emphasized the need for closer bilateral and regional collaboration to address the security and economic challenges being faced by Afghanistan.

In his statement in the Ministerial Conference, ECO Secretary General highlighted the initiatives taken by ECO for Afghanistan and maintained that investing in Afghanistan is indispensable to stability, security and prosperity of Afghanistan. He added that ECO gives specific priority to Afghanistan and efforts in ECO are underway to that effect, including through connecting Central and South Asia and China with Europe through Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) corridor and some other road and railway routes/networks. He also referred to ECO Container Train network of Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Route. He alluded that ECO is also carrying out some projects under ECO Special Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca added that negotiations for customs facilitation, insurance, visa and security arrangements of some of the ECO corridors are also ongoing with direct and indirect bearing on Afghanistan. Besides, ECO is assisting acces-

sion of Afghanistan to the relevant international conventions which are instrumental to facilitating transport. He further added that enhanced participation and contribution for implementation of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) activities would yield high dividends for the whole region. He underscored that ECO initiatives in the fields of infrastructure and energy aim at strengthening regional economies through enhanced connectivity, liberalization of trade and promotion of investments and these would have impact on the lives of the people living in Afghanistan and the ECO Region as a whole.

Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, a joint initiative of Afghanistan and Turkey, started in November 2011 to provide a platform to discuss regional security and economic cooperation among Afghanistan and its neighbours. Fourteen participating countries, seventeen supporting countries and twelve regional and international organizations are part of the process.

CND 59th session

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM

ECO Secretary General addressed the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

ECO CHRONICLE

The ECO Secretary General, His Excellency Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca participated in the high level segment of the 59th Session of Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) held on 14-16 March 2016 in Vienna. The Meeting was convened to finalize the preparations for the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on World Drug Problem.

In his statement in the Event, Ambassador Akca highlighted the efforts of ECO to counter the drug problem as ECO Region is among the most drug-affected regions in the world. He underscored the need for more attention to the ECO Region by the United Nations and international community while formulating drug related policies and programmes. He further added that any global drug policy needs to be developed in the overarching context of "economic development" of the affected countries and regions which requires, among others, contributions into the socio-economic development of the affected countries and regions.

Ambassador Akca also held bilateral discussions with Mr. Yuri Fedotov, the Executive Director of UNODC, where both sides reviewed existing ECO-UNODC cooperation. The ECO Secretary General and UNODC Executive Director also exchanged views on possible future cooperation, including for realization of sustainable development goals and sustainable alternative livelihood for poppy growing farmers in Afghanistan. Both sides also expressed their readiness to continue to cooperate closely in their efforts to counter the menace of drugs and organized crime in the ECO Region.

ECO Secretary General addressed NAM Health Ministerial Meeting in Geneva

ECO CHRONICLE

ECO Secretary General Ambassador Halil Ibrahim AKCA attended the "9th Health Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)" in Geneva and addressed its opening session. The Meeting was held on 24 May 2016 in Geneva on the sidelines of the 69th World Health Assembly and chaired by H.E. Dr. Seyed Hasan HASHEMI, Minister of Health and Medical Education of the I.R. Iran.

In his addressed to the ministers and high level health officials of NAM countries, the ECO Secretary General briefed about the ECO activities and achievements, including in the area of MDGs health related goals as well as the regional prospects for SDGs implementation. He also informed that the ECO Member States have since long decided to establish regional arrangements for cooperation to improve health situation in the countries and the Region as a whole. He noted that the Non-aligned Movement, as the principal framework addressing health agenda in the developing world can also rely on the capacities of the existing regional and sub-regional frameworks among its membership which is in line with the roles of these regional and sub-regional organizations as defined and pursued by the United Nations system. In this regard, he expressed readiness of the ECO Secretariat to engage in any arrangements for inter-regional cooperation on health within the developing world.

The "9th Health Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)" concluded its work by adopting "NAM Declaration on Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

ECO and UNISDR Regional Office reviewed Cooperation

ECO CHRONICLE

During his visit to Bangkok to attend the "72nd annual Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific" (ESCAP), the ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari held on 19 May 2016 bilateral meeting with Ms. Feng Min Kan, the Head of UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in Asia and the Pacific.

The ECO Deputy Secretary General briefed the UN official on the ongoing efforts within ECO to prepare the regional framework for implementation of the UN Sendai 2030 Framework on disaster risk reduction in the ECO Region. He referred to the preparatory process for the next ECO ministerial meeting on disaster risk reduction to be held later this year in Turkey, which includes preparation of the draft regional framework. He invited UNISDR to contribute to this process, including through participation in the upcoming expert level meeting in the ECO Secretariat aimed at finalizing the draft regional framework.

Ms. Fen in return briefed about the UNISDR current activities including the preparation for the next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held from 2 to 5 November 2016 in New Delhi. She invited ECO to actively contribute to and participate in the ministerial meeting. She also invited ECO Secretariat to attend the ISDR Asia Partnership Meeting in June 2016 in Bangkok. She expressed ISDR readiness to send resource persons to the above ECO expert level meeting on drafting the regional framework.

Two sides agreed to continue exchanges on above issues.

ECO attended the ESCAP annual Ministerial Session

ECO CHRONICLE

The 72nd annual Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was held from 15 to 19 May 2016 in Bangkok. At the invitation of the ESCAP, ECO Secretariat attended the Ministerial segment of the Event (17-19 May 2016), where Heads of Government, Ministers and high level officials from Member States discussed the theme of the Session "Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development". ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, represented the ECO Secretariat in the Ministerial Segment and made a statement.

The ministerial segment, chaired by Prime Minister of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda was structured in ministerial panels and dialogue as well as plenary sessions for policy statements. Panels addressed issues such as "Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration"; "Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific"; and "Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development". There were also several side events addressing some pressing concerns of the Asia and the Pacific Region.

The Meeting concluded its work by adopting some decisions and 12 resolutions. The resolutions cover, among other, areas such as strengthening regional cooperation for transport connectivity; promoting conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources; combating sand and dust storms; fostering regional cooperation and partnerships to respond to climate change challenges; advancing disaster related statistics for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; committing to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda; harnessing science technology and innovation for sustainable development; and the framework agreement on facilitation of cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific.

In his statement, ECO Deputy Secretary General briefed the Meeting on the state of affairs within ECO as regards regional cooperation for development including in the transport and connectivity, energy and electricity, ICT, disaster risk reduction, statistics, etc. He also shared ideas on the new emerging ECO Vision for the future where immediate needs and concerns of the ECO Member States, including in the context of SDGs and 2030 development agenda will also be addressed.

On the sidelines of the Event, the ECO Secretary General had bilateral discussions with Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, where two sides reviewed policy aspects of bilateral cooperation between ESCAP and ECO. In a separate meeting, ECO Deputy Secretary General had sectoral discussions with ESCAP Directors for Environment and Development; Energy; and ICT and Disaster Management. Both sides agreed on some specific follow up for possible sectoral cooperation.

ECO-UN Workshop on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis in Tehran

ECO participated in the 41st IDB Annual Meeting at

ECO CHRONICLE

The 41st Annual Meeting of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group was held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 15th to 19th of May 2016.

As an IDB observer, ECO Secretariat was represented in the Meeting by Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi, Deputy Secretary General who also attended two side events, namely, "The Seminar on the Development of Regional Transport Infrastructure Connectivity: A Network-Cum-Corridor Approach" and "The 1st Annual Consultative Forum between the IDB and the Regional Cooperation Organizations in the OIC region".

During the Seminar, ECO Deputy Secretary General shared ECO efforts on development of regional road and rail corridors with the support of IDB.

He also referred to the need for 'Exclusive Corridor Management Model" for commercially viable and sustainable intercountry/ regional

ECO CHRONICLE

The "Induction Capacity Building Workshop of Sub-regional Project on Seismic Hazard and Risk Analysis" was organized from 30th May to 1st June 2016 in the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

The Workshop was participated by government's representatives, scientists and experts from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Turkey as well as officials from UNESCO, UN-Habitat, International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES) and ECO Secretariat.

This induction workshop was planned to familiarize the relevant governmental and academic representatives of the participating countries with the sub-regional project on seismic hazard and risk analysis initiated by UN-Habitat and UNESCO and supported by Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and some other international organizations.

The Project is planned to be finished in 3 years. During the 3-day workshop; the instructors from Iran and Turkey conducted technical exchanges on the topics of the Workshop. Some technical visits were also organized by the Iranian authorities.

At the end of the Workshop, the participants received "Certificate of Participation" jointly awarded by ECO, UNESCO, Habitat and IIEES.

Jakarta

rail/road corridors and the ECO plans to implement the model on ECO KTI (Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan- Iran) rail corridor.

The "First IDB Annual Consultative Forum" was aimed to institutionalize interagency consultations in line with the IDB Vision 1440H which stipulates that the Bank will promote regional cooperation organizations among member countries through strengthening the capacity of existing organizations with a view to engaging all OIC member countries in a network of regional groupings.

ECO Secretary General attended CICA Ministerial Meeting

ECO CHRONICLE

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca represented the ECO in the Fifth Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held on 27-28 April, 2016 in Beijing, China.

The Conference was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China and chaired by H.E. Mr. Wang Yi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

In his statement delivered during the Conference, the Secretary General stressed the importance of security and stability for the development of the region.

He also acknowledged the contribution of the CICA for the promotion of dialogue, cooperation and common prosperity of the countries in Asia and expressed the readiness of the Economic Cooperation Organization to work closely with CICA for promoting cooperation in the areas of mutual interest.

At the end of its deliberations, the Ministerial Conference adopted its Declaration on "Promoting Peace, Security, Stability and Sustainable Development in Asia Through Dialogue".

On the sidelines of the Meeting, the ECO Secretary General also met with Ambassador Gong Jianwei, the CICA Executive Director where both sides exchanged views on different aspects of ECO-CICA cooperation and agreed on the need to further deepen the partnership in the areas of common interests.

ECO and UN bodies reviewed cooperation

ECO CHRONICLE

During his visit to New York to attend the "UN General Assembly Special Session on World Drug Problem" (UNGASS 2016), the ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari held, on 22 April 2016, bilateral meetings with the heads of UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSS) and the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFF).

Meeting with UNOSS

In his meeting with Mr. Jorge Chediek, Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the ECO Deputy Secretary General congratulated him on his new appointment as the UN Secretary General Envoy for South-South Cooperation. He also thanked UNOSS for its interest in cooperation with the ECO Secretariat. Mr. Alavi further briefed the UN Official on ECO and its scope of activities.

Mr. Chediek also gave a brief overview on the UNOSS mandates as the focal point for coordinating the South-South activities within the UN system as well as promoting cooperation among countries. He further referred to the UNOSS approach to the regional organizations and expressed hope that UNOSS and ECO can soon start cooperation in the service of their common Member States. He also invited ECO to the next "Global South-South Development Expo" to be held from 30 October to 3 November 2016 in Dubai.

Both sides agreed on the need to identify meaningful and feasible areas of cooperation, taking into account the priorities of mutual interest. The two organizations are expected to jointly develop a draft memorandum of cooperation with clear cut areas/sectors of cooperation.

Meeting with UNFF

ECO Deputy Secretary General also met with Mr. Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFF) and discussed the state of play of bilateral cooperation. During the Meeting, the ECO Deputy Secretary General recalled the two major regional workshops co-organized by ECO and UNFF Secretariats in Tehran in 2014 and 2015 and thanked the UNFF for continued interest in the ECO Region. He also referred to the report prepared by UNFF consultant on the sustainable forest management in the ECO Region and the subsequent project proposals submitted by the ECO Member States.

Mr. Filho in return thank ECO for extending its support to UNFF for organizing meetings and activities for the regional countries and briefed the ECO Secretariat's Official on the latest developments as regard fund-raising for ECO projects, including through GEF. The both sides also reviewed the relevant part of the outcome document of the 11th session of the UNFF and explored possibilities for ECO involvement in implementation of the regional components of the outcome document.

ECO Secretary General met with UNIDO Director General

ECO CHRONICLE

During his visit to Vienna, the ECO Secretary General, His Excellency Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca held bilateral meeting with Mr. Li Yong, the Director General of UNIDO on 15th of March 2016. Both sides discussed wide range of issues of mutual interest including UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, climate change, renewable energy, new technologies in industries, capacity building, foreign investment, women entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprises. They also exchanged views on initiating joint efforts to find donor countries to launch new projects in ECO Region. They also expressed readiness to develop joint projects to strengthen their cooperation. Ambassador Akca and Director General Li also reviewed the implementation of the "3rd phase of the ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project" which was launched in March 2014. Both sides were satisfied with the ongoing implementation of the Project which will be completed in early 2017. They also agreed to work together in order to initiate the remaining component of the Project.

ECO Secretary General Attended the "International Conference on the Policy of Neutrality" in Ashgabat

ECO CHRONICLE

The ECO Secretary General H.E Ambassador Halil Ibrahim AKCA attended the "International Conference on Policy of Neutrality: International Cooperation for Peace, Security and Development" which was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 12 December 2015. The Conference was held on the occasion of 20th anniversary of the neutrality status of Turkmenistan in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution which had welcomed the decision of Turkmenistan to declare the year 2015 as the year of "Neutrality and Peace". The Conference was attended by the representatives of more than 80 countries and 20 international organizations along with several Heads of State/Government.

Secretary General also held bilateral meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov and Minister of the Economy and Development of Turkmenistan Mr.Yoldash Hallyevich Sheripov where both sides discussed areas of enhanced cooperation.

ECOPOL on the Agenda of the INTERPOL Meeting

ECO CHRONICLE

At the invitation of the INTERPOL Secretary General, the ECO Secretariat participated in an inter-regional debate on "An Effective Multilateral Policing Architecture against Global Threats" held on 15-16 March 2016 in Singapore. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Jürgen Stock, the Secretary General of the INTERPOL and attended also by the presidents and high level officials of the regional police and law enforcement organizations from across the world, namely, AFRIPOL, AMERIPOL, ASEANAPOL, EUROPOL, GCCPOL as well as representative from UNODC. The purpose of the Meeting was to embark on discussions on ways to coordinate activities against transnational crime through clarifying the roles of each regional organization.

In his inaugural remarks, INTERPOL Secretary General highlighted the roles of regional police organizations as an important component of an effective global policing architecture, where the global nature of crime threats such as cybercrime and terrorism requires optimal levels of cooperation among regional actors. During the Meeting, the high level participants presented the current structures and activities of their regional police organizations and also discussed topics such as the data processing and sharing frameworks; different infrastructures for information exchange; and governance mechanisms.

The Deputy Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari who represented the Organization in the Event also briefed the participants about ECO and its ultimate goal of enhancing regional cooperation for economic development of the individual countries and Region as whole. He further highlighted the specific features of the Region which led the ECO Member States to embark on intra-regional undertakings in areas such as drugs control, law enforcement, judiciary and anti-corruption cooperation. He also gave a presentation on the ongoing process of establishment of the ECOPOL.

At the end of the two-day dialogue, the participating organizations agreed that their experts may start cooperation and technical discussions in order to identify avenues for integrating existing infrastructures at the regional and global levels. They also recommended to convene annual such dialogues among the presidents and senior officials of the regional police organizations with a view to assessing the advancement of these joint efforts and identifying areas of duplication as well as potential gaps in inter-regional and global police exchanges.

During the Event, the participants also visited the "Interpol Global Complex for Innovation" in Singapore and became familiar with its research and development facilities, innovative training techniques, as well as operational support and partnerships, particularly in the area of digital security and cybercrime.

On the sidelines of the Event, ECO Deputy Secretary General made bilateral discussions with the INTERPOL Secretary General and his team on the possible areas of technical assistance and capacity building programmes for ECO Region.

UNAMA Senior Official visited the ECO Secretariat

ECO CHRONICLE

A high level delegation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) visited the ECO Secretariat in Tehran on 7th March 2016 and met with ECO Secretary General Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca. In the meeting, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto* informed the ECO Secretary General about the completion of Transition Process in Afghanistan and the initiation of the Transformation Decade (2015-2024) where regional efforts are required in much larger perspective. He also informed the Secretary General about the upcoming Inter-Governmental Meeting on Afghanistan to be held in Brussels in October 2016.

ECO Secretary General in return highlighted that Afghanistan is an active member of the ECO and ECO is aware of the importance of Afghanistan for ECO and the Region. ECO is active in initiatives on Afghanistan including in Istanbul Process and welcomes any effort aimed at development of Afghanistan. The Secretary General further added that ECO has a special fund for Afghanistan with some pledges by the Member States and four reconstruction projects have been funded upon the request and preference of the Government of Afghanistan. He also said that ECO is planning to hold a Conference on Afghanistan in the last quarter of the current year to develop its future supporting policy for Afghanistan.

Secretary General also informed the Senior UN Official that ECO is preparing new ECO Vision which will focus among others on increased regional trade and enhanced connectivity where Afghanistan will also benefit from ECO projects, including through development of ECO Rail and Road networks.

Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto expressed hope that the ECO will assist UNAMA in its efforts for developing effective coordination within the Region for the betterment of Afghanistan. He also welcomed ECO plan to organize a special conference on Afghanistan and hoped that the outcome of this conference may be submitted to the Brussels Conference.

The Secretary General assured that ECO, as an effective platform for regional coordination, can be utilized in efforts for promoting peace and economic stability in Afghanistan. ECO and UNAMA can complement and supplement each other and find a way to cooperate effectively to help development and betterment of Afghanistan.

** Mr. Yamamoto was later on appointed as the Special Representative of UN Secretary General*

ECO Secretariat attended the International Water Conference in Tehran

ECO CHRONICLE

The second "International Summit of Health and Lifestyle: Water, Sustainable Development and Healthy Life" was held on 2-3 March 2016 at the University of Tehran. The relevant directors and staff of the ECO Secretariat also attended in the Summit and its panels.

Scientists and scholars from different Islamic countries gathered in the Event and discussed the current situation of water resources in the Islamic world focusing also on different aspects of water including food supply, energy, human health, social well-being, poverty eradication, economic development, and global sustainability. Three specialized panels were also devoted to i) Water Diplomacy; ii) Water Quality, and iii) Sustainable Water Resource Management where the participating scientists and panelists presented statistical and analytical overview about dependency of countries on water and its environmental impacts. The panelist also shared their views on how to achieve and improve Sustainable Development Goals, promote global water management, address challenges of water scarcity, enhance cooperation in different academic water-related fields, develop sustainable solutions, and raise awareness and knowledge.

Among the panelist was Mr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President of ECO Science Foundation, who addressed the water resources and transboundary issues in the ECO Region and suggested to establish a network called as "ECO Water Experts Network (ECOWEN)".

ECO and UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) discussed Bilateral Cooperation

ECO and UNCBD delegations attending the "2nd ECO Pre-COP Meeting in Antalya" had bilateral consultations on 4th March 2016. The two sides discussed and agreed on possible partnership frameworks in the future, inter alia, ECO`s observer status in UNCBD, enhancing UNCBD`s outreach in the Region through ECO capacities, networks and institutional arrangements, as well as, possible synergy on designing and developing common projects.

During the meeting, Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Director of Energy, Mining and Environment briefed UNCBD Representatives about the ECO's environmental and biodiversity profile as well as recent activities for stimulating more interactions among the ECO Member States on development of coherent policy for common environmental challenges with particular emphasis on biodiversity, climate change and its adverse effects on ecosystems in the

Region. Dr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel, President of the ECO-IEST also highlighted ECO's ongoing projects and studies on environment and biodiversity and called upon UNCBD to provide its technical support for capacity building and fund raising for the ECO Member States and ECO projects.

The UNCBD Representative, Mr. Robert Hoft in return expressed UNCBD's readiness to render technical assistance and expertise in data-sharing and in organizing capacity building workshops for ECO Member States. He also offered to engage ECO in the CBD process through observership which can be granted through formal application by ECO. Both sides agreed to continue dialogue and communications for enhanced partnership.

ECO Secretariat attended the UN Environment Assembly

ECO CHRONICLE

The 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) was held from 23 to 27 May 2016 in Nairobi , Kenya. The ECO Delegation headed by Deputy Secretary General attended the High Level Segment of the Event (26-27 May 2016). It was the first time ECO Secretariat was attending this important global environmental assembly since granted observership.

The UNEA-2 was the first event after adoption of the SDGs by UN General Assembly as well as the conclusion of the Paris climate change agreement. Ministers and high level officials from UN members, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders discussed, in the context of plenary sessions and different ministerial panels and policy dialogues, ways and means to deliver on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There were also numerous side events and Expo activities parallel to the intergovernmental discussions. A specific ministerial policy review session also took place with focus on findings of the "Healthy Environment, Healthy People" report, a joint effort of several organizations, including the UNEP, WHO and CBD Secretariat. ECO delegation also attended a ministerial luncheon where ways and means for mobilizing investment for sustainable development were discussed. The Assembly concluded its weeklong work by adopting some decisions and more than 20 resolutions. On the sidelines of UNEA2, the delegation of the ECO Secretariat held bilateral meetings with the UNESCAP and UNEP.

Meeting with UNESCAP

The ECO Deputy Secretary General and his team had bilateral discussions with Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, where two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation between ESCAP and ECO. During the meeting, ECO Director of Energy, Minerals and environment briefed the UN Official on ECO`s environmental and energy profiles and on recent activities and meetings. Mr. Kaveh Zahedi also gave a brief overview on the UNESCAP`s approach to the regional organizations and expressed confidence that UNESCAP and ECO can expand cooperation in concrete areas.

Both sides agreed on the need to identify meaningful and feasible areas of cooperation, taking into account the priorities of mutual interest. The two organizations are expected to look into the existing MoU (signed in 1993) and jointly develop a draft work programme with clear cut areas/sectors of cooperation. They initially agreed that sectoral cooperation on environmental issues, disaster risk management, dust haze and sand storm , renewable energy, electricity market, and energy efficiency can be among the areas of cooperation. The ESCAP Official also invited ECO contributions into the next UNESCAP annual session (2017) which will address energy as its "Theme".

Meeting with UNEP

ECO Deputy Secretary General and his team also met with Ms. Isabelle Louis, Acting Regional Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for Asia and the Pacific and discussed the implementation of ECO ministerial mandate on preparation of "State of Environment Report (SoE) for ECO Region".

Recalling a meeting between ECO-IEST and UNEP in Istanbul, the ECO Official requested information on what kind of support UNEP regional office in Asia and the Pacific can offer for preparation of this important report. UNEP Official informed about UNEP ongoing initiative for a regional SoE for ASEAN. She further mentioned that it is now acknowledged that SoE reports should be aligned with the SDGs directions and expressed readiness to work with the ECO Secretariat through sharing the needed methodology and research tools as well as trainings services.

ECO was granted Observer Status in the UN Convention to Combat Desertification

ECO CHRONICLE The 12th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held its two week session on 12 October 2015 in Ankara. As the first major global meeting since the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Conference focused on the implementation of the Convention in post 2015, taking into account the "Target 15.3" of the SDGs.

Nearly 4,000 delegates, including 75 ministers and high-ranking officials from around the world, including from the ECO Region, attended the Conference. The High level

Ministerial Segment of the Conference was inaugurated by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. A delegation from the ECO Secretariat, led by Deputy Secretary General Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, participated in the "High-level Ministerial Segment" of the Conference, held on 20-21 October 2015.

The ECO delegation also took part in a ministerial round table on addressing land degradation. In his remarks in the Round Table, the ECO Deputy Secretary General thanked UNCCD Secretariat for granting observer membership to ECO and expressed hope that both organizations undertake to cooperate closely in order to address the desertification phenomenon in the ECO Region. He informed the high-level participants about the ECO projects and activities and highlighted that ECO Member States are mainly located in arid or semi-arid areas, mostly categorized as countries with low-forest cover. He also highlighted that the sand storm and dust haze constitute an immediate concern for some ECO Member States which require urgent actions. Referring to some ECO partnerships with UN agencies and other players in the international community, the ECO Deputy Secretary General expressed readiness of the ECO Secretariat to share its capacities and experiences through partnership with the relevant potential partners, including UNCCD, to address desertification challenges in the Region.

This was the second observership recently granted to ECO by global environmental bodies. In 2014, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) granted to ECO the observer status in the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA). On the Sidelines of the UNCCD Conference, ECO delegation held bilateral discussions with the UNCCD officials on the possible future cooperation.

ECO-UN Regional Capacity-building Workshop on Sustainable Forest Management

ECO CHRONICLE

The Economic Cooperation Organization Secretariat and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) co-organized the "Regional Capacity-building Workshop on Designing Projects for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)" on 26-30 October 2015 at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. The representatives from Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, UNFF, Secretariat of Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) and ECO Institute for Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST), as well as ECO Secretariat participated in the Workshop. The Workshop was jointly inaugurated by the ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari and the Deputy Director of UNFF Secretariat Mr. Hossein Moeini-Meybodi. ECO Deputy Secretary General in his inaugural remarks underscored the importance of the cooperation between ECO and UNFF for the environmental agenda of the ECO Region, specifically in the area of climate change financing for sustainable forest management. He also thanked the Secretariat of UNFF for organizing the second workshop for ECO Region, as well as for choosing the important topic of designing project proposals to secure financing from international donors for the ECO Member States. He underlined the ECO Secretariat mandates in environment which interlink areas such as climate change, desertification and land degradation, forest management as well as biodiversity.

Mr. Hossein Moeini-Meybodi briefed the participants about UNFF's overall policy and approach with regard to assisting countries around the world in identifying various sources of funding for forests at the global level, in particular, in the context of the climate change process, as well as facilitating the low forest cover countries (LFCCs) in the ECO Region to harness climate change funding for forests management, policy making, training & building capacity in the ECO Member States through developing bankable projects attractive to the relevant international financial institutions and organizations, such as Green Climate Fund (GCF), and Global Environment Facility (GEF). He also referred to the newly established Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), which will be managed by the UNFF Secretariat to facilitate access of countries to forest- related resources of the international financing institutions.

During the 5-day intensive schedule, the participants actively engaged themselves in different training sessions in combined and separate groups and learnt from International Consultants, Mr. Peter O'Hara and Mrs. Nato kirvalidze as well as UNFF staff on how to write and develop projects on SFM, including different methodologies of project submission that could be acceptable for funding by financial institutions and donor agencies. They also became familiar with ideas of financing, situational analysis, gaps and opportunities in the ECO Region, topics and proposals for projects, result-based management (RBM) and budgeting (RBB), project outcomes, logical framework approach, solid monitoring and evaluation, locating online the new and existing financing opportunities for SFM and taping into existing resources, including UNFF GFFFN.

It was recommended that in order to continue the capacity building in the Member States, and as part of the GFFFN activities, the UNFF may send teams of consultants to the individual countries to work directly with relevant authorities to develop specific projects for submission to the GCF and the GEF. Moreover, it was also recommended that similar trainings/workshops may be further conducted in future by the UNFF at national and regional levels, respectively.

ECO Observership in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

ECO CHRONICLE

During the 43rd Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), held from 11 to 13 April 2016 in Nairobi, the Panel accepted by consensus the accreditation of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as an observer organization to the IPCC.

This is the third observership granted to ECO by global environmental bodies .

In 2014, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) granted to ECO the observer status in the Sessions and work of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary organs. In October 2015 , during the 12th session of the Conference of the Parties to UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held on 12-23 October 2015 in Ankara, ECO was granted Observer Status in the UNCCD.

The ECO Secretariat also submitted its request for ECO`s observer status at the forthcoming sessions of the COP to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which is on the process of review and approval for mid 2016.

During the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment (15-17 December 2014, Istanbul, Turkey), Ministers gave mandate to the ECO Secretariat to seek observer status, where applicable, in environmental conventions and fora to which ECO Member States are parties.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change.

It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. In the same year, the UN General Assembly endorsed the action by WMO and UNEP in jointly establishing the IPCC. Currently 195 countries are Members of the IPCC.

ECO attended the UN Special Session on World Drug Problem

ECO CHRONICLE

The 30th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS 2016) was held from 19 to 21 April 2016 in New York. The Meeting, allocated to the theme of "World Drug Problem" was attended by the Heads of State and Government, Ministers and high level officials from the UN member countries as well as high level representatives from observer countries and international organizations. ECO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, represented the ECO Secretariat in the Event and made a statement in its plenary.

The UNGASS 2016 was structured in 6 plenary sessions and 5 thematic round tables. Officials from participating delegations made their statements in the plenary sessions. In his statement, the ECO Deputy Secretary General referred to the imperative of addressing the world drug problem for the ECO Region and informed the Meeting about the existing capacities in the Region which may help implementation of the UNGASS operational recommendations.

In parallel round tables, representatives of the participating countries and organizations focused on some areas of drug-related imperative, namely, demand reduction and related measures, supply reduction and related measures; cross-cutting issues; and alternative development.

At the end of three day deliberations, the UNGASS 2016 adopted its final document entitled "Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem".

This was the third time in the history of the United Nations that UN General Assembly devoted its special session to the drug issues. Earlier in 1990 and 1998, two UNGASS were organized in this regard. The primary goal of UNGASS 1990 was to generate momentum for implementation of the "1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances". UNGASS 1990 adopted a political declaration proclaiming the period from 1991 to 2000 the "UN Decade Against Drug Abuse". A "Global Programme of Action" was also adopted at the Meeting. One of the practical outcome of the UNGASS 1990 was the establishment of the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) in 1991, later merged with the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division making the current United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

ECO Delegation participated in the UNWTO Meeting on Silk Road

ECO CHRONICLE

The 6th World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Task Force Meeting on Silk Road was held on 23-25 April in the City of Urmia in Iran. Various participants from member states of the UNWTO Silk Road Program, including Russia, Ukraine, Spain, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Mongolia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan as well as a delegation from UNWTO Secretariat and a few tourism NGOs attended the meeting.

A delegation from ECO Secretariat also participated in the Event. The Meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Soltanifar, Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Head of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO). Mr. Talib Rifai, Secretary General of the UNWTO also addressed the audience through video message.

The Meeting, comprised of five sessions, addressed topics of Marketing and Promotion; Travel Facilitation and Connectivity; Capacity Building and Destination Management; and Standards and Certification on the Silk Road where presenters and participants shared their knowledge and views on the topics. Each session was followed by questions and answers discussions.

During the Meeting, the Secretariat delegation introduced the potential of the Organization in the area of tourism promotion in the ECO Region. The importance of cooperation between ECO and UNWTO for promoting the tourism along the Silk Road was also emphasized.

During bilateral talks, the ECO and UNWTO delegations also exchanged their views regarding future cooperation including through organizing events and courses and participating in their relevant activities and agreed to follow up the mutual interests in tourism sector vigorously.

With its richly diverse cultural heritage and wealth of natural attractions spanning across thousands of kilometers of ancient routes, the Silk Road today offers visitors the opportunity to experience a unique network of destinations linked by a shared history.

ECO Vision

Halil Ibrahim Akca
ECO Secretary General

When I assumed my duties in August 2015 as the 11th Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the international community was giving birth to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a view to generating more momentum for global efforts towards a "World We Want". Besides SDGs; the UN and its membership were also engaged in the year 2015 in other attempts to develop the global framework on disaster risk reduction; the global framework for financing for development; the new global climate agreement; and new global policy and action points for tackling world drug problem. All in all, these developments made 2015 a crucial year, a milestone, for years to come.

The year 2015 made sense in ECO as well. Thirty years after Iran, Pakistan and Turkey cre-

ated ECO in 1985, and its ensuing enlargement to 7 more countries in 1992, the Organization started in 2015 to develop its overall plan for coming 10 years, the so called "ECO Vision 2025". The "Vision", to be approved by the ECO decision making bodies, is expected to serve as a roadmap guiding the Organization and its membership in their collective endeavours to realize more effectively and responsively the noble objective of the ECO: the higher living standards and prosperity for the countries and the peoples of the Region.

Turning back into three decades of its existence, one can easily realize that ECO has successfully laid down the necessary legal and institutional foundations and has established cooperative frameworks in numerous areas of regional importance. A number of agreements have been concluded, a set of important decisions have been taken, and several regional specialized and affiliated bodies and institutions have been created to fulfill ECO agenda in different socio-economic sectors. Concurrently, a regional identity, personified as "ECO Region" has emerged and, to an increasing extent, been acknowledged by the international community. "ECO" is unique in its membership, among the largest regional organizations in the world, embracing countries from South and West Asia, Caucasus and Central Asia which connects Europe to China and Russia to Persian Gulf.

ECO history has not been a straightforward path, a relatively challenging though. ECO has witnessed different rate of participation by Member States in its different programmes. Some ECO programmes have failed to generate enough incentives in some Member States to participate, a less-than-full-membership phenomenon.This leads us to another phenomenon ECO has been witnessing, namely, varying degree of sense of ownership. The "ECO Vision 2025" needs to be phenomenal to enable the Organization to reverse the above mentioned discouraging phenomena, addressing in a more effective and convincing way the needs and requirements of all Member States.

In developing the "ECO Vision 2025"and building on the earlier work done, I hosted a brainstorming meeting where representatives from governments, academia and private sectors of the Member States participated in a series of thematic discussions on the optimal direction ECO should move in the coming 10 years. The participants believed that boost in intra-regional trade and wider connectivity within the Region continue to be central for ECO success in realizing its genuine goals and objectives. They also identified some areas of further cooperation as beneficial for ECO and its aspiration for Member States.

Strengthening intra-regional trade and integrating the national transport and transit networks have always been top priorities for ECO since its establishment. The success has so far been in varying degrees, still away from the envisaged targets. Although the intra-regional trade has doubled to 10 percent in the last 10 years, further boost, say to 20 percent in the next 10 years, seems to be contingent on implementation of some ECO trade-related arrangements, notably ECOTA (the ECO preferential trade agreement). Trade in agricultural and industrial goods also requires regional arrangements on standards, SMEs develop-

ECO Member States have gathered together 5 times since June 2014 to make policy directions for the Organization. ECO is now seriously involved in activities of international environmental conventions and frameworks such as UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention on Combating Desertification, and UN Forum on Forests. ECO has developed regional activities and projects to address the immediate environmental challenges of the Region and to help implementation of the global agenda in this part of the world.

Tourism continues to offer great untapped potential for ECO regional socio-economic development. ECO's three decade attempts to strengthen the cultural affinities among the nations of the Region, and the intention to put in place physical and regulatory infrastructures to facilitate movement of people and sharing of the cultures within the Region, as well as the rich tourism attractions owned by all Member States attest to the fact that tourism can be among the flourishing sectors of economy. Initiatives are under way in the other sectors which, in one way or another, reinforce the pro-tourism policies and measures, including in transport infrastructure (particularly rail), visa services, heath tourism, etc. During the

ment and entrepreneurship as well as customs and border cooperation.

In transit and transport, ECO has been successful in launching rail corridors on multiple North-South and East-West routes within the Region with potential developmental impacts across other sectors. The enhanced intra-regional connectivity is not limited only to cargo and passenger transport and transit.The potential capacity for electricity exchange among Member States has made a strong case for a regional electricity market. This envisaged power grids connectivity is now pursued by ECO which will legitimately deserve to stand high in "Vision 2025".

There are other areas of regional cooperation which have received due support and attention from the Member States, very much in line with regional and global concerns. Environment is now more than ever prominent in ECO agenda, attributed to the regional common challenges and emerging global agenda. The ministers and high level officials of the

"Vision" period, there is strong hope that ECO will be able to develop and put in place solid foundations and capacities for a robust tourism sector in the Region. The success stories within the Region, namely, those Member States who have already developed successful national tourism economy can undoubtedly contribute to this envisaged regional venture.

The above mentioned sectors and areas of regional cooperation neither cover all those areas ECO has pursued in the last three decades nor all those need to be pursued by the "Vision 2025". Food security, quality control, health, education, resilience against disasters, regional cooperation against drugs and organized crime, etc. are areas for regional cooperation with direct bearing on the social welfare of the peoples of the Region.

"ECO Vision 2025" needs to be inclusive in terms of issues to be addressed and interests to be accommodated. This is why I have started to solicit views and policy advices from heads of state and government as well as ministers of foreign affairs and other ministers and high level authorities of the Member States. The "Vision" to be prepared accordingly can be relied as a roadmap to catalyze the needed policy actions for promoting ECO genuine goals and objectives subscribed to by all its Member States.

Realization of the "Vision" and common aspirations therein relies first and for most on the support our Member States will render while corresponding measures and actions are taken, as well as the global course of events affecting our Region. I remain very much hopeful that the emerging "ECO Vision 2025" as well as the outcomes of the current reform process as mandated by the ECO Council of Ministers would open a new and promising page in the history of our Organization, bringing to our Region and its people more choices to develop and prosper.

Interview with H.E. Ambassador Javanshir Akhundov Permanent Representative Azerbaijan in ECO

Ambassador Javanshir Akhundov has been Permanent Representative of his country in ECO in the last six and half years. At the end of his mission and before leaving Iran to take his new assignment as Ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan in Latvia, Ambassador Akhundov was so kind to accept our request for an interview which is reproduced below:

■ ECO Chronicle: Republic of Azerbaijan was among the 7 countries that joined Economic Cooperation Organization in early 1990s. Republic of Azerbaijan is now one of the active ECO Member States. What motivated your country to join the Organization?

■ Ambassador: After the collapse of the Soviet Union and regaining its independence in 1991, Republic of Azerbaijan declared integration into the world community and international and regional organizations among its top priorities and has pursued this way successfully. As you know, Republic of Azerbaijan was accepted to the membership of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) at the Organizations' extraordinary Council of Ministers' meeting held in Islamabad, Pakistan on 28 November 1992. Today, Azerbaijan is one of the most active members in ECO supporting main objectives

and aims of the Organization and gives its tangible contribution to the regional development. Hosting ECO Summits and meetings of COM as well as various ECO meetings, submission of projects beneficial for the countries of the Region, and establishment of information network on ECO renewable energy resources in Baku are bright examples to that end.

■ ECO Chronicle: Since early 1990s and after collapse of Soviet Union, Central Asian and Caucasus countries, including ECO Member States and notably Azerbaijan, have been target for many development-related programmes by international community. How has your country benefited from regional and global initiatives?

■ Ambassador: As you may know, at the beginning of 90s of the 20th century and after restoring its independence, Republic of Azerbaijan became a full- fledged member of the UN, OIC, ECO, OSCE, Council of Europe, Non-Aligned Movement and other international and regional organizations. We have been the first country amongst former Soviet Republics to be elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2012-2013). And during the Azerbaijan's non-permanent membership at the UNSC and its chairmanship of the UNSC - in October 2013, for the first time at the special meeting of the Security Council, cooperation issues between UN and OIC were reviewed. Our policy in all these organizations is based on friendship and peace. Main task in implementing our country's foreign policy as identified by Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of Azerbaijani people, has been to ensure multi-pronged balanced policy and to achieve maintaining mutually beneficial cooperation and friendly neighborhood relations with neighboring countries.

I'd like to bring to your attention that as a result of steps taken in 2003-2013 our economy has grown more than 300 percent-3.4 times. Number of population under poverty has drastically decreased, currently the level of poverty in Azerbaijan is a little over 5%. Unemployment rate is very low-around 5%. In 2013, Azerbaijan launched its first national satellite which is offered not only to the local consumers, but also to Asia and Africa. Today, Azerbaijan is also known in the world for promoting multiculturalism. Let me mention that this is not a new phenomenon for Azerbaijan. Historically, Azerbaijan has been a place where various religions and cultures have peacefully coexisted together. In order to promote activities in this direction our country has put forward a number of initiatives and hosted numerous international events. In 2008, an international women conference comprising all continents took place in Baku and Baku Declaration on the role of women in intercultural dialogue was adopted. In 2009, Baku was declared one of the capitals of Islamic Culture. In the same year, Baku hosted the 6th Meeting of the OIC Ministers of Culture.

World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue was organized in Baku on 7-9 April 2011 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Azerbaijan in cooperation with UNESCO, UN Alliance of Civilizations, UN World Tourism Organization, Council of Europe, ISESCO, and North-South Center of the Council of Europe. Under the patronage of H.E. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Forum addressed challenges of intercultural dialogue in its various aspects regarding conceptual frameworks, governance, policy and practice. The second and third World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue took place in 29 May-1 June 2013 and 18-19 May 2015 Baku, respectively.

Let me also inform you that on 25-27 April 2016 Baku will host another influential event- the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. As you know, in June 2015 Azerbaijan hosted the First European Olympic Games and in 2017 Islamic Games of Solidarity will be held in our country. All of these once again demonstrate that Azerbaijan today plays a role of bridge in the world both in international and regional level.

■ ECO Chronicle: In the last three decades, particularly following its enlargement in 1992, ECO has expanded its scope of activities to different areas and sectors of economic cooperation. As Permanent Representative of an ECO Member State in the last 6 years, you have been closely exposed to these activities through ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR). What is your assessment on the performance of the Organization in different sectors?

■ Ambassador: Yes, you are

of Republic of

right, and I have been not only just a Permanent Representative, but also Chair of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives during the Azerbaijan's ECO Chairmanship. Amongst a number of achievements of these years I would like to particularly underline Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) railway project and establishment of ECO Research Center in Baku. And I value these achievements as significant ones for both our Organization and the future of our Region. It has been among top priorities of our Embassy to pursue relevant measures for realization of North-South International Transport Corridor which is economically very important for the future of our Region. Our Embassy has carried out necessary activities aimed at coordinating railways between Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran and these activities still continue.

Upon the initiative of and relevant work by our Embassy, Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) railway project was included into the ECO priority projects list.

During the 11th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Administrations held in Republic of Turkey it was decided to establish high level working group on Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) railway project. As of today the first meeting of the group was held in Baku and the 2nd meeting took place in Rasht, Iran. Top ECO documents also include decisions on Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) railway project. Decisions on the realization of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) railway project have been reflected in Istanbul Declaration adopted at the 11th ECO summit, as well as Baku Declaration adopted at the 12th ECO Summit held on October 16, 2012 in Baku under the chairmanship of H.E. Ilham Aliyev, the President of Republic of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, early finalization of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) railway project has been underlined in the reports of ECO Council of Ministers and Regional Planning Council meetings. And finally after all these efforts, "Framework Agreement between the Government of Republic of Azerbaijan and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the coordination of railways of Azerbaijan and Iran" and "Agreement between Azerbaijan Railways CSC and the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways on construction of a railway bridge over the Astara river on Azerbaijan-Iran state border", which is directly linked to the Framework Agreement, were signed on 23 February 2016 during the recent official visit of H.E. Ilham Aliyev, the President of Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Iran. For a long time, about one century, there was a need to connect railways between our two countries. Let me remind that railway between Azerbaijan and Iran was functioning during the Soviet Union, which ceased to function as the result of occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia during Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict. We are convinced that Qazvin-Rasht-Astara(Iran)-Astara(Azerbaijan) rail-

way project, which is a part of North-South transport corridor, will give new impetus to economic development of not only Azerbaijan and Iran, but of the whole Region.

Another achievement I'd like to elaborate on is agreement on establishment of ECO Research Center. I want to particularly stress that for the first time among non-founding members, Republic of Azerbaijan will host a regional center of the Organization. This Center will operate with the aim to draft efficient economic projects, research programs, as well as economic patterns for the regional states.
Research Center will give its contribution to ECO's future development as well as its transformation into a project-oriented Organization. The launch of the Research Center is one of the substantial issues on the agenda. I am of the view that implementation of result-oriented economic projects within ECO and transformation of ECO into a project-oriented organization will serve to the benefits of every ECO Member State and will increase efficiency of our Organization.

■ ECO Chronicle: ECO is now in the process of developing its vision document for the next 10 years. To ensure the success of any vision for the Organization, it is imperative to focus on the immediate needs and requirements of the Member States and the Region as a whole. Which areas and sectors of regional cooperation would be more accommodating for the Azerbaijan national priorities?

■ Ambassador: I fully agree with you that in order to ensure the success of any vision for the Organization, it is indispensable to focus on the immediate needs and requirements of the Member States and the Region as a whole and result-oriented measures have to be taken to fulfill these needs. While being Permanent Representative, and also in my capacity as a Chair of the Council of Permanent Representatives, I have always underlined that one of the most important targets in the ECO agenda has to be coordinating railways of ECO Member States and establishment of railway infrastructure. Considering from a broader scale, prioritization of such spheres as transportation and trade may result in positive achievements for Member States and economic future of the Region.

■ ECO Chronicle: As the outgoing Ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan, what would you like to share with our readers? What is your advice to your fellow ECO Ambassadors in Tehran, including your successor, as they continue to play an important role in the ECO?

■ Ambassador: It might be interesting for your readers, I came for the first time to the Islamic Republic of Iran 40 years ago as a student, and then I was met with such a friendly and warm welcome, which I have also enjoyed while being my country's Ambassador in Iran. Let me mention that during my six and half years tenure as the Ambassador of Republic of Azerbaijan in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Permanent Representative in the Economic Cooperation Organization, I have never had a feeling of a being guest here, I have always been in a very sincere relationship with my partners.

There are very special friendly relations among ECO Ambassadors in Tehran and it should be definitely applauded. Preserving and further development of these relations can positively contribute to cooperation between Member States both within ECO and on bilateral level. In my opinion, it is important that Member States regard cooperation in ECO from the perspective of development of the Region as a whole. For the successful economic future of our Region, I would recommend that Permanent Representatives in ECO promote implementation of regionally beneficial projects and closer cooperation with UN specialized agencies and international financial institutions to successfully implement economic projects of regional character.

■ ECO Chronicle: Thank you very much for your time Excellency. We wish you wholeheartedly a successful tenure during your new assignment.

D-8 Leaders in its First Summit

Positive Outlook towards **D-8 Economic** Development*

In 1997, leaders of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey formed the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation through the historic 'Istanbul Declaration'.

The spirit of establishment of this inter-governmental entity entails economic cooperation through intensification of trade and commercial relations and enhanced participation in decision-making at international level.

Dr. Seyed AliMohammad Mousavi, the current D-8 Secretary-General

The common and shared belief as well as diversity among the Member States makes it a unique organization with opportunities as well as challenges.

The D-8 is a mix of Members with different

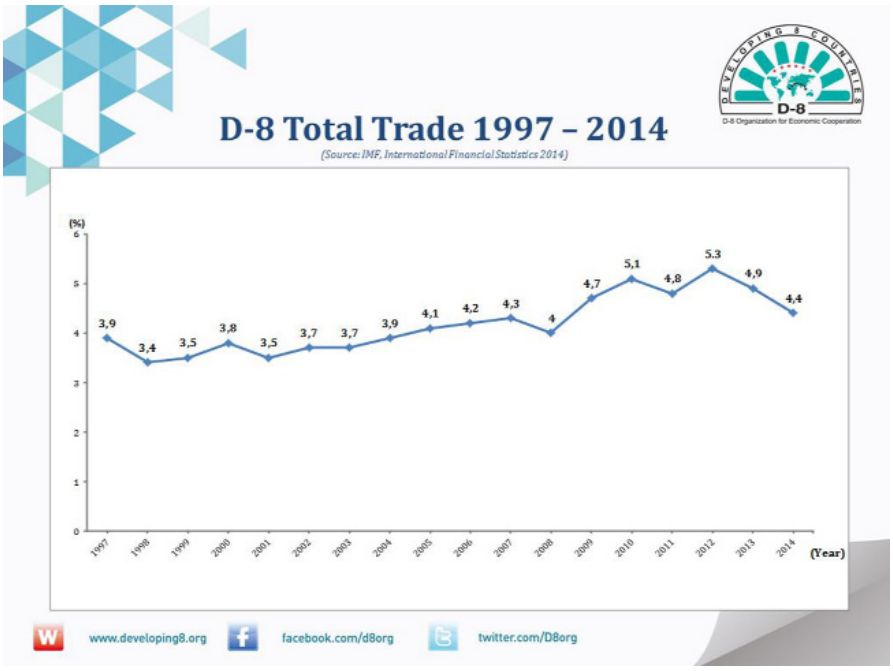
economic size and strength. Some of its Members place their seat among the top economies of the world. During the establishment of this economic group back in 1997, the leaders of the Member States had strong political will as well as commitment to cater to the need of the countries in a small but more effective group that might necessarily be able to avoid complexities of a large organization and make decisions that are prompt, effective and result-oriented. Since its establishment in 1997, the D-8 successfully formulated the Charter, Global Vision, Roadmap and several other documents in order to ensure growth through effective partnership and elevate Member States' positions in the world economy, diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations and provide better standard of living.

The D-8 is also committed to working towards broadening the support for the Organization at the national level within the Member States and strengthening its visibility and image at regional and international levels, including

through active engagement in and promotion of South-South and South-North cooperation.

The Charter of the Organization stipulates the establishment of 'mutually beneficial collaborative relationships with other states, regional or international organizations, institutions and non-governmental organizations with a view to establishing partnerships and/or initiating joint projects'.

Since its establishment, the D-8 has achieved several outstanding progresses in formation of principal organs, namely, the Commission,



D-8 total trade with the world

Council and Summit. The D-8 Secretariat based in Istanbul has played vital role as the backbone of the Organization activities. D-8 has produced several legal documents in order to ensure continued relevance of the Organization, to promote interests of its Member States, and to redouble efforts to meet global challenges through innovative cooperation. Instruments already concluded are:

- 1.D-8 Charter: adopted on 22 November 2012 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

- 2.D-8 Roadmap (2008 - 2018): During the 6th D-8 Summit held on 4-8 July 2008 in Kuala Lumpur,, the Heads of States/Governments of D-8 Member States endorsed "the Roadmap for Economic Cooperation in the Second Decade of Cooperation (2008 - 2018)" as the vision to guide D-8 activities with particular emphasis on enhancing intra-D8 trade.

- 3.D-8 Global Vision (2012-2030): The Heads of States/Governments of D-8 Member States adopted "D-8 Global Vision (2012-2030)" in the 8th D-8 Summit on 22 November 2012 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

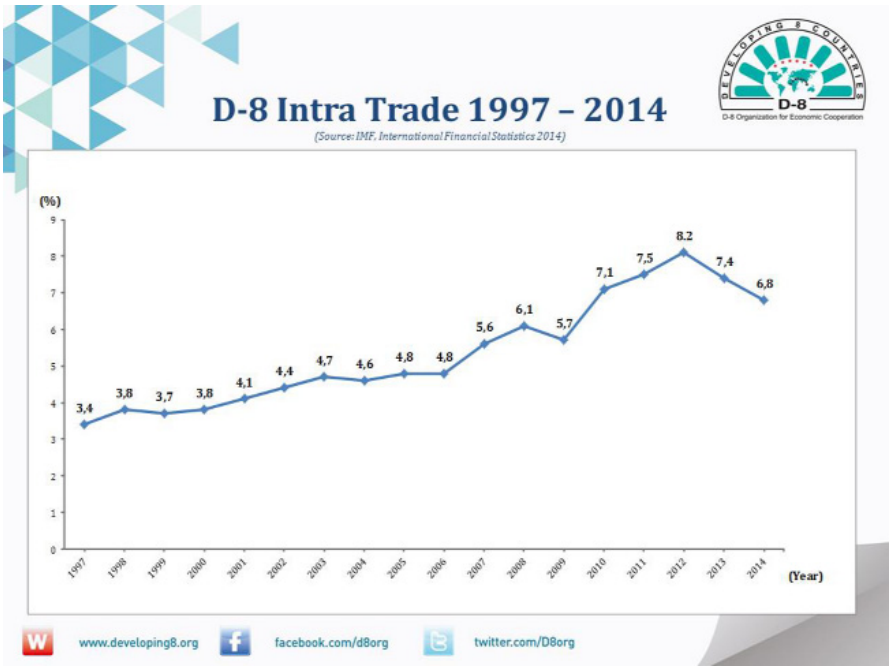
- 4.Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)

- 5.Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the D-8 Member States

- 6.Multilateral Agreement on Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters

- 7.Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on D-8 Civil Aviation Cooperation

The entries into force of the Visa Agreement, Customs Agreement and Preferential Trade Agreement



D-8 intra-trade

(PTA) also served an important role to facilitate and promote actual cooperation among the Member States, particularly in the field of trade sector.

Thus, since establishment of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation in 1997, D-8 intra-trade has increased steadily, particularly from 1997 to 2014.

The volume of D-8 intra-trade increased from US$ 20 billion in 1997 to US$ 120 billion in 2014. It is expected that these agreements enhance the intra-D-8 trade volume from around US$ 122 billion or 7.4 percent of the total trade with the world in 2014 to around US$ 500 billion or 10-15 percent by the year 2018, as envisaged by the Roadmap.

The D-8 Member States' total trade volume is USD 1.71 trillion or 4.4 % of total world trade in 2014, which is USD 37.45 trillion. Conversely, in financial year of 2014 the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) trade volume was USD 3.94 trillion or 10.5 per cent of total world trade, 43 per cent attributed to D-8 Member States.

In order to achieve this target, the Organization has identified several areas of cooperation, which would have direct and indirect influence on the level of D-8 intra-trade.

These areas are trade, agriculture & food security, industry & SMEs, transportation, energy, communication and information, finance, banking and privatization, science and technology, poverty alleviation and human resources development, environment, health, tourism, and culture.

Among these areas, the Organization has given priority to five areas of cooperation, namely, Trade, Agriculture & Food Security, Industry & SMEs, Transportation and Energy, due to its high impact on the D-8 intra-trade. Member States explore different opportunities to promote, develop and strengthen relations and projects among themselves through related working groups, task forces and workshops as well as at Ministerial meeting level.

D-8 Affiliated Institutions

- a)D-8 Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (D-8 FCCI)
- b)D-8 Animal Feed Information Center (D8 AFIC)
- c)D-8 Fertilizer Association (D8 FA)
- d)D-8 Technology Transfer & Exchange Network (D-8 TTEN)
- e)D-8 Petrochemical Association

The D-8 Organization will complete first phase of its life cycle after the inception of the Organization by the 9th Summit.

The Organization is now bound to seize this momentum to enter its second life-cycle phase, and strategically devise effective way to achieve its entire goals, in accordance with the vision set by its great founders.

In the upcoming 9th D-8 Summit, the D-8 needs to underline and formulate new strategies, policies and measures to enhance effectively D-8 cooperation with joint efforts at addressing the challenges and tapping into potentials for common growth.

**Report prepared by the D-8 Secretariat*

Millennium Development Goals in ECO Region

By: Javad Heidari - ECO Secretariat

An Overview

Introduction

At the beginning of this century, the United Nations Member States unanimously agreed to forge a commitment, through the Millennium Declaration, to help the poorest to achieve better life by the year 2015. The framework of this commitment was outlined in a set of time-bound common goals and targets embodied in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Progress towards the MDGs was being benchmarked against a set of 21 time-bound targets and 60 indicators addressing extreme poverty and hunger, education, women's empowerment and gender equality, health, environmental sustainability and global partnership. The MDGs were seemingly an attempt to tackle the most pressing development challenges international community is facing. In September 2015 the world's countries adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at UN headquarters in New York that will guide global development efforts through 2030. SDGs will offer a fresh opportunity to build on the MDGs - completing "unfinished business" in such vital areas as maternal and child mortality, while addressing other major concerns that have risen to the top of the global agenda, notably climate change and rising levels of inequality. The goals are associated with a number of new targets and indicators.

This new agenda can also make up for weaknesses in the MDGs, notably in Goal 8 which fell far short of its potential for strengthening a global partnership for development. The new agenda is both ambitious, more than doubling the eight Millennium Development Goals and more comprehensive. For example, where the first MDG set out to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger," its successor SDG takes on these challenges in their entirety: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere" (Goal 1) and "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture" (Goal 2).

Since 2001, countries across the ECO Region have been striving to meet ambitious goals that aimed to improve the lives of their more than 440 million people. As this paper points out, the overall picture seems promising. While the ECO Region has cut that poverty rate by more than two-thirds, the Region has not achieved all the goals and some ECO Member States have made faster progress than others. Although the data largely correspond to 2013/2014, the information at this stage has shown that the MDGs have stimulated inspiring levels of commitment and achievement.

ECO Secretariat has occasionally produced Regional MDGs Reports presenting concise graphical scorecards of achievement, while also highlighting challenges and opportunities for accelerating progress towards the goals. This paper assesses the state of progress

on the MDGs, and considers how ECO can shift towards the SDGs.

Although the data for the most recent years are not yet available, the overall picture is already clear. The paper and assessments therein are based on the United Nations global dataset. It should be noted that these data, which are adjusted to be internationally comparable, may for certain countries differ from those published by national statistical offices.

Regional progress

Over the past 15 years, the ECO Region has taken strides in human development. This is reflected in many of the MDGs' indicators. These include measures at the national level in the areas of human development as well as social, educational and health standards. These programmes have resulted in progress in the regional indicators in terms of girls and boys primary schooling; and reduced child and maternal mortality rates.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living on $1.25 a day or less fell by more than two-thirds, as did the proportion of those without access to safe drinking water. ECO Member States have contributed towards regional efforts to reduce poverty and promote human develop in the Region.

Table 1- Goal1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Country	1.25 Per day poverty(%)		Country line poverty (%)		Underweight children (% under age5)	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Afghanistan	--	--	36/3 (08)	35/8 (11)	44/9 (97)	25/0 (13)
Azerbaijan	25/2 (95)	0/3 (08)	49/6 (01)	5/3 (13)	8/8 (96)	8/4 (06)
Iran	3/9 (90)	1/5 (04)	--	--	13/8 (95)	4/1 (11)
Kazakhstan	4/2 (93)	0/1 (10)	46/7 (01)	2/9 (13)	3/8 (99)	3/7 (10)
Kyrgyzstan	18/6 (93)	5/1 (11)	39/9 (06)	38/0 (12)	2/7 (06)	3/4 (12)
Pakistan	64/7 (91)	12/7 (11)	30/6 (99)	12/4 (11)	39/0 (91)	39/9 (11)
Tajikistan	50/1 (99)	6/5 (09)	96/0 (99)	47/2 (09)	14/9 (05)	12/1 (12)
Turkey	1/8 (94)	0/1 (11)	30/3 (02)	2/3 (12)	8/7 (93)	1/7 (08)
Turkmenistan	63/5 (93)	24/8 (98)	--	--	--	10/5 (00)
Uzbekistan	--	--	17/7 (10)	16/0 (11)	--	4/4 (06)

Although this MDG targets of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger have been fully met in some Member States and partly met in other Member States, the ECO Region is still far from reaching the Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Eradicating poverty and hunger remains at the core of the SDGs.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

The Region has also been successful in meeting other targets. Nearly all primary-aged children are enrolled in and complete school, and students at all levels of education benefit from gender parity.

Table 2- Goal2: Achieve universal primary education

Country	Primary enrolment (%)		Reaching last grade (%)		Primary completion rate (%)	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Afghanistan	--	--	--	--	--	--
Azerbaijan	92/0 (91)	89/3 (12)	97/8 (93)	98/2 (11)	95/8 (93)	91/6 (12)
Iran	86/4 (99)	98/5 (13)	97/4 (00)	96/2 (11)	92/7 (00)	102/2 (12)
Kazakhstan	88/6 (00)	85/9 (13)	95/0 (00)	99/3 (12)	94/9 (00)	102/2 (13)
Kyrgyzstan	86/8 (99)	90/5 (12)	94/5 (99)	97/1 (11)	93/6 (99)	97/7 (12)
Pakistan	56/2 (02)	71/9 (13)	--	61/0 (11)	61/2 (05)	71/9 (12)
Tajikistan	93/7 (00)	95/6 (14)	96/7 (99)	98/0 (11)	90/8 (99)	97/6 (12)
Turkey	94/3 (99)	94/0 (12)	--	90/0 (11)	97/7 (04)	101/4 (12)
Turkmenistan	--	--	--	--	--	--
Uzbekistan	--	88/5 (11)	99/5 (99)	98/1 (10)	96/0 (99)	91/8 (11)

As the Table 2 shows there is enormous progress during the past 15 years in ECO Region. However and despite this progress, achieving universal primary education target will require renewed attention in the post-2015 era. Investing in the quality of education and ensuring a sustainable source of funding are essential.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

The education of women and girls has a positive multiplier effect on progress across the ECO Region. As illustrated in the Table 3, the greatest improvements have been made in primary education. Today, almost most of ECO Member States have achieved parity.

Table 3- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Country	Gender parity index in primary education		Gender parity index in secondary education		Gender parity index in tertiary education	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Afghanistan	0/34 (93)	0/70 (13)	0/37 (93)	0/55 (13)	0/49 (90)	0/33 (11)
Azerbaijan	0/99 (91)	0/98 (12)	1/00 (91)	0/99 (12)	0/67 (91)	1/05 (12)
Iran	0/92 (90)	0/98 (05)	--	0/95 (12)	0/59 (96)	1/00 (12)
Kazakhstan	1/01 (00)	1/00 (12)	1/03 (00)	0/99 (12)	1/25 (94)	1/43 (12)
Kyrgyzstan	0/96 (96)	0/98 (12)	--	0/99 (11)	1/33 (93)	1/61 (13)
Pakistan	0/68 (02)	0/87 (13)	--	0/74 (13)	0/40 (90)	0/98 (13)
Tajikistan	0/93 (00)	0/99 (14)	0/91 (99)	0/90 (11)	0/43 (99)	0/52 (12)
Turkey	0/93(94)	0/98 (12)	0/71 (97)	0/96 (12)	0/50 (90)	0/85 (12)
Turkmenistan	--	--	--	--	--	0/64 (14)
Uzbekistan	--	0/97 (11)	--	--	0/82 (99)	0/65 (11)

In secondary education, gender parity has been achieved in 2015 in the ECO Region. A majority of the Member States have reached gender parity in primary education, but disparities persist at higher levels.

Health related goals

On the health front, maternal mortality and under-five mortality rates fell by more than half along with declines in the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis. Some Member States have done well and achieved targets in child mortality and maternal mortality, while others have made limited progress. The ECO Region has reduced the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis. However, bringing the goals within the reach in all countries requires increased commitment, determination and sustained action at the national and regional levels.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Statistics show that child mortality rate in the ECO Region has drastically changed. Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkey have successfully achieved the target (Reduce by two thirds the under-five mortality rate between 1990-2015). The progress made by other seven Member States seemed insufficient making achievement of MDG4 by the end of 2015 difficult. As shown in Table 4 below, the under-five child mortality rate in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan had not been adequately reduced

Table 4- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Country	Under - 5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births)		Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Afghanistan	179/1 (90)	97/3 (13)	121/3 (90)	70/2 (13)
Azerbaijan	94/5 (90)	34/2 (13)	75/4 (90)	29/9 (13)
Iran	56/4 (90)	17/6 (13)	43/9 (90)	15/1 (13)
Kazakhstan	54/1 (90)	18/7 (13)	45/8 (90)	16/7 (13)
Kyrgyzstan	70/5 (90)	26/6 (13)	58/0 (90)	23/6 (13)
Pakistan	138/4 (90)	85/9 (13)	105/9 (90)	69/3 (13)
Tajikistan	104/7 (90)	58/3 (13)	82/4 (90)	49/0 (13)
Turkey	73/7 (90)	14/2 (13)	55/2 (90)	12/2 (13)
Turkmenistan	90/4 (90)	52/8 (13)	72/4 (90)	44/8 (13)
Uzbekistan	73/8 (90)	39/6 (13)	60/4 (90)	34/4 (13)

between 1990 and 2013. The rate of decline in under-five mortality in ECO Central Asian and Caucasus Member States remained insufficient to achieve MDG4.

Measles immunization has helped to lower measles deaths significantly (Table 5) where there has been substantial progress in the most ECO Member States, particularly in Central Asia, Iran and Turkey.

Table5: Children 1 year old immunized against measles (%)

Country	1990	2000	2010	2013
Afghanistan	20	27	62	75
Azerbaijan	-	67	89	98
Iran	85	99	99	99
Kazakhstan	-	99	99	99
Kirgizstan	-	98	99	99
Pakistan	50	59	69	61
Tajikistan	-	88	94	92
Turkey	78	87	97	98
Turkmenistan	-	96	99	99
Uzbekistan	-	99	98	97
ECO	65	70	86	-
ASEAN	70	80	89	-
Developing Countries	74	70	87	-
Developed Countries	76	95	94	-

Despite progress, the Region as a whole has been slow in achieving the Millennium Development Goals targets for child health. And most ECO Member States failed to attain MDG4. In other word, progress to meet the main target 4 of the Millennium Development Goals was insufficient. Much work therefore remained to be done for the ECO Region to meet Goal 4 of MDGs.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

In the ECO Region as a whole, there has been a range of improvements in maternal health since 1990. In other words, ECO Region has made steady progress in reducing the maternal mortality ratio. Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkey achieved this MDG target. In the Region and in 2013, the maternal mortality ratio ranged from levels as high as 400 deaths per 100,000 live births in Afghanistan (levels similar to the African average) to levels as low as 20 in Turkey. In other words, higher-income countries in the ECO Region had the lowest rates of maternal mortality on average, at 20 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013.

Among ECO Member States in Central Asia, only Kazakhstan has managed to achieve MDG5. Turkmenistan and Kyrgyz Republic still have a high maternal mortality ratio (60-75 deaths per 100,000 live births). The median annual rate of reduction in the 5 Central Asian ECO countries was over 40 deaths in 2013.

ECO Region is still lagging behind in achieving Millennium Development Goal5 in the areas of maternal mortality, skilled birth attendance, antenatal care and access to sexual and reproductive health. Table 6 presents an overall picture of the maternal mortality situation in the ECO Region.

Table 6- Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Country	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)		Skilled birth attendance (%)		Antenatal care (1 visit)(%)	
	Farliest	Latest	Farliest	Latest	Farliest	Latest
Afghanistan	1200 (90)	400 (13)	14/3(03)	38/6 (11)	16/1 (03)	47/9 (11)
Azerbaijan	60 (90)	26 (13)	97/3 (90)	97/2 (11)	98/3 (97)	91/7 (11)
Iran	83 (90)	23 (13)	86/1 (97)	96/4 (11)	76/5 (97)	96/9 (11)
Kazakhstan	91 (90)	26 (13)	99/0 (90)	99/9 (11)	92/5 (95)	99/2 (11)
Kyrgyzstan	85 (90)	75 (13)	98/1 (97)	99/1 (12)	96/9 (06)	97/0 (12)
Pakistan	400 (90)	170 (13)	18/8 (91)	43/0 (11)	25/6 (91)	60/9 (07)
Tajikistan	68 (90)	44 (13)	90/3 (91)	87/4 (12)	77/1 (05)	78/8 (12)
Turkey	48 (90)	20 (13)	75/9 (93)	91/3 (08)	62/3 (93)	92/0 (08)
Turkmenistan	66 (90)	61 (13)	95/8 (96)	99/5 (06)	98/1 (00)	99/1 (06)
Uzbekistan	66 (90)	36 (13)	97/5 (96)	99/9 (06)	94/9 (96)	99/0 (06)

However, there was major progress in maternal mortality and most countries in the

Region saw their rates fall by more than 50 per cent, including those that had the highest rates in 1990 except Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan. The vast majority of maternal deaths are preventable, and stronger actions and bolder policies need to be pursued if the Region as a whole aims to achieve this Goal in post 2015 era.

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The HIV epidemic has been stabilizing in the ECO Region. However, new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are on the increase in some Member States, and the prevention of new infections among populations at risk remains a key challenge. Between 2007 and 2011, new HIV infections increased in the Region. The AIDS epidemics were growing and young people did not yet possess adequate knowledge about how to protect themselves from the virus. (Table 7)

Access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV-infected people has been increasing in developing regions, including ECO Region, since 2012. ART has saved many lives since 1995. Expanding its coverage can save many more. In addition, knowledge about HIV among youth needs to be improved to stop the spread of the disease.

Table 7- Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Country	HIV prevalence (% ages 15-49)		TB incidence rate (per 100,000)		TB prevalence rate (per 100,000)	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Afghanistan	0/1 (90)	0/1 (13)	198 (90)	189 (12)	306 (90)	340 (12)
Azerbaijan	0/1 (90)	0/2 (13)	305 (90)	95 (12)	744 (90)	124 (12)
Iran	0/1 (90)	0/2 (13)	31 (90)	21 (12)	51 (90)	33 (12)
Kazakhstan	--	--	79 (90)	137 (12)	116 (90)	189 (12)
Kyrgyzstan	0/1 (90)	0/2 (13)	92 (90)	141 (12)	170 (90)	217 (12)
Pakistan	1/1 (90)	0/1 (13)	231 (90)	231 (12)	589 (90)	376 (12)
Tajikistan	0/1 (90)	0/3 (13)	70 (90)	108 (12)	121 (90)	160 (12)
Turkey	--	--	52 (90)	22 (12)	51 (90)	23 (12)
Turkmenistan	--	--	95 (90)	75 (12)	152 (90)	99 (12)
Uzbekistan	0/1 (90)	0/2 (13)	125 (90)	78 (12)	262 (90)	135 (12)

As regards malaria and other diseases in ECO Region, the greatest progress has been achieved with regard to tuberculosis and malaria. The mortality rate from tuberculosis was 11.6 cases per 100,000 people in 2011 (compared to 13.5 per 100,000 people in 2000) and the incidence of malaria cases was 0.8 per 100,000 people in 2011, compared to 80-132 cases per 100,000 in 2002. ECO Member States in Central Asia experienced the greatest reduction in the incidence of TB between 2000 and 2011 (45 percent). Table 7 indicates the HIV prevalence and TB incidence rate in the ECO Member States.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Among the environmental targets, the ECO Region has maintained the proportion of land covered by forests and protected area. ECO has also reduced CO2 emissions per unit of GDP. Regarding the access to safe drinking water, half of the ECO countries met the target and half of them are expected to meet the target. Around 82 per

Table 8- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Country	Forest cover (% land area)		Protected area (% territorial area)		CO2 emissions per GDP (kg CO2 per $1 GDP) (ppp)		Safe drinking water (% population)		Basic sanitation (% population)	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Afghanistan	2/1 (90)	2/1 (10)	0/37 (90)	0/37 (12)	0/021 (02)	0245 (10)	5 (91)	64 (12)	21 (91)	29 (12)
Azerbaijan	11/3 (90)	11/3 (10)	6/20 (90)	7/36 (12)	2/205 (92)	0/367 (10)	70 (90)	80 (12)	63 (94)	82 (12)
Iran	6/8 (90)	6/8 (10)	5/4 (90)	6/96 (12)	0/621 (90)	0/755 (09)	92 (90)	96 (12)	71 (90)	89 (12)
Kazakhstan	1/2 (90)	1/2 (10)	2/45 (90)	3/32 (12)	2/675 (92)	1/396 (10)	94 (90)	93 (12)	96 (90)	97 (12)
Kyrgyzstan	4/4 (90)	5/0 (10)	6/36 (90)	6/33 (12)	1/235 (92)	0/580 (10)	73 (90)	88 (12)	91 (90)	92 (12)
Pakistan	3/3 (90)	2/2 (10)	9/81 (90)	10/56 (12)	0/378 (90)	0/388 (10)	85 (90)	91 (12)	27 (90)	48 (12)
Tajikistan	2/9 (00)	2/9 (10)	1/94 (90)	4/22 (12)	0/697 (92)	0/715 (10)	58 (93)	72 (12)	90 (94)	94 (12)
Turkey	12/6 (90)	14/7 (10)	1/79 (90)	2/11 (12)	0/333 (90)	0/326 (10)	85 (90)	100 (12)	84 (90)	91 (12)
Turkmenistan	8/8 (00)	8/8 (10)	2/99 (90)	3/18 (12)	1/543 (92)	1/433 (10)	86 (94)	71 (12)	98 (90)	99 (12)
Uzbekistan	7/2 (90)	7/7 (10)	2/12 (90)	3/35 (12)	3/142 (92)	1/328 (10)	90 (90)	87 (12)	84 (90)	100 (12)

cent of the ECO population have access to basic sanitation.

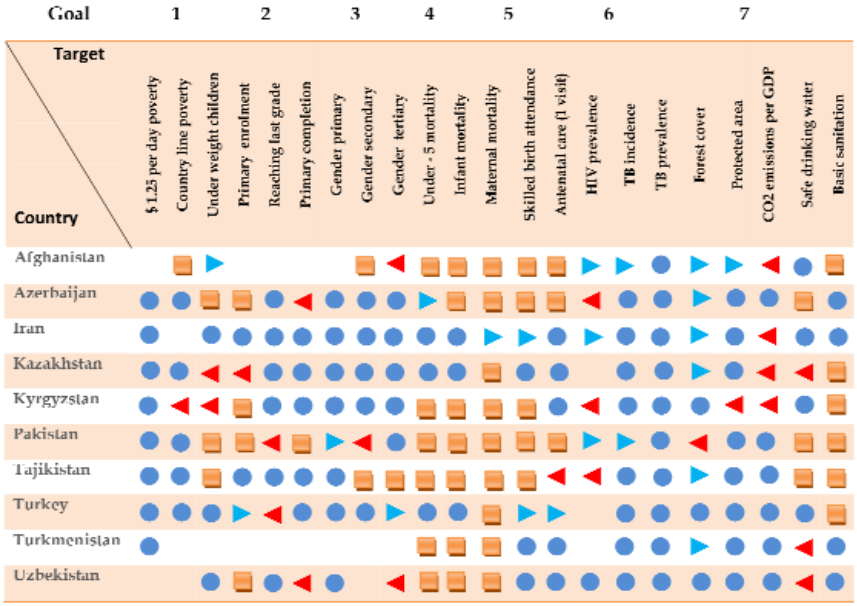
ECO Member States in Caucasus and Central Asia have cut in half the proportion of the population without access to improved sanitation.

Conclusion:

Table 9 shows the aggregate outcome for the ECO Member States. At the end of 2015, the ECO Region as a whole was expected to reach the target in 13 out of the 21 indicators tracked for this paper. One of the greatest successes has been for poverty. The MDG target was to halve the poverty rate, and of the countries in the Region with sufficient data, all except one were expected to meet this target. ECO countries were also to ensure universal enrolment, primary completion, and gender parity in primary schools, and to halve those without access to safe drinking water.

Some countries are not reducing the incidence of drop-out and are not expected to achieve gender parity in secondary and tertiary education. For a number of other indicators, the Region failed to hit the targets and made slow progress.

Table 9- ECO Member States on - and off - track for the MDGs



Early Achiever: Already achieved the 2015 target

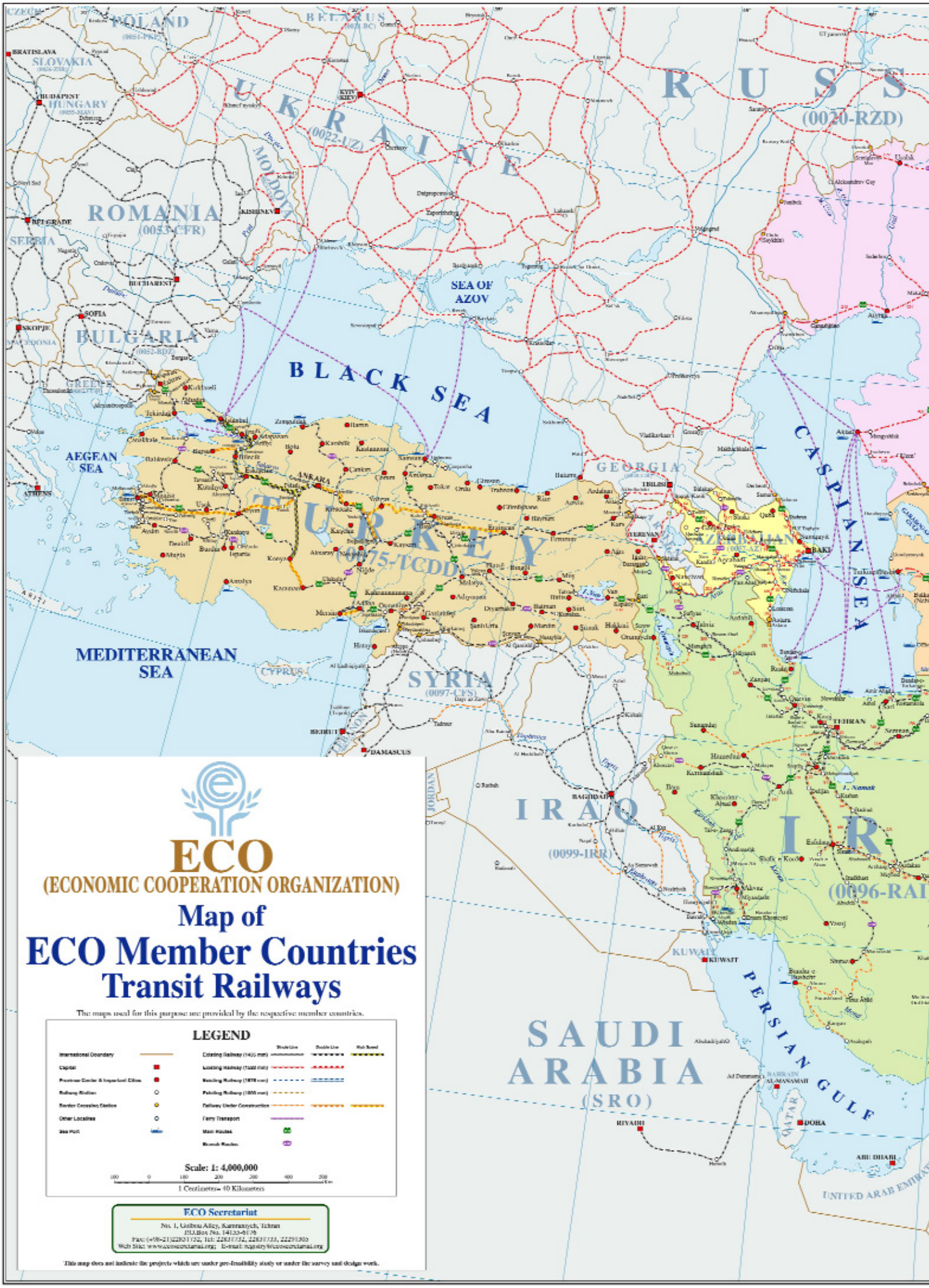
On Track: Expected to meet the target at the end of 2015

Slow: Expected to meet the target, but after 2015

Off track (no progress/regressing) : Stagnating or slipping backwards

In ECO Region, only three countries have met the targets for maternal, child or infant mortality. All ECO countries have achieved the required progress in TB prevalence and the extent of protected areas. However, for some indicators, including those related to malnutrition and primary completion, more than half of ECO Member States achieved the targeted reductions.

6 ECO countries also achieved gender equality at the tertiary level and 7 Member States could not meet any of the primary education goals. ECO Member States in Central Asia achieved the full range of education indicators having ensured that all children who start primary school reach the last grade without interruption. These Member States also achieved universal antenatal care. Central Asian Member States, however, could not meet the goal for safe drinking water.


ECO
(ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION)
Map of
ECO Member Countries
Transit Railways
The maps used for this purpose are provided by the respective member countries.
LEGEND
Scale: 1: 4,000,000
1 Centimeter= 40 Kilometers
ECO Secretariat
This map does not indicate the projects which are under pre-feasibility study or under the survey and design work.
POLAND
BELARUS
UKRAINE
RUSS
(0020-RZD)
ROMANIA
(0053-CFR)
MOLDOVA
SERBIA
BULGARIA
(0052-BDZ)
GREECE
SEA OF AZOV
BLACK SEA
AEGEAN SEA
TURKEY
(0075-TCDD)
GEORGIA
AZERBAIJAN
CASPIAN SEA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
CYPRUS
SYRIA
(0097-CFS)
IRAQ
(0099-IRR)
IR
(0096-RAI
KUWAIT
SAUDI ARABIA
(SRO)
PERSIAN GULF
QATAR
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

KAZAKHSTAN
(0027-KZH)
UZBEKISTAN
(0029-UTD)
TURKMENISTAN
(0067-TRK)
KYRGYZSTAN
(0059-KRG)
TAJIKISTAN
(0066-TDZ)
CHINA
(0033-CR)
AFGHANISTAN
(AFGS)
PAKISTAN
(PR)
INDIA
(IR)
OMAN
JAMMU AND KASHMIR
(DISPUTED TERRITORY)
Aral Sea
Balkhash Lake
Lake Zaysan
Issyk Kul
Lake Fyak kol
OMAN GULF
ASTANA
BISHKEK
TASHKENT
DUSHANBE
ASHGABAT
KABUL
ISLAMABAD
NEW DELHI
MUSCAT
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN
REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN
REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
TURKMENISTAN
REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

RPC Delegations visited the ECO Park in Tehran

The delegations participating the 26th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) visited the ECO Park in the central part of Tehran. They also visited the Tehran Planetarium and had their lunch in a Restaurant on the famous "Nature Bridge".

Transforming Our World:

The 2030 Agenda
For Sustainable Development

ECO as the Most Suitable Regional Forum to Engage