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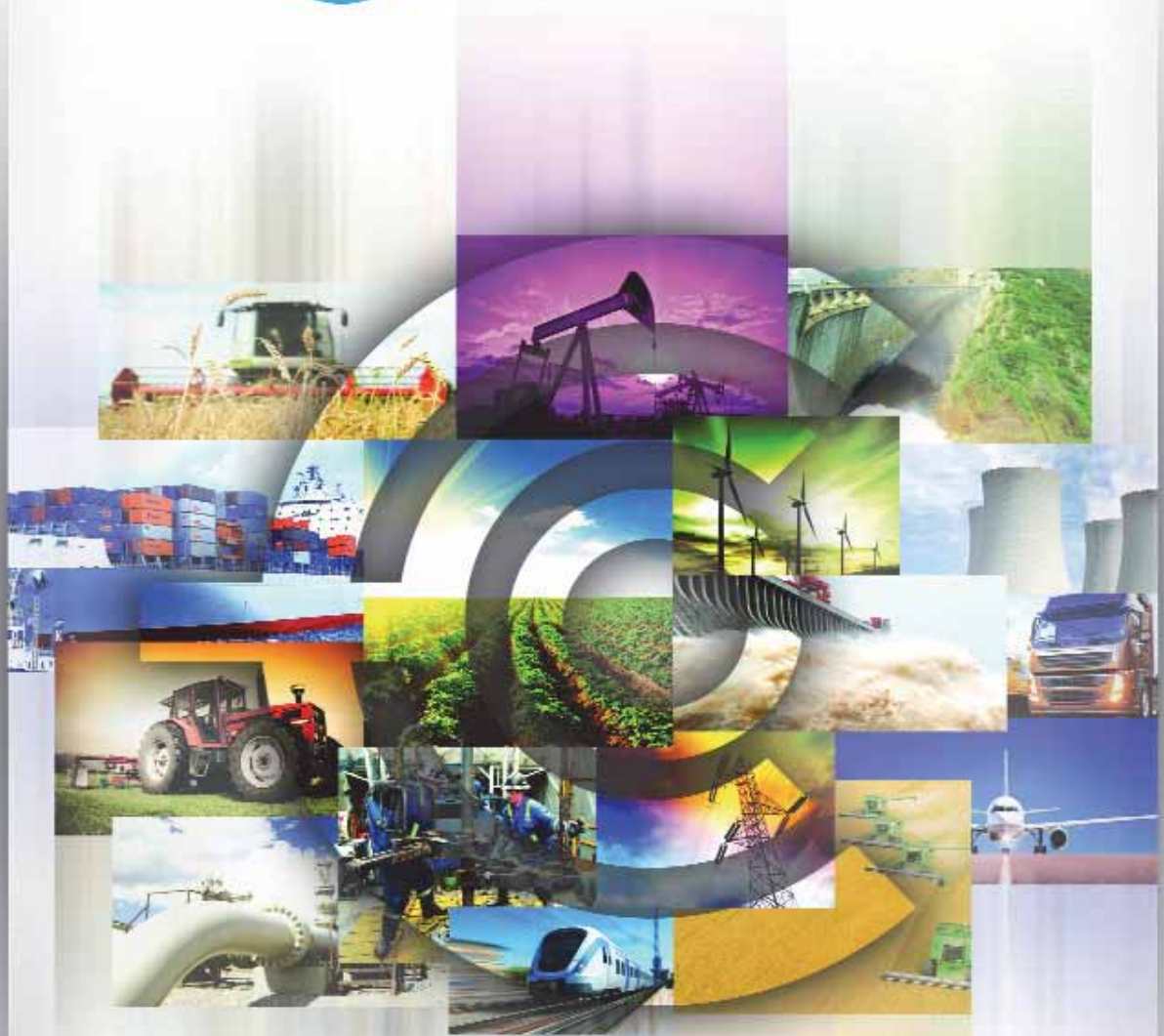
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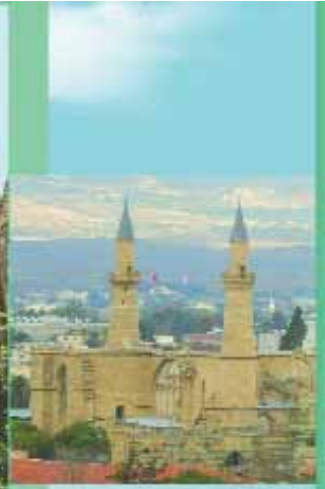
21st COM Meeting
on
21st ECO Anniversary
November 24-26, 2013, Tehran





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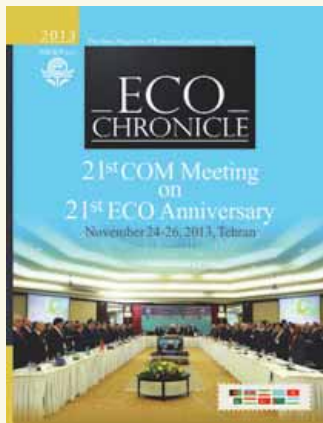
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Editor's Note:

ECO Chronicle is a non-profit making news magazine. The views expressed and data contained in this publication are provided by writers/ authors from ECO member countries or from outside the ECO region, and are not necessarily those held or agreed by the ECO Secretariat or ECO Chronicle Editorial Board.



Cover



21st COM Meeting
on
21st ECO Anniversary
Nov. 24-26, 2013, Tehran



“A New Pattern for Regional Cooperation”

At the inaugural ceremony of the auspicious 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), held in Tehran on November 26, 2013, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H. E. President Hassan Rouhani, made a notable statement by expressing optimism about the future of the Economic Cooperation Organization, and said "ECO should undergo some reforms to provide the needs of the Member States". By emphasizing that ECO has provided a new pattern for regional cooperation, he underlined that: "Over two decades of cooperation among the ten ECO countries, from South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasus, has provided a new model, for regional cooperation."

Indeed, ECO has all the ingredients to act as a significant regional player for promoting economic development and integration of its Members. Although several measures have already been adopted by ECO, to strengthen cooperation and among other things increase the trade among its Member States, nevertheless the achieved result does not meet the desired expectations and requires the concerted efforts of all the parties involved to meet the challenge and rectify the situation.

In another development, in commemoration of "ECO Day" marking the Anniversary of the expansion of Economic Cooperation Organization from a three member grouping to a 10-member organization, a friendly initiative took place through the joint efforts of Tehran Municipality and the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), where an attractive park named as "ECO Park" was dedicated to ECO in the presence of ECO Ministers participating in the Meeting, Tehran's Mayor as well as friends of ECO in the beautiful Abbas Abad hills of Tehran.

The Park is said to be a place to raise awareness about culture and civilization of all the ten ECO Member States. Considering the nature and objectives of the project, I hope construction of such parks may be repeated elsewhere in other Member States to bolster the existing cultural and historical ties and promote the culture of cooperation among our people.

Finally, at the threshold of the year 2014, I wish to extend to all our readers, my heartiest season's greetings and warmest felicitations. May the spirit of cooperation and peace prevail and the world be a more peaceful and safer place to live for all!

Dr. Shamil Aleskerov
Secretary General

S. Aleskerov

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Shamil Aleskerov
ECO Secretary General

Editorial Board
Altatf Asghar
Hayri Maraslioglu
Abolghasem Tahmasebi
Mahmood Khaghani

Editor in Chief
Ali Sabzalian

Graphic Design
Kianoush Saadatmand



Address

No. 1, Golbou Alley,
Kamranieh St., Tehran-Iran

P.O.Box \ 14155- 6176

Tehran(I.R. Iran)

Tel \ (+98-21) 22831733-4

(+98-21) 22292066

Fax \ (+98-21) 22831732

Email

registry@ecosecretariat.org

ecochronicle@ecosecretariat.org

Web

<http://www.ecosecretariat.org>

Iran President :

“ECO is a Big Opportunity for the Region & Member Countries”

The 21st ECO-COM Meeting was hosted by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran with the presence of Iran's President, Hassan Rouhani, at the inaugural session of the meeting. During the meeting, Iran took over the chairmanship of the ECO-COM from the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran President, Hassan Rouhani, said in his inaugural speech:

"ECO is a big opportunity for the region and Member countries and the Organization needs certain reform measures at the beginning of the third decade of cooperation among the Member States."





President Rouhani expressed optimism about the future of the Economic Cooperation Organization, and

"Over two decades of cooperation among ten ECO countries from South Asia, Middle East and Central Asia and

said ECO should undergo some reforms mainly with goal of improving this Organization to such a level that it is turned into a medium which can provide the needs of the Member and regional states.

"I hope to witness extensive regional cooperation and increased welfare and happiness for the member states in light of reforms in ECO in the near future and by taking a look at future horizons," said President Rouhani.

While emphasizing that ECO has provided a new pattern for regional cooperation, Rouhani said:



Caucasia, has provided a new model for regional cooperation."He added that the ECO members have made major achievements, during the period, in the fields of energy, industry, agriculture, mining, environment, banking, technology, science, education and transportation. However, noted the President, that further progresses should be made in the field of regional cooperation with ECO Members having brighter

prospects in their minds.



ECO Ministers' Communiqué Stresses Expanding Cooperation

"To make ECO More Responsive to the Needs and Expectation of its Member States"

Tehran Communiqué

We, the Foreign Ministers of the Member States and Heads of official delegations of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO),

Convening, in a cordial and friendly environment, the 21st Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers on 26 November 2013 in Tehran, under the chairmanship of H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Availing ourselves of the opportunity of the Tehran Meeting to exchange views on the most important regional and global issues,

Bearing in mind the goals and objectives of the Organization as envisaged in the Treaty of Izmir and as reemphasized by our Heads of State and Government, notably and recently in Baku Declaration 2012,


Reviewing with appreciation the progress made since our last meeting in Baku on 15 October 2012,


Taking stock of the ECO achievements and developments in its first two decades of expansion with a view to developing new approaches and adopt-


ing necessary policies and mechanisms to make ECO more responsive to the needs and expectations of its Member States and Peoples, and in this regard, appreciating the invaluable work done by our Senior Officials in their meeting on 24-25 November 2013 in Tehran,

Mindful of the immediate requirements of a successful ECO in its 3rd decade of expansion,

Emphasizing that ECO activities and undertakings in its 3rd decade and beyond shall be as inclusive as possible encompassing all its Member States,


 1. Endorsed the final Report of the 21st Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers as prepared by the Senior Officials Meeting and called on the concerned authorities of the Member States and Secretary General to ensure implementation of the decisions therein.


 2. Reaffirmed the continued critical value of collective cooperation within ECO for economic growth and development of its Member States, individually and regionally.


 3. Building on the two decades of experience, decided to take forward the reform process of ECO on the basis of the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and instructed the ECO





Secretary General to arrange, in cooperation with the Member States, the timely conclusion of the said process for enhancing the dynamism, efficiency and visibility of the Organization. The Council instructed the CPR to finalize and approve the roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations of the EPG by August 2014 with a view to its earliest implementation.

 4. Agreed that the reform process shall address, inter alia, the regulatory, institutional, budgetary and other requirements of the Organization putting in place a reliable and durable cooperation framework for our Region, and to that end mandated the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to provide the Secretary General with necessary support and authorizations enabling him to mobilize all in-house and external resources, including pertinent expertise and applicable reform models, with a view to ensuring the applicability and usefulness of the envisaged reforms.


 5. Agreed to review and revise the ECO Secretariat staffing structure during the year 2014 in order to more accurately reflect and further encourage all ECO Member States representation.


 6. Acknowledged the pivotal role of intra-trade expansion in boosting economic growth and cooperation in the ECO region and in that respect called for early establishment of the requisite trade, customs, banking and tax arrangements, as well as public-private sector partnerships needed for an enabling regional trading environment. Accordingly called to take the necessary measures for the practical implementation and wider membership of trade related agreements within the framework of ECO. The need for ECO advocacy policy for assisting in early accession of its remaining Member States to the World Trade Organization (WTO) was highlighted as an important contribution to the trade agenda of the ECO region.


 7. Reaffirmed its commitment to immediately operationalize ECOTA among the Contracting Parties, which have submitted their Lists. The Council also requested the remaining Member States to join ECOTA at the earliest.


 8. Having full cognizance of the macro and microeconomic impacts of the transport and transit sector on the economic growth and development of ECO region as well as welfare of its people, called for action on removing the existing obstacles to full and early operationalization of the ECO rail and road corridors, including corridors identified in the ECO Railway and Road Network Development Plans. To that end, invited the international and regional funding institutions and the Member States to participate in financing the ECO transit/transport related projects.


 9. Revisited the yet existing gap between ECO enormous potential for enhanced energy cooperation and its pertinent real achievements in the last two decades, and reiterated our firm desire to rectify this situation, including through outlines developed in the decisions of the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy held in March 2013 in Tehran.


 10. Reaffirmed the significance of all projects, programmes and bodies within the Organization in areas such as environment, agriculture, industry, tourism, statistics, economic research, information and communication technologies, health, culture, science and technology, education, disaster risk management, Meteorology, human resource development, anti-corruption, drugs, organized crimes and other areas of relevance, and acknowledged the need for necessary streamlining.

 11. Commended efforts of the ECO Secretariat to strengthen and expand ECO relations with the United Nations system, regional and international Organizations and relevant non-ECO countries, particularly those aimed at securing technical and financial support for the relevant ECO projects and activities, and emphasized the need for a revised ECO external relations policy commensurate with the needs and requirements of its 3rd decade. The significant role of the Contact Groups of ECO Ambassadors at international organizations was also emphasized.

 12. Also welcomed the support given by the ECO in the framework of Istanbul Process for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan.

 13. Appreciated the establishment of ECO Research Centre in Baku.

 14. Appreciated the invaluable efforts of H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for the promotion of regional cooperation during his chairmanship of the ECO Council of Ministers, and felicitated H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on assuming the Chairmanship of the Council.

 15. Expressed profound thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Government officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran for their support and contributions to the 21st COM meeting held in Tehran. Also thanked the ECO Secretary General and his staff for their efforts to make this meeting successful.

Tehran 26th November, 2013



World Leaders Congratulate Election Wins



ECO
CHRONICLE

On Wednesday, October 9, 2013 citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan exercised their constitutional rights by voting in the nation's sixth presidential election since restoring independence in 1991. Results published by the Central Election Commission of Azerbaijan showed that the incumbent President Ilham Aliyev secured a convincing re-election with a high voter turnout.

On November 6th, 2013 citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan also exercised their constitutional rights by voting in the nation's fourth seven-year term presidential election since restoring independence in 1991. World leaders congratulated President Ilham Aliyev and Emomali Rahmon on their election victories and expressed their hope for further expansion of their relations with the two ECO Member States that would witness the promotion of regional and international peace and security. ■

Informal COM Meeting Held in New York

ECO
CHRONICLE

The Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held its twentieth informal meeting in New York on 26 September, 2013 on the sidelines of the sixty-eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Meeting was hosted and chaired by H.E. Dr. Elmar Mammadyarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and was attended by the Ministers and Representatives of the ECO Member States. The Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) represented the ECO Secretariat at the meeting. The meeting reviewed the main progress made in various fields of cooperation including trade and investment, transport and communications, energy and environment, narcotics control, health and external relations of ECO. The meeting also discussed the developments of ECO since its expansion and exchanged views on the possible reforms needed for keeping pace with the evolving requirements of regional cooperation. The meeting also called on the Contact Groups of ECO Ambassadors at various capitals to play an active role in promoting ECO's interests at the United Nations and other relevant regional and international Organizations. The meeting participants renewed their commitment to promote regional economic integration among the ECO member states and resolved to play an active role for the realization of the Organization's aims and objectives. ■



ECO Celebrates 21st Anniversary

ECO Secretary General hosted the ECO Day Celebration on 25th Nov. 2013 in Tehran. ECO Day celebrated annually on 28th November. But, as ECO Ministers of Foreign Affairs and ECO Senior Officials arrived in Tehran for the 21st ECO Council of Ministers Meeting on 26th November, the ECO



Secretariat celebrated the ECO Day prior to ECO-COM meeting. Some ECO Ministers, ECO Senior Officials, ECO Ambassadors to Tehran and high authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Diplomatic Corps in Tehran attended the ECO Day celebration. ■



ECO Secretary General Receives VIP Guests

“Train the Trainers” Workshop Held in Ankara

ECO CHRONICLE The workshop titled “Train the Trainers” was held in Ankara at the Turkish Academy against Drug and Organized Crime (TADOC). The workshop was held within the framework of EU-funded project on “Fight against trafficking from/to Afghanistan with the ECO Member States” and with the technical support of Turkish Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crimes Department (KOM)/TADOC.

It was attended by the representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey (host) and Turkmenistan. The workshop was also attended by the relevant officials of the ECO Drug and Organized Crimes Coordination Unit (ECO-DOCCU) and the Technical Coordinator for the EU-funded Project from the GIZ.

The purpose of the workshop was to enhance the capabilities of the trainers of the anti narcotics agencies/departments of the Member States enabling them to build effective course plans and deliver more interactive and informative training sessions by utilizing the adult learning principles and student-centered learning.

Other topics of the workshops included: the role and responsibilities of a trainer, the learning environment, ice breakers, classroom agreements, facilitation, reflective practice, action planning, experiential learning, models of learning, problem solving, adult learning cycle, lesson planning, feedback and the lesson structure.

The participants of the workshop highly appreciated the ECO-DOCCU, TADOC as also the European Union for their support to organize this important training course. Towards the end of the workshop, Adem Sahin, Head of TADOC, along with Hossein Pourkarami, Leader of Component-I of the Project, awarded the certificates to the participants. ■

ECO Envisioning Secure & Independent Afghanistan Post 2014 Roundtable

ECO CHRONICLE The role of Economic Cooperation Organisation in the future of Afghanistan was among the topics discussed in a joint roundtable co-hosted by the German “Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung” (FES) and Iran’s “Institute of Political and International Studies” (IPIS) on 5 November 2013 in Tehran.

In this respect, the roundtable also took up ECO possible contribution towards “Afghanistan post 2014”, where S. Alavi Sabzevari, Director for “ECO Affairs” at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, shared his views regarding ECO’s role in the development of Afghanistan, and other topics on the agenda of the meeting with the participating experts and authorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, FES and IPIS.

Alavi, in his presentation, emphasized that Afghanistan’s development-related concerns have always been addressed at the meetings held by the Economic Cooperation Organisation. “In fact, since 1992 that Afghanistan, along with six other Central Asian and Caucasus Republics joined the three ECO founding members; the Organization has managed to accord special priority for the development needs of Afghanistan in ECO regional projects”, he said.

“ECO Special Fund for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan was established in 2002 with total pledges of US\$11150000 by ECO member states which are quite distinct from their financial and economic assistance to Afghanistan unilaterally and/or in the context of other international initiatives”, he added. In transport and transit sector, Alavi Sabzevari highlighted ECO rail and road corridors’ construction projects which benefit Afghanistan trade and business development. On issues related to drugs specific, he referred to the ECO-EU Project entitled “Fight against



Trafficking from/to Afghanistan” which is funded by “EU’s Instrument for Stability” and implemented by an international Consortium led by GIZ on behalf of German Federal Ministry of the Interior. The aforementioned project which was commenced in 2008, addresses challenges of drugs trafficking from the enroute countries perspective and aims at accommodating the technical, regulatory and institutional needs. He also enumerated some upcoming arrangements in the ECO region such as ECOPOL (Police of ECO Region) which can contribute to the security attempts in Afghanistan and the Region as a whole. Concluding his remarks, Alavi Sabzevari brought to the notice of roundtable participants that ECO has proved its critical value for any kind of partnership arrangements for the future of Afghanistan. He also mentioned that excluding China, all Afghanistan’s neighboring countries are members of ECO, and in one way or another, are engaged in ECO projects with direct or indirect bearing on Afghanistan. Therefore, ECO constitutes an invaluable asset/opportunity and can be a reliable and trusted regional partner and player in any attempt with a view to “envisioning a secure and independent Afghanistan”. ■

By ECO Chronicle Afghanistan desk

2nd Meeting of ECO Expert Group on Renewable Sources of Energy (RSE)

ECO CHRONICLE

The 2nd Meeting of ECO Experts Group on Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and the 4th Workshop on RES were held during 20-22 November 2013 in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Representatives of ECO Member Countries of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan (host), Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and the ECO Secretariat participated in the workshop which was held in Baku and Gobustan. Representatives of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Republic of Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA) also participated in the Meeting.

The State Agency on Alternative and

Renewable Energy Sources (SAARES) of the Republic of Azerbaijan was the host of the events that discussed latest developments, implementation of the related activities, as well as exchange of views on the implementation of the ECO Plan of Action in the field of RES. The Meeting also discussed necessity of enhancing regional cooperation among ECO countries in the field of RES. During the course of the Meeting, site visiting tour to the Sumgait Technologies Park (STP) and Azguntex PV factory in Sumgait city was organized for the participants' familiarization with the STP and Azguntex PV factory capabilities, potentials and functions. ■



Workshop on: ECO Oil and Gas Drilling

The representatives of 5 ECO Member States, namely: the Republic of Azerbaijan (host), the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and representatives of leading companies in the industry - BP Azerbaijan, KCA Deutag Azerbaijan, Maersk Drilling Azerbaijan, Azeri MIDrilling Fluids, Gulf Drilling FZE, Caspian Drilling Company, CDC Drilling, SLB, as well as representatives of the ECO Secretariat participated at the workshop on "Oil and Gas Drilling" which was jointly organized by the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) during 5-6 December 2013 in Baku. The



participants shared their relevant knowledge and experiences, on the basis of promoting business to business (B2B)



cooperation in the ECO Drilling industry & delivered detailed presentations on:

- i. History and current activity of Oil and Gas wells Drilling in the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- ii. Subsea Drilling & Completion Operations;
- iii. Drilling Rigs and Methods;
- iv. Optimization on Drilling Business-Mud system;
- v. Deployment of new generation of nanostructure fluids in drilling business;
- vi. Drilling Trust of SOCAR.

On December 6, Technical Site/Field Trip to "Sangachal Terminal" - industrial complex was organized by the host and the participants were acquainted with terminal's Operation, Facilities, Maintenance, etc. ■

FAO Regional Training Course on Country Stat Program



The "1st FAO Regional Training Course on Country Stat Program" for ECO Member States was conducted jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) from 21 to 25 October 2013 in Ankara. The training course was organized in line with the implementation of the FAO project "Support for the implementation and development of the CountrySTAT Framework in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) countries" for the development of agriculture statistics and CountryStat in the region. This project, in the first step, is being implemented in Afghanistan as the pilot country in the region and in the next step, will be replicated to other ECO countries. CountrySTAT is an integrated national food and agriculture statistical information system ensuring harmonization of national data and metadata collections for analysis and policy making. The CountrySTAT framework organizes, harmonizes and standardizes data from various sources, integrating them into a common platform, via a unique combination of statistics and information technology. CountrySTAT is a system which is based on several decades of experience by FAO in the area of agricultural statistics, including the development and implementation of the world's largest global database on agriculture. Training program was provided by the FAO and SESRIC hosted the training course. ■



Workshop on Statistics of Labor Force



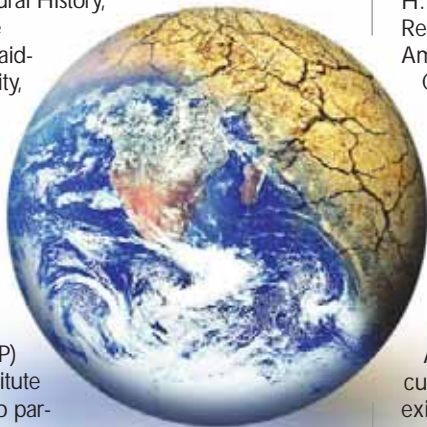
The Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC) of the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) in joint cooperation with the UNFPA Country Office in Iran and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) organized a regional workshop on "New International Standards about Statistics of Work of Labor Force with applications to sex and age disaggregated data" within 23-25 September 2013 in Tehran. The main objective of the workshop was to acquaint participants on the new draft international standards on work statistics submitted by ILO for adoption by the Nineteenth International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ICLS) in Geneva in October 2013.

The purpose of the standards is to guide countries in updating and integrating their existing statistical programs, to program and monitor the labor market and related economic and social policies such as job creation, income generation, skills development, vocational education and training, participation in different forms of work among population groups such as women and men, young people, children, migrants and other groups of particular policy concern. The workshop facilitator was Prof. Farhad Mehran, a well-known Iranian Research Assistant and Teaching Fellow, Department of Statistics and Department of Social Relations, Harvard University, USA. ■



Experts Meeting on Climate Change & Biodiversity

ECO CHRONICLE The Experts Meeting on Climate Change and Biodiversity was held from 29-30 November 2013 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Host), the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey, as well as the ECO Secretariat delegation attended the meeting. The representatives of the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO IEST), Pakistan Museum of Natural History, Pakistan Science Foundation, Quaid-e-Azam University, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Wild Fund Nature in Pakistan (WWF-P) and INAAM Institute of Education also participated in the meeting.



During the meeting the Heads of Delegation also made their statements/presentations and underlined their country positions on the Climate Change and Biodiversity as well as highlighted their countries' policies, programs, projects and activities carried out in the aforementioned fields and in line with the implementation of ECO Work Plan on biodiversity. The meeting also highlighted the threats to the biodiversity, hunting and trafficking, main climatic zones, biomes and vegetation, biodiversity conservation, indicating the vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the Meeting appreciated the proposal of the ECO Secretariat to establish an Environmental Information Network (EIN). ■

ASEAN-ECO Ministerial Meeting

ECO CHRONICLE The 13th joint Ministerial Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in New York on 26 September 2013, on the sidelines of the sixty-eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly.



The Meeting was attended by representatives from ASEAN and ECO Member States, and co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR, and H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The ECO Secretariat was represented by Ambassador Shamil Aleskerov, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

The meeting took stock of the recent developments in the two regions and reviewed the status of cooperation between ASEAN and ECO in the light of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the two sides in 2006.

The participants of the meeting also exchanged views on the future direction of the ASEAN-ECO relations.

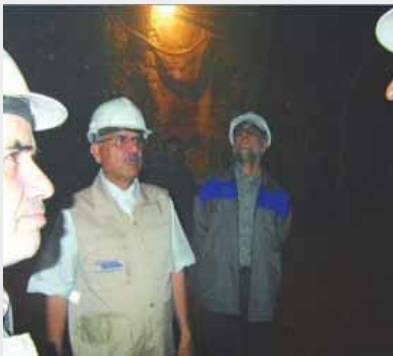
The meeting reviewed the progress on the Work Programme for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and in view of the increasing need for ASEAN-ECO cooperation in the areas of mutual interest, discussed the possibility of revising the MoU to broaden scope of existing cooperation. The meeting stressed the importance of the role of the private sector in promoting inter-regional trade and investment and emphasized the need to facilitate and promote interactions among the private sectors and businesses of the two regions. In this regard, the meeting recalled the decisions reached at the ASEAN-ECO Joint Ministerial Meeting held in September 2011 in New York, which called for an ASEAN-ECO Business Forum and an ASEAN-ECO Tourism Forum to be organized, and welcomed the respective offers of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey to host these events in their countries in 2014.

The meeting acknowledged the growing collaboration between the Secretariats of ASEAN and ECO in the recent years and encouraged the two sides to maintain the exchange of information and best practices in order to strengthen the cooperation between the two Organizations. ■

ECO Deputy S.G.

Visits Tehran Metro

ECO CHRONICLE Upon an invitation by Tehran's Boland Payeh Civil Engineering company, involved in the building of the new sections on Tehran Metro development, DSG Altaf Asghar and DSG Tahmasebi visited the new line under construction in Tehran. A presentation was offered to the visitors on the Tehran Municipality's Metro project. The Tehran Metro is a type of high-capacity public transport system serving Tehran, the capital of Iran. The system consists of four operational lines, with new lines under construction. ■



ECO Railway to Connect Persian Gulf to Caucasus & Beyond

Report By: ECO Chronicle field correspondent

ECO CHRONICLE A delegation consisted of 37 members of diplomatic corps in Tehran comprising of ECO and non-ECO diplomats along with some high-ranking officials of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Secretariat visited the Qazvin-Rasht segment of the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (R. Azerbaijan) Railway Construction Project on 17th November, 2013. One of the visitors amongst the diplomatic corps told ECO Chronicle on the way to Qazvin that in his view, it is very good to see logistic being used as a tool for Economic Cooperation.



countries, Turkey, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Azerbaijan. It will finally reach North Europe via Russia.



Enhancing Trade within the ECO region & its Neighbors

ECO Diplomats were of the view that when this Railway line is completed and commissioned, trade amongst ECO neighboring countries with ECO

member states including Afghanistan, will be enhanced noticeably. Because, there is a well established surface route within Iran and from Chabahar port to Zarang Lake (Border of Afghanistan).

The International North-South Transport Corridor

On the way to Qazvin, the Iranian host said that the Government of India initiated the idea for the project with the view to enhance trade relations between South Asia and Central Asia which are also ECO Member States.

A Memorandum of understanding was signed between India and Iran over the development of Chabahar Port and transshipment facilities at Bandar Abbas. The International North-South Transport Corridor will have its starting point from JNPT Port in Mumbai, and via transshipment the goods, will reach Bandar Abbas Port (near Straits of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf) in Iran a founding Member of ECO. Then a railway link connects Persian Gulf to ECO Member

Win-win Trade Opportunities for ECO Region & Its Neighbors

One of the envoys visiting the project told reporters that "this project provides the South Asia in near future with no need of transshipment for trade, because established railway link starting from India, connecting Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Azerbaijan will connect these countries to North Europe via Russia". Thus, commerce opportunities will elucidate a win- wins trade situation for ECO region and its neighbors. Tuula Magdud, Consul of the Embassy of Finland in Tehran, while supporting the project told reporters that Finland may also be interested on this railway route for tourism industry. One of the Iranian officials familiar with the project told

ECO Chronicle that this is a multi-modal transport corridor which will link India to Moscow through ECO Member countries. He highlighted the background that the International North-South Corridor was mooted by Russia, Iran and India in the year 2000. The participating countries are Oman, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Ukraine, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Syria. But, for more than a decade, there was very little progress - more words and talk than action. Now work, as the envoys witnessed, has been pursued seriously by Iranian government.

The diplomats were also shown the construction of the bridge crossing over the lake Manjil in the northern province of Gilan.

A Shorter & Cheaper Trade Connection

Greeting the participants, Governor of Gilan Province, Mohammadali Najafi, told members of the diplomatic corps that: "this corridor will open a shorter and cheaper trade connection within the ECO region and beyond."

Railway to Connect Iran to North Europe via the R. Azerbaijan

The Republic of Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Tehran, Javanshir Akhundov, underlined the importance of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara railway and told the



delegates visiting the project " the project will enhance bilateral and multilateral trade in the region". He further said: "Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Russia have a trilateral agreement for construction and completion of this railway project and Baku makes serious efforts for the realization of this project."

The Second Meeting of the Working Group on the ECO-North-South Railway Project

Delegations from ECO Member countries took part in the Second Meeting of the Working Group on the ECO-North-South railway project, which was held in the Iranian Caspian Sea port city of Anzali, on 18th November, 2013.

Iran/ R. Azerbaijan Discuss Financing of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara Railway

"The Republic of Azerbaijan has been discussing the possibility of financing the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara railway project with Iran." Deputy Head of Iran's State Company for Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure, Hussein Nazdar, said, according to a report by Mehr News agency on 19 Nov. 2013.

He has also been quoted as saying that "the Qazvin - Rasht- Astara railway is

planned to be completed in case the necessary finance is made available during 2014".

The Railway Route

The Qazvin-Rasht- Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) Railway Project has three parts. Two parts, namely Qazvinn-Rasht and Rasht-Astara with a total length of about 369 km are located in Iran, and one part (less than 10 km) is located in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Qazvin-Rasht-Anzali route (205 km long) starts at Siah Chesemeh rail station 15 km southwest Qazvin and reaches Rasht and Anzali via the towns of Lowshon, Manjl, Roudbar, and Emamzadeh Hashem. About 165 km of the route is single track and 40 km double track. It is a complicated route, as 40% of it is on plains, 10% hills, and 50% mountains. The railway in this route is designed for a maximum speed of 160 km/h for passenger trains and 120 km/h for freight trains. Totally 62 large bridges, with an overall length of about 9 kilometers (excluding aqua-ducts and small bridges) and 53 tunnels, with a total length of 22 kilometers are envisaged for this route. The Rasht-Astara route, with a total length of 164 km, begins at Rasht station and passes the towns of Rezvanshar and Hashtpar to reach Astara (Iran)-Astara (R. Azerbaijan) border. The terrain on this route is mainly green and agricultural between a mountainous and Caspian Sea region. ■



North Sea Field to Ease Energy Price Fears

By ECO Chronicle Energy Desk

ECO CHRONICLE A key gas field in UK North Sea frozen by international sanctions against Iran is set to return to production following UK Government intervention aimed at lifting the ban.

Britain became a net importer of gas in 2009 just before the Rhum field was blocked.

In a press release published by the UK Department of Energy & Climate Change on 22nd October 2013, the UK government said that it supports restarting production at Rhum, which is necessary to avoid potential environmental damage and to prevent the possible destruction



of the value of the field.

The Rhum gas field which is jointly owned by BP and National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) subsidiary in UK (Iran Oil Company UK-IOC) was contributing around five percent to UK gas production in October 2010 before its shutdown.

The field started pumping gas in December 2005 and cost £350m (\$565.6m, €410.7m) to build and it

is expected to deliver a multi-million pound boost to BP and its Iranian partner. Exceptions to sanctions have already been made for some Iranian-backed energy projects, including BP's giant Shah Deniz gas field off shore Caspian Sea in the Republic of Azerbaijan, in which Iran's National Oil Company (NIOC) subsidiary "NICO" holds a 10 per cent stake. ■



Tenders for Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan Railway

ECO CHRONICLE Preliminary works on feasibility study of the Afghan section of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway project have been completed and tenders are expected to be announced in the coming days for carrying out the feasibility analysis, Deputy Minister of Public Works, Ahmad Shah Wahid, told Azerbaijan's Trend News Agency. According to him, the Afghan section of the railway has a length of 355 km. "The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan rail-



Tajikistan, Iran Presidents Discuss Expansion of Economic Cooperation

ECO CHRONICLE The President of Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, met with Islamic Republic of Iran's President Hasan Ruhani prior to inauguration of the SCO Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic to consider the various aspects of multisectoral cooperation between the two ECO Member countries, reports the Tajikistan President's official site. During the friendly meeting, much attention was paid to the expansion of economic, trade and investment cooperation.

With a sense of gratification by increase of investments of Iran to the Tajik economy, including in the construction of Sangtuda-2 HPP and estab-

lishment of other joint ventures, he expressed confidence that this country (Iran) will make a worthy contribution to the construction of other hydropower and industrial facilities of Tajikistan. The sides also focused particular attention on the construction of railways and automobile highways, power transmission lines, water and oil pipelines between Tajikistan and Iran, as well as development of railways of Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan to China. Both parties voiced their interest in holding a large business forum of the two countries in Dushanbe for ensuring of a vast participation of Iranian side in the implementation of investment projects of Tajikistan. ■



way, the construction of which will begin in the near future, will be one of the largest projects in the region," Wahid said. According to him, the construction of the Turkmen section of the railway has already begun. The Asian Development Bank undertook the implementation of the Afghan section of the project, and it will cost \$350 million, the Deputy Minister said. "The ADB will be ready to defray the additional expenses if the project cost changes after the feasibility analysis," Wahid said.

According to him, the construction of the Afghan section of the railway will

start after the feasibility study. The preparation process for the construction may last 8-12 months. In March 2013, after the trilateral high level meeting, the Presidents of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the three countries on the construction of the Trans-Afghan railway. In April, the first meeting of the working groups on the railway project was held. A ceremony for laying the foundation of the railway was held in June in Lebap velayat of Turkmenistan with the participation of the heads of the three states. ■

Int'l Industrial Exhibitions in Tashkent



ECO CHRONICLE

International industrial exhibitions as part of the Central Asian Industrial Week 2013 opened at the Uzexpocenter. The shows were organized by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the State Committee for Geology and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Uzmakhsusimpex state enterprise and the Tashkent city hokimiyat (administration) in partnership with the international exhibition company ITE Uzbekistan. At the opening ceremony of the event, it was noted in particular that wide-ranging reforms are being undertaken in Uzbekistan to boost and modernize manufacturing in all sectors of the economy, particularly in mining industry, metalworking, machinery and mechanical engineering, as well as in the spheres of security and fire safety. The resolution of the head of state "On Priorities of Bolstering the Manufacturing Industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan during 2011-2015" signed 15 December 2010 serves as an important guide for action on this front. Some 70 firms and companies from around twenty nations like Uzbekistan, China, Germany, France, New Zealand, Singapore, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, Belarus and Iran offered their goods and services at the exposition. ■

ECO Participates in UN-ESCAP Meetings



ECO CHRONICLE The Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation, Connectivity and Inclusive Development in South and South-West Asia, was held in New Delhi, India, 28-29 November, 2013. The purpose of the dialogue was the High-level round table of eminent experts and officials who discussed the potential for greater regional cooperation between member states. Deputy Secretary General of ECO Secretariat A. Tahmasebi chaired a session during the meeting and presented ECO objectives for cooperation with UN-ESCAP.

Moreover, ECO DSG Altaf Asghar participated in the Regional Conference on Strengthening Transport Connectivity and Trade Facilitation in South and South-West Asia organized by UN-ESCAP for South and South-West in Lahore, Pakistan on 9-10 December 2013. With a view to strengthen cooperation ECO & UN-ESCAP signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 1993. ■



UEST Presentation for UoE

Academic Staff



ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) arranged a meeting with faculty

members and personnel of the University of Environment (UoE), which is the host to the ECO-IEST, in order to inform them about the activities of the Institute during the last two years and the prospect of its future programs.

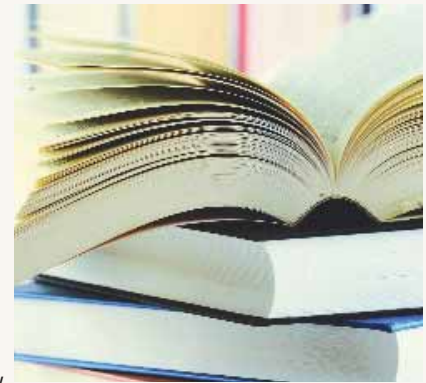
At the outset, Dr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel, President of the ECO-IEST, provided participants with a general view of the process which led to the establishment of the Institute and the rationale, targets and overall goals.

Thereafter, Dr. Sasan Rabieh, the Coordinator of the ECO-IEST, presented a report about the activities of the Institute since its inauguration with a brief description about each event.

Then, Dr. Fazel concluded with the way forward of the ECO-IEST and some of its upcoming events. He counted some of the challenges ahead of the Institute and hoped that ECO-IEST can develop its activities to the all Member States.

At the end of this meeting, there was a question and answer session featuring 60 participants, including the majority of UoE faculty members and key experts of the UoE, where participants exchanged some ideas about strengthening and developing the performance of ECO-IEST and expressed their support and readiness for cooperation with the Institute.

The possibility of closer cooperation between two sides was also discussed. ■



ECO - Park Inaugurated



countries."

Iftikhar Arif, the President of ECI, while expressing his satisfaction for the allocation of a large area to ECO countries by the Islamic Republic of Iran, acknowledged: "ECO Park serves not only as a civic venue but also as a practical medium in the arena of civic diplomacy as well as the cultural diplomacy of the Economic Cooperation Organization." He further stated: "The establishment of this Park in Tehran, and hopefully other similar parks by the Member countries in the future, will pave the way for further strengthening of the existing ties among the ECO nations."



ECO CHRONICLE

At the conclusion of 21st ECO Council of Ministers Meeting, chaired by Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 26th November 2013, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ECO Member States, several dignitaries and officials including Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Mayor of Tehran; Ahmad Masjed Jamei, the Chairman of Tehran City Council; Shamil Aleskerov, ECO Secretary General and Iftikhar Husain Arif, President of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) participated in the official opening of ECO Park in Tehran.

Referring to the common culture and heritage of the ECO Members, Zarif stated: "For serious and comprehensive cooperation between ECO Member States which are significant countries in the region, we need to create unified, key symbols". He expressed his gratitude to the Mayor of Tehran, ECO Secretary General, President of ECO Cultural Institute and other officials in the Tehran Municipality as well as colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran who contributed to the ECO Park project.

Tehran's Mayor, stressed the significance of cultural cooperation among the ECO Member States and vowed "Tehran Municipality is willing to work out a long term plan to preserve the precious cultural heritage of the region with the support and participation of the concerned local authorities of the ECO

Later at the event, a memorial statue in the shape of a tree made of marble, built to a height of three meters and weighing three tons, as well as a commemoration stamp marking 2 decades of expanded cooperation through Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), designed by ECI and published by Iran's Post Office, were unveiled.

ECO Park is part of an extensive cultural center located in Abbas Abad Hills, a large north-central neighborhood of Tehran. Cultural and artistic programs by the ECO countries in collaboration with ECO Cultural Institute are planned to be organized in the park. According to ECI Executive Director, Ambassador Hafez Jabbari, the proposal to build ECO-Park was first approved at ECI's 3rd Board of Trustees Meeting (BOT) held in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2007. "ECI plans to hold joint cultural programs with participation of Tehran Municipality and the ECO Member States in the future" Ambassador Jabbari added. The ECO Park has been designed and built by Abbas Abad Renovation Company, affiliated with Tehran Municipality. ■



On the occasion of the birth anniversary of "Allama Mohammad Iqbal", the great poet- philosopher of the Muslim World, ECO Cultural Institute held a ceremony titled "Iqbal Day" at its Headquarters on Wednesday, 27 November 2013. Present at the event were Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, the Head of the Iranian Academy of Persian Language and Literature, Noor Mohammad Jadmani, Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Tehran, Iftikhar Hussain Arif, President of ECO Cultural Institute as well as eminent literary scholars comprising Sarvar Molaei from Afghanistan, Shahmansour Khajaei from Tajikistan, Ghasem Saafi, Baghaei Makan, Mostafa Dolatyar, Akbar Jabbari, Mohammad Kioumars from Iran and a group of literature enthusiasts. At the opening speech, ECI President stated: "Iqbal assimilated all the values lying in the past and present Islamic and Oriental thoughts, traditions, and culture to create the best possible literary work of his time."

He then added : "In fact, his emotion-laden and soul-lifting poetry was the medium Iqbal employed in awakening Muslims."

Also at the event, Noor Mohammad

Iqbal Day Observed

Jadmani, Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran, expressed that the ECO region is one of the world's richest areas in terms of history and cultural heritage. "We have strong commonalities in arts, language and literature."



"ECO Cultural Institute has always tried to play an important role in promoting cultural commonalities among ECO Member States and their today's effort is another step in this direction." He continued. Jadmani further called Allama Iqbal a "world famous poet who had a unique and matchless style of poetry both in Urdu and Persian language."

"Major part of Iqbal's poetry is in Persian which is also its finest part."

"The poetry of Iqbal is replete with the message of hope, unity, brotherhood, love and peace", he further noted.

Referring to Iqbal's influence on Persian literature, Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, noted: "Iqbal and his poetry has enriched the Persian literature." Adding that: "there have been numerous poets of the Indian subcontinent who composed verses in Persian language, but in terms of world-view and thoughts, Iqbal is quite distinguished. At a time when Muslim nations were apart, he spoke of the unity of the Muslim Ummah". In the next part of the program, a panel of literary scholars, present at the function, reviewed Iqbal's thoughts and works and a new Persian book on Iqbal entitled "va chenin goft Iqbal" (And So Said Iqbal) authored by Ghasem Safi was unveiled. ■

Organized by ECO Cultural Institute in collaboration with Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Tehran, the inauguration ceremony of the exhibition of traditional Turkish-Islamic artworks was held on November 3, 2013 at ECI Headquarters.

Addressing the event, Iftikhar Hussain Arif, ECI President, said the event features a comprehensive collection of artworks including images from landscapes, tourist sites along with artworks such as miniature, illumination and calligraphy and photos taken by Iranian and Turkish artists marking the outstanding status of Turkish arts.

"To keep the Turkish centuries-old tradition of Islamic arts alive, ECO Cultural Institute, in cooperation with Yunus Emre Cultural

Turkish Islamic Arts on Display in ECI

Center, aims to honor the distinguished Turkish artists who have made significant contributions to restore and promote the cultural-artistic heritage of the country and to make it known in the international arena." Barish Saygin, the Turkish cultural counselor



in Tehran, noted adding that the ECO Cultural Institute has provided an opportunity for Turkey to introduce its cultural sites to the Institute's ten-member states.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Mohammad Reza Jabbari, ECI Executive Director, also said that out of 400 entries submitted to the event, 60 frames were selected for the show. "This is a multipurpose exhibition featuring Turkey's natural, historical monuments along with the ethnic culture and the country's new affairs in conjunction with its background," he said, adding that "Iran is one of the foremost countries in Islamic arts.

He then continued: "During the past decade, Turkey has tried to revive its Islamic arts and, ECI extends its support in this regards". ■

ECI Holds 1st ECO Poetry Night

ECO CHRONICLE The 1st ECO Poetry Night was organized by ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) at the Institute's Headquarters in Tehran on August 28, 2013.

At the outset, Iftikhar Hussain Arif, ECI President, welcomed the audience, among them several ambassadors and diplomats of the ECO countries, high ranking cultural officials of Islamic Republic of Iran and eminent literary figures of the Member States. He then highlighted the role and importance of Persian poetry and literature in the integration and strengthening of the existing relations among the people of the region and concluded his remarks by offering a few pieces of his poetries in Urdu language which were well received by the audience. The event was inaugurated by H.E. Mohammad Bagher Khorramshad, President of Iranian Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO). While elaborating on the rich common literary heritage of the ECO region, he highlighted the need for cultural as well as literary collaborations among the Member countries. He then announced ICRO's readiness to support ECO Cultural Institute. The program featured readings of poetry by prominent poets from four Member countries of I.R. Afghanistan, I.R. Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and I.R. Iran. Mohammad Afsar Rahbeen, Mohammad Abdullatif Behand, Sarvar Rajaei, Mohammad Hosein Fayyaz from Afghanistan; Iftikhar Hussain Arif and Ghasem Reza Pirzadeh from Pakistan; Gul Nazar Kaldiev from Tajikistan and Ali Mousavi Garmaroudi, Seyyed Abdullah Hosseini, Alireza Ghazveh, Hadi Saeedi Kiasari and Ms. Fatemeh Rakei from Iran recited their poetry and reviewed the contemporary literature in ECO countries. The event concluded with the remarks made by Gholamali Haddad Adel, the Head of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature and Sa'adi Foundation, referring to the common cultural heritage of ECO nations and Persian language as the key factor in the unity of poetry in the region, who also presented some of his poems which received an enthusiastic response from the audience. The event continued in Shiraz on August 29, attended by eminent literary figures of the city. ■



Two Decades of Cooperation Marked

ECO CHRONICLE The year 2013 marks the two decades of ECO's expansion from a three-member regional forum to an expanded regional grouping of ten countries. This happy family of key contiguous countries of our region is bound together by many a commonality. The shared ties of faith and culture, history and geography, also converg-



ing interests in diverse fields lay at the root of the decision made two decades ago to create this key regional organization.

ECO has grown in strength and substance over the past two decades. Today, it encompasses key areas of trade and transport, industry and agriculture, energy and communication as well as education and banking. Public awareness about its activities plus the visibility and uplifting of the image of the organization is highly crucial for its continued success. To meet this objective, ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) made a proposal at the meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR) for issuing a commemorative stamp simultaneously in all the ECO Member States marking 2 decades of expanded cooperation in Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to be unveiled at the 21st Meeting of Council of Ministers (COM). The initiative was well received by the Member States. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan supported the initiative and issued the stamp with minor alterations to its design. The delegations present at the 21st Meeting of COM were presented albums containing the stamp issued by the Pakistan Post. Later at the same day, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ECO Member States unveiled the stamp issued by Iran's Post Office on the sidelines of ECO Park inauguration ceremony. ■

Azerbaijan Improves ICT Ranking



ECO CHRONICLE Azerbaijan ranks 61st among 157 countries on the index of information and communication technologies development this year, according to the 2013 report prepared under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reports Azernews. Azerbaijan ranked 68th in the ITU report for 2012. The measuring that the Information Society report, takes into account the level of access to the latest technologies, their use and ICT skills.

According to the report, the first 30 rankings are held by the countries with high incomes, which shows a strong relationship between the income and the progress in the ICT sector. Neighboring Russia as well as Belarus ranked 40th and 41st respectively, while Moldova is 65th, and Ukraine 68th; Georgia ranked 71st and Armenia 74th.

The report points out that usage of the mobile broadband internet through smartphones and tablet PCs has now become the fastest growing segment of the world market.

There is also an overall worldwide increasing demand for ICT products and services, along with continuously falling prices for mobile services and

broadband connection, as well as unprecedented growth of the 3G technology implementation. Over 250 million people connected to the Internet over the past year, the report said. Almost 40 percent of the world population will use the Internet by the end of 2013. The Republic of Korea is the leader in the ICT development sector for the third year running. It is followed by Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Finland and Norway.

The top ten countries include the Netherlands, Britain, Luxembourg and Hong Kong (China). Authors of the report expect some 6.8 billion users of cellular communication by the year-end, which is almost equal to the population of the planet. The internet will be available for 2.7 billion people. However, 1.1 billion households, or 4.4 billion people, will still have no access to the Internet by the end of 2013. Azerbaijan is developing its ICT sector, especially after 2013 was announced the ICT Year in the country. ICT plays one of the leading roles in the non-oil sector of the country's economy and the budget revenues it generates have been increasing year-on-year. ■

Discovery Potential of 20 New Oil Fields in Kazakhstan under Eurasia International Project

ECO CHRONICLE The international project of "Eurasia" consortium for exploration of deep structures of the Caspian Basin will allow discovering 20 new oil fields with reserves of more than 300 million tons of oil, President of the Association of Petroleum Geologists of Kazakhstan, Baltabek Kuandykov, said at the VIII Eurasian Forum KAZENERGY.



"We predict that in the framework of the project, about 20 large hydrocarbon deposits with reserves of more than 300 million tons will be found in the Caspian Basin," he said.

He stressed that every oil and gas province in the Caspian region should be studied as a single unit without taking into account the administrative boundaries or blocks. ■



Afghanistan to Strengthen Domestic Sources

ECO CHRONICLE As concerns about Afghanistan's economic situation after 2014 are rising, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) emphasize on boosting domestic sources of the country. Speaking at a press conference in Kabul, Head of the ACCI, Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, said government and relevant agencies must persuade investors to further increase their investment in the country. He added that in order to improve the economic situation, domestic industries must be strengthened. "We must have an alternative to imports. Goods that can be produced domestically, they should be produced and not imported. We must focus on our exports to ensure that foreign currencies flow into Afghanistan and that trade balance is secured. Our manufacturing, agriculture and mining industries can potentially provide us the opportunities we require." ■

Turkey's Health Expenditure Reaches \$38 Billion

ECO CHRONICLE Turkey's health expenditure reached 76.2 billion Turkish Liras (\$38.1 billion) last year with a 10.7 per cent increase from a year earlier as health expenditure per capita was 1,019 liras (\$566), the state-run Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) revealed, reports Hurriyat.

The health expenditure rose from 68.8 billion liras in 2011 to 76.2 billion liras in 2012, according to the health expenditure statistics of 2009-2012. The health expenditure per capita increased to 1,019 liras from 932 liras in the same period. The proportion of total health expenditure to GDP was at 5.3 percent in 2011 and 5.4 percent in 2012.

The proportion of general government health expenditure to total health expenditure was 79.6 percent in 2011 and 76.8 percent in 2012.

The proportion of household-out-of-pocket health expenditure to total health expenditure was 15.4 percent for the years 2011 and 2012. The first compilation and analysis studies of health expenditure conforming to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) standards were undertaken with the "National Health Accounts" project between 1999-2000.

The studies were carried out by TÜİK in the following years and the recent health expenditure of 2008 was published in 2011. ■



This was said by Kyrgyzstan's Charge d'Affaires, Kubanychbek Toktorbaev, during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, according to local press report .

Terming the Pak-China Economic Corridor a significant project for both Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan as it would link Gwadar to Kashghar with which Bishkek already has a strong road link, he said the route will provide Pakistan an access to Central Asian and Russian markets opening new avenues of business opportunities for both countries.

Mentioning his country's liberal business laws and its cheaper electricity rates - Rs0.75 per kilowatt-hour (kWh)

Kyrgyzstan to Strengthen Ties with Pakistan

compared to Pakistan's Rs1.5 per kWh - for industrial and commercial consumer, he added that it was an attractive country for business.

He also invited investors to explore business opportunities in the country as the Kyrgyz government has prioritised foreign direct investment and has established a Free Economic Zone in Bishkek.

Toktorbaev said Kyrgyzstan, an agrarian country, wants to develop close ties with Pakistan in the field of agriculture, adding education, tourism and culture to the list of sectors ideal for mutual cooperation.

He said Pakistani textile products, utensils and cutlery are very popular in his country which provides a great scope for enhancing the export of these items. ■



Chabahar to Promote ECO Region Trade

"Sanctions Will Not Affect Trade Ties between Iran and Afghanistan".

The Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries assured that the economic sanctions imposed on Iran would not have any adverse effects on the trade relations between Afghanistan and Iran. This comment comes after Chabahar

Port project has been put forward as a corridor to boost regional trade and ties and to provide an alternative trade route for Afghanistan. Voicing the importance of the Chabahar Port project, ACCI chief, Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, called on the Iranian government to begin work on the Chabahar Port promptly. The Port of Chabahar is a sea-

port in Chabahar in southeastern Iran. Its location lies on the border of Indian Ocean and Oman Sea.

It is the only Iranian port with direct access to ocean. Afghanistan will be able to export its products directly to India, Kazakhstan, Persian Gulf and European states in an efficient manner. ■



ECO Trade and Development Bank Loan Agreement with Sekerbank T.A.S.

ECO CHRONICLE ECO Bank signed a "Subordinated Loan Agreement" with Sekerbank. This transaction stands as a part of the parallel financing with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for the purpose of financing the SME Sector in Turkey.

Sekerbank was founded in 1953 with small savings of thousands of Anatolian sugar beet cooperative farmers with the aim of supporting production and trade for agricultural industry. Sekerbank provides services in the fields of Small Business and Agricultural Banking, Commercial/SME Banking, Corporate Banking, and Retail Banking.

Government of Kazakhstan, Sekerbank Pension Fund and shares quoted to Istanbul Stock Exchange each have 33 % stake at Sekerbank T.A.S.

This is the second agreement signed by the ETDB under Subordinated Loan structure for proving the necessary support to the SMEs which are playing a major role in the contribution of economic growth and development of trade in the member countries. ■



F I F A Brokers Deal to Heal North-South Cyprus Football Divide



ECO CHRONICLE Turkish Cypriot State Football Association President, Hasan Sertoglu, and Cyprus Football Association President, Costakis Koutsokoumnis, shook hands on November 5, 2013 during a signing ceremony at the headquarters of the world football's governing body in Zurich that brokered a landmark deal between the Cyprus Football Association and its opposite number which runs the game in the Turkish Cypriot State of the island.

FIFA, the world football's governing body, said the accord marked a "major milestone" in the history of football in Cyprus, a country which has been split in two for four decades. "Both the CFA and the CTFA are today providing the whole world with an excellent example of how football can build bridges and bring people together after a long period of conflict," FIFA President, Sepp Blatter, said.

"I would like to thank both associations and UEFA for their outstanding contribution to this milestone arrangement," said Blatter, who also signed the accord along with his counterpart from European football's governing body, Michel Platini.

Turkish Cypriot State football team is not part of FIFA or UEFA, with the squad from the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, the island's sole representative in the global game. Under November 5th 2013 deal, FIFA said, the CTFA becomes a member of the CFA as an "association in accordance with the CFA's statutes and regulations." ■

Source: *The Daily Star-Lebanon*, November 06, 2013, on page 14.

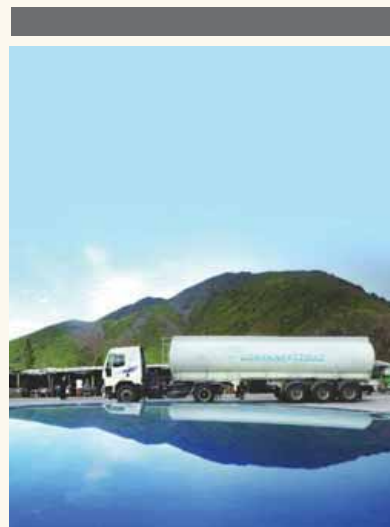
Uzbekistan's Promising Business Environment

Uzbekistan's economy is changing rapidly, as the country can no longer be considered a predominantly rural economy.

The contributions of Uzbekistan's industry and agriculture to GDP growth have been the same since 2006 and the share of its booming industry in the GDP (24%) now exceeds that of agriculture (17.6%), according to a report by the World Bank. Indeed, the country is rich in hydrocarbons-resources, sitting on about 1.8 trillion cubic meters of proven natural gas reserves, 590 million barrels of oil reserves and three billion tons of coal reserves.

■ Positive Change is coming to Uzbekistan

The authorities announced a privatization program for 2012-13, which included minority and majority stakes in around 500 enterprises that have been offered to local and foreign investors via open public tenders. The overall business environments in Uzbekistan, according to observers are promising. "Firm registration and tax reporting procedures have been simplified and a significant number of



licenses and permits have been abolished," said the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The economic transformation comes at a time of fiscal strength for the country. Real GDP growth averaged around 8.3% each year during 2009 to 2011. Growth came from services

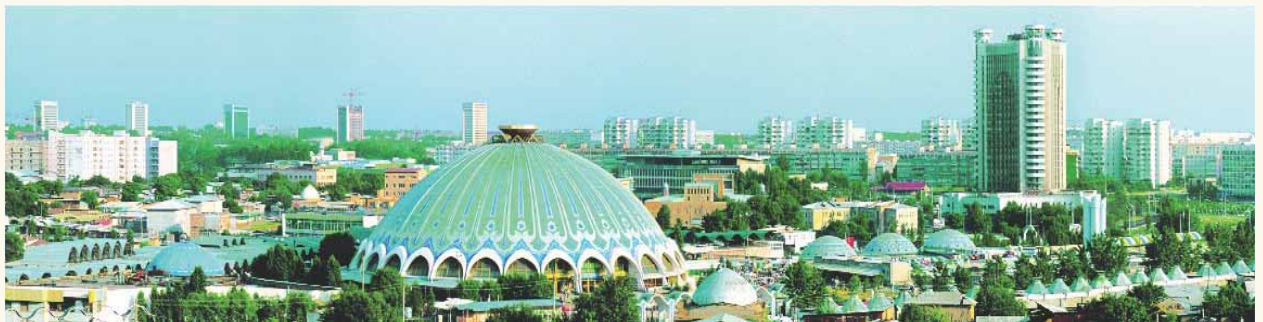
(9.9%), construction (8.6%) and agriculture (7.1%). Meanwhile, investment in the economy grew by 7.6% in the year 2012, on the back of lower corporate taxes, improving the business environment and improved access to bank financing.

■ The Country Has Massive Hydrocarbon Riches

The country has secured deals with many Asian and Russian companies to develop new gas projects, including a USD2-billion deal with Russia's Lukoil, while its counterpart Gazprom, Malaysia's Petronas and China's CNPC have also signed deals in recent years to develop various fields and raise natural gas production for exporting purposes.

According to press reports, Uzbekistan announced plans to spend at least USD1 billion (two-thirds funded by Uzbekneftegas and one-third by domestic and international banks) by 2020 on increasing gas reserves and infrastructure for fields in the southwestern Gazli region. ■

By ECO Chronicle Central Asian Desk



Turkmenistan Hosts Conference on Energy Security

During 17-18 October 2013, the OSCE Conference on Energy Security & Sustainability was held in Ashkhabad and brought together more than 120 representatives of the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, high-level officials from relevant ministries and agencies, representatives of international, regional and non-governmental organizations, as well as experts from business sector and academia. The President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, in his opening address of the two-day event, said that energy security and the elaboration of a long-term strategy of joint work in this sphere are the key areas of Turkmenistan's co-operation with the OSCE. He further stressed the need to join efforts at the international, regional and national levels, effective co-ordination between state and international organizations, including the OSCE. In this context, the President emphasized special attention should be paid to the preservation of the natural wealth of the Caspian Sea. OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Leonid Kozhara, stressed the central role of energy to address major challenges in his opening statement and said: "The Ukrainian Chairmanship of the OSCE attaches great importance to enhance energy security and sustainability in the OSCE region, as they are crucial to regional stability and play a key role in supporting economic development and national security."

He further said that regional co-operation is essential for the development of a robust and reliable energy sector. Kozhara welcomed Turkmenistan's recent initiatives that culminated in the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolutions on reli-

able and stable transit of energy - another key topic of the conference. With regard to the promotion of sustainable energy solutions, energy savings and energy efficiency, the OSCE Chair said:

"Energy efficiency is an immediate and effective option with multiple benefits, such as reducing adverse environmental and health impacts, enhancing energy security, and creating jobs and economic opportunities."

Speaking about energy challenges in the globalized world, OSCE Secretary General stated: "While energy issues risk becoming a potential source of tension, they also offer many opportunities for fruitful co-operation between energy supplier, consumer and transit countries."

At the conclusion of the forum, the participants called for the intensification of cooperation in the field of global energy security. The conference participants heard the reports covering energy diplomacy, integration and legal relations, functioning of the global energy system, interaction of producer countries, transit countries and consumers of energy resources, development of international cooperation in the field of processing of energy resources, technology transfer and use of alternative energy sources. A number of meetings were held as part of the conference, including the quadrilateral meeting of the delegations of Ukraine, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. ■

*By ECO Chronicle Energy Desk
Compiled from news agencies' reports
<http://www.turkmenistan.ru/en/articles/17437.html>*



The ECO Region Electricity Market

On 5-6 November 2013, the ECO Secretariat held the 1st Experts Group Meeting on the "Establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market" which was attended by the delegations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran (Host), the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey, delegation of the ECO Secretariat, the Ambassador of Norway in Tehran, the representative of Nord Pool Spot, the Secretary General of ECO-CCI, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the ECO-Trade & Development Bank.

■ Inaugural

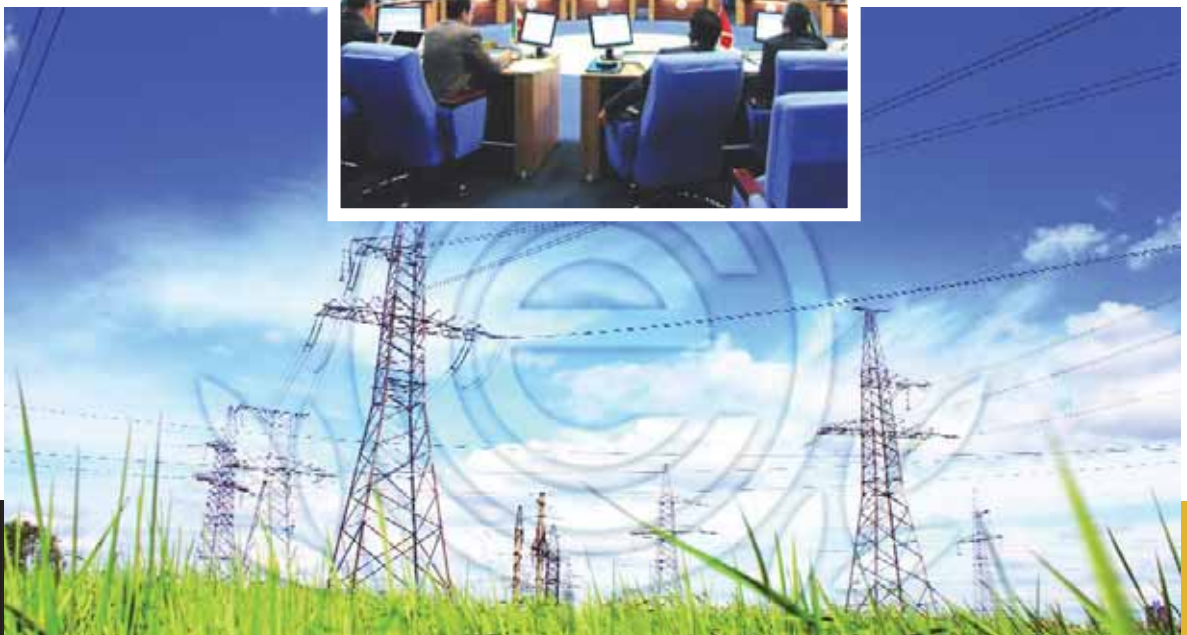
The Meeting was inaugurated by Fattah Gharabagh, Managing Director of the Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC) and Abolghasem Tahmasebi,

ECO Deputy Secretary General.

Dr. Vahid Gohari Sadr, Advisor to Managing Director & Director for Overseas Interconnection Studies of Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (TAVANIR) of the Islamic Republic of Iran was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Meeting. In his remarks, Dr. Gohari Sadr, welcomed and thanked the participants for reposing confidence in him and expressed the hope that their deliberations would produce useful and beneficial outcomes for the Member States. The Meeting was moderated by Orkhan Zeynalov, ECO Secretariat Director for Energy, Minerals and Environment (EME).

■ Presentations & Statements

The delegations of the ECO Member States made their country presentations / state-



ments, describing the following in detail:

- Power production, consumption, new trends, interconnections lines (internal and those with neighbouring countries), in particular the features of active Electricity Markets in Iran and Turkey;
- Their interest in electricity / energy trade; progress made in energy trade and investment policies, regulations, pricing, etc.
- Promotion of electricity exports / imports; surpluses to export or demand to import electricity;
- Specific investment projects in transmission and generation - whether in their own country or in other countries in the region - which may increase the trade in electricity, etc.

They also emphasized the vivid need for regional cooperation in the fields of energy and electricity trade. The Meeting emphasized that a regional electricity market would facilitate the involvement of private sectors in investment in the generation and transmission sectors.

The Secretary General of ECO-CCI delivered a statement and expressed the importance of the participation of the private sector in the fields of energy and electricity. He then touched upon the initial agreement between ECO Secretariat and ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) to organize the first ever Meeting of the ECO Public and Private Sector Energy / Petrochemical Consortium / Companies in 2014, the event which may facilitate B2B (business to business) cooperation in energy. The representative of ECO-TDB and the representative of Islamic Development Bank (IDB) made their statements and expressed their readiness to cooperate for feasibility studies on ECO electricity projects, especially for the establishment of the ECO Electricity Market. Orkhan Zeynalov, Director (EME) of the ECO Secretariat, presented the Concept Paper on

"Development of Electricity Trade in ECO Region - Opportunities and Challenges" and highlighted the importance of ECO regional electricity market development.

■ Presentation(s) by Nord Pool Spot

Terje Nilsen from Nilsen Consultant Company, delivered a comprehensive and in-depth presentation on the establishment of a power market, activities of the Nord Pool Spot, European Power Market, other relevant experiences, Indian energy exchange (IEX India), Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Southern African Power Pool (SAAP) and the Regional Market Model.

He then explained for the participants the objectives of the regional power market, Nordic system, power system management,

electricity supply reform, legal and regulatory framework - scope, law provisions, power industry organization (physical power industry in Nordics), power market preconditions, utilizing the value of differences in a region, Nordic power prices, requirement of the power industry (public demand on the industry), the demand for a short term power market, how the markets work together, the UK's power trading market, political decisions (regional market - Nordic example), the integrated markets, power exchanges objective and requirements, principles, the day-ahead market, the day-ahead market features, trading capacity and congestion management, market socio-economic welfare aspect (foundation of the "Energy only" market concept, day-ahead and intraday: price

coupling as a key feature of the European target model, enhance trading, regulatory regime and role of market surveillance. He further briefed the participants about the Nord Pool Spot, Nord Pool Spot's function, Power trade growth (1996-2012) and the day-ahead (Elspot) and intra-day (Elbas) markets.

The participants having reviewed and exchanged their point of views on the



comprehensive presentation made by the representative of Nord Pool Spot, agreed to take benefit from the vast experience of the Nord Pool Spot in establishment of Electricity Market for ECO Region as well as extending cooperation with the Nord Pool Spot.

■ Iran's Electricity Market Plan

The Meeting continued with the presentation made by Mohammad Hossein Asgari, Head of Market Operation of Iran Energy Exchange Company (IRENEX) who delivered a comprehensive report on Iran's energy exchange structure focused on electricity in order to expand its Market to the other ECO Member States.

Afterwards, Iman Rahmati, Head of Market Design and Monitoring, Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC) delivered an all-inclusive presentation on the Power system restructuring and Iran Electricity Market.

■ ECO Region's Electricity Market Plan

Elsewhere at the event, Reza Riahi, Deputy of Power Market of the Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC) presented the participants a thorough presentation on ECO Region's Electricity Market Plan. He then briefed the meeting about the interconnection of Iran with the neighbouring countries, current bilateral trade between ECO Member States, characteristic of current situation, power market, electricity market, regional electricity market: definition, benefits and conditions, European regional power market and ECO regional power market: step of ECO regional electricity market and concluded his presentation on the following proposals/advantages/benefits of establishment of electricity market in the ECO region among the ECO Member States:

- Electricity market has a wide range of advantages;
- Regional electricity markets has been implemented all over the world recently;
- There are considerable infrastructures such as inter-zonal transmission lines to form the regional electricity market in ECO region;
- Implementing regional electricity

market has plenty of benefits for the countries involved in;

- Forming a cooperation committee within ECO may be a good idea in order to devise the Primary plan of the regional electricity market with these objects:

- Coordinate ISOs and TSOs;
- Data and Information Exchange;
- Prepare Appropriate Regulation; Framework
- Develop Competition between; Participants
- Create Information Protocol;
- Develop Long Term Policies.

■ Status of Bilateral Power Grid Interconnections

The participants in the meeting delib-



erated on the current status of the bilateral Power Grid Interconnections of the ECO Member States and capacity of the transmission lines and agreed that there is a demand to enhance the capacity of the transmission lines and trade.

The Meeting urged the need for sharing information regarding the update Schematic, Table Forms of bilateral Power Grid Interconnections as well as detailed status of Existing and Planned/Under construction bilateral Power Grid Interconnections among neighbouring ECO Member countries including number, voltage level, capacity of the transmission lines and purposes etc.

■ Technical Possibilities & Mechanism for Development of Multiple Electricity Exchange & Trade

The Meeting then proposed to establish an ECO Regional Electricity Market among the ECO Member States and in this regard, it recommended that Experts Group Meetings may be held, on annual basis, among the ECO Member States to proceed further on the matter. The ECO Secretariat was then requested to approach to the international donors for financial and technical assistance for organizing the meetings on establishment of the Electricity Market among the ECO Member States.

■ Two Electricity Markets in the ECO Region

Considering the existence of two electricity markets in the ECO region namely the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey, the meeting took note of the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish an Electricity Market in the ECO region as a pilot project with participation of the above mentioned markets and requested the other interested ECO Member States to join this Electricity Market for maximum benefit of ECO region.

■ Conclusion

The Meeting concluded when the participants agreed that local consultants from Iran and Turkey may be hired under the supervision of an international consultant to prepare the feasibility study for harmonizing and merging the electricity market of Iran and Turkey with the cooperation of the financial and technical support of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) or other interested international financial institutions/donors.

Nordpool Shows Interest in ECO Region's Electricity Market

Turkey and Iran could establish a traded electricity market that may build upon the Nordpool model, inside sources in Iran told ICIS on Thursday 07 Nov 2013. During 5-6 Nov. 2013, representatives of the Nordic exchange travelled to Iran to discuss the creation of an energy pool that could include countries such as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan or Azerbaijan. The project is spearheaded by the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), an intergovernmental regional organisation based in Tehran that promotes economic cooperation among 10 Eurasian and Asian member states during the first experts group meeting on the "establishment of the ECO regional electricity market". A senior ECO member told ICIS that the meeting established an initial agreement between Turkey and Iran to set up a joint electricity market that could lead to trading possibilities, although the exact details of such a project are to be clarified at a meeting next year. The Turkish and Iranian government would be responsible for the implementation of the market, he said.

The source noted that, in parallel with the creation of such a market, the interconnector capacity between the two countries could also increase. Last month, an Iranian ministry official told ICIS the export electricity capacity to Turkey could increase to 600MW. The maximum current capacity between the two countries is 400MW in winter, 300MW in spring and 200MW in summer.

"The Iranian and Turkish electricity markets are the most developed in the region," he said. "If the market is successful the concept could be expanded to other [ECO member] states," he said, adding they wanted to replicate the transparency of the Nordpool spot plat-



form in the region. Mahmood Khaghani, an international energy expert based in Iran, said trade relations between member states could be bilateral, trilateral or regional. However, he said the concept may take time to materialise because of a number of constraints. Firstly, he said the current setup in Iran for the Ministry of Petroleum & Ministry of Electricity needs to be restructured from a management point of view to overhaul the policies of the previous government on the basis of harmonising and integrating the relationship between the petroleum (oil and gas) and power generating industries.

Secondly, he said the development of an existing power bourse - Irex - necessarily required the improvement of the current oil and gas exchange. Iran's electricity bourse Irex was launched in March 2013 but activity has been low so far and concentrated on physical futures rather than spot. Meanwhile, the country's oil bourse in Kish opened its first phase in 2008 and is intended as a platform for petroleum, petrochemicals and natural gas.

"Oil and gas are primary resources, while electricity is a secondary resource," the source said. "First you need to make

sure you have a developed market for your primary resources, and then you can start an electricity bourse." Thirdly, he said, the recently elected government in Iran would have to deal with the subsidies system that had been kept in place to cushion vast swathes of the population, but which is causing the country to lose billions of dollars.

Finally, he said, a regional electricity market would have to decide on the means of clearing and settlement for trading. He said a possible outcome could be - within a suitable clearing union agreement - settlement in a generic prepayment instrument or swaps.

"Iran, as one of the major gas producers in the world, could use gas prepayment instruments to fund investment and thereby create what could become a de facto petro-currency. Gas is a major generator of power; in fact companies such as NIOC [the National Iranian Oil Company] or TAVANIR [the Iranian electricity grid operator] could issue the petro-currency."

He added that other Caspian countries and ECO members such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan or Turkmenistan, may support the idea, being equally major regional gas producers. The election of a new government in Iran and the recent thaw in relations with its western counterparts that could see the lifting of sanctions could open up vast economic opportunities for the country. Turkey and Iran could become well-established energy markets thanks to high economic growth and electricity demand. Nordpool could not make any comment by the time the report went to press. ■

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By Aura Sabadus, Editor, Turkish Energy Hub Daily, www.icis.com/herein



The Great Change in Global Energy Diplomacy

By: Sam Barden

The P5 +1 talks with Iran are fast moving from a default setting of confrontation to one of collaboration. In view of Iran's already considerable involvement in economic trading pacts in the region and beyond, the real game going on is not about nuclear weapons, but about the great change in global energy diplomacy.



bon emissions, either than oil or coal. For populous countries like China, India and Pakistan, securing long term supplies of gas is essential not only to their economic prosperity, but an important tool for reducing carbon emissions against a backdrop of soaring energy demand.

Iran has the most gas reserves of any country in the world according to some, or second only to Russia, according to others. Yet energy remains political. De-politicizing energy, or the energy pricing and distribution, is the only logical way forward in the long term in order

■ De-politicizing Energy

The energy market realignment is going from west to east. However, the real game changer in the energy market is not oil, but gas. Modern technologies means that gas is more easily accessible, transportable and cleaner in terms of car-



to achieve energy efficiency. Not simply energy efficiency in how we use it, but more importantly in how we extract and distribute energy. Iran is part of, or indeed at the centre of, one of the most important geostrategic energy locations in the world, namely ECO-Caspian Sea gas.

■ The 5-Seas Energy Accord

Mahmood Khaghani, former Director General for Caspian Sea Oil and Gas affairs at the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum, often refers to Iran and the 5 seas; the Caspian, the Persian gulf, the Sea of Oman, the Black sea and the Mediterranean. In terms of extraction and distribution, Iranian Gas can either come from or go to all of the 5 seas. Yet for this to occur, Iran needs collaboration. Iran not only does collaborate, but also is more often the initiator of the collaboration.

■ The Changing Approach to Energy Diplomacy

As long as energy is politicized, then there is confrontation, usually in the form of military intervention. The result is never energy efficiency in either extraction or distribution when military intervention is involved. Yet President Obama is so far having success in foreign policy without military intervention, namely with Iran. The collaborative approach rather than the confrontational approach towards Iran with the P5 +1 talks are in fact an echo of the changing approach to energy diplomacy.

■ Key Point: Economic Co-operation

Iran is a founding member of OPEC; it is a founding member of the relatively new Gas Exporting Country's Forum (GECF), which recently appointed an Iranian energy diplomat as its Secretary General and a founding member of the Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO).

The key point is that each of the groupings is based on economic co-operation as opposed to military co-operation. They are the embodiment of collaboration rather than confrontation.

Each of these three organizations has energy at its core, and so far none of them include the P5 +1 countries of the USA, Britain, Germany, France or China. Only Russia bridges these worlds, and only through the GECF. Yet in either energy extraction, or distribution whether by physical route or coordinated volume releases onto the market, these three organizations play an increasingly important role in global energy diplomacy.

■ Gas and its Role in Energy Diplomacy

The question of relevance is not so much on ECO, OPEC or GECF, but much more on the P5 +1 grouping.



Sanctioning Iran is no longer relevant in the paradigm of global energy diplomacy. So the need for a resolution to the Iranian Nuclear issue is not really about nuclear weapons, it's about gas, and its role in energy diplomacy. If sanctions against Iran were removed tomorrow, it will not "fix" the Iranian economy. It will help relieve pressure in the short term of course.

■ EU Energy Security

Sanctions are in fact easing. The Rhum Field, in the UK's North Sea is set to come back online. A joint venture between BP and Iranian National Oil Company (NIOC), the Rhum Field has been flagged by the UK's department of Energy and Climate Change to be re-started. The UK became a net importer of Gas in 2009, just before sanctions closed the Rhum field. US sanctions exempted the giant Shah Deniz field in the Caspian Sea on strategic grounds, in which Iran collaborates, because of fears it would affect EU energy security.

■ Energy Cooperation

The solution to the Iranian Nuclear issue is gas, in the form of energy cooperation. The P5+1 talks, whilst incredibly important, are political, not economic. As the great change in global energy diplomacy takes hold, the opportunities for consumers, producers and service providers to come together and collaborate is immense. Those who think they can still have their cake and eat it, no matter how yellow, misunderstand how quickly capital and commodity flows are changing and moving from west to east, heralding with a new form of de-politicized energy diplomacy. ■

Sam Barden is a director of SBI Markets, an international commodity trading and advisory company which advises governments and private firms on deal financing and facilitation.

The Importance of Arbitration as a Mechanism to Resolve Commercial & International Disputes

*By: Khawar Qureshi QC**

All legal systems contain provisions for parties to deal with civil matters through the Courts. Some domestic Courts (like the High Court in London) are so well recognised and respected that most of the disputes in the English Commercial Court concern non-UK parties who have chosen in the contracts or otherwise made themselves subject to the English jurisdiction.

■ Why parties choose arbitration?

For most commercial and international parties, the clear preference is to avoid local Courts wherever possible.

This is often (rightly or wrongly) because of a perception that the local Court will favour a local party (whether Governmental or private sector), and sometimes because of lack of a clear legal framework or experienced local Judges and lawyers.

For these and other reasons, in most commercial and international agreements, there is a reference to arbitration as a means to settle any disputes. Quite often, unfortunately, the parties fail to use clear language which means that whether they did agree to arbitration ends up being



fought over. Issues such as this are common and in large part avoidable with the right input.

■ What is arbitration?

Arbitration is a process which takes place outside the domestic Court process whereby parties choose individuals called arbitrators (who should be impartial, experienced persons) to decide the dispute and issue a decision called an "award". The arbitrators will mostly use the rules provided by an institution (such as the ICC or the UNCITRAL rules) as cho-

sen by the parties in their commercial or international agreement.

Since 1958, due to the UN New York Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Arbitral Awards, most States have agreed to make the process of enforcing international arbitral awards even faster and less complicated than enforcing judgments from Foreign Courts. This is seen as a big advantage for arbitration - parties fight cases to win and obtain a damages award- there is no point if they cannot recover effectively at the end. At the same time, there has been a move-away from absolute immunity for States and State entities, so that in very general terms, assets of the State or State entities which have an actual or intended commercial use are not immune - this can include ships/planes, proceeds of sale of oil and gas as well as money sitting in bank accounts.

I have dealt with such matters on a regular basis and some States are still surprised that they do not have complete immunity- the surprise turns to shock when they find their assets have been frozen or seized abroad.

However, parties using arbitration must always be vigilant in ensuring that the rules they choose are appropriate, that their legal advisers guide them properly on the process (the various stages, importance of preserving evidence, use of experts), as well as the importance of selecting independent and impartial persons who can make effective and experienced arbitrators. It is no use appointing the former Head of Legal Affairs or his best friend as an arbitrator if he does not have the right experience or qualifications.

Even worse, if this person appears biased, they will be ignored by the other arbitrators and may even be legally challenged - which may lead to their removal from the process and create prejudice for the appointing party. Of just as much importance is the question of costs. If not controlled and managed properly, any legal process can become far more costly and lengthy than it should be. The problem is that it needs experience to predict how much time and cost any potential dispute may involve - and many parties from developing

countries do not have such experience.

■ The Future of Arbitration

In the past 10 years, many States have faced claims brought by foreign investors using the protection given to them by Bi-lateral Investment Treaties (BIT) (readers may be familiar with some cases brought under the Energy Charter Treaty or pursuant to the ICSID rules).

Such claims came as to complete surprise to some States which did not appreciate that a BIT gave a direct right to a foreign investor to go to arbitration, avoiding local Courts or any contractual mechanism for resolving disputes. The undeniable trend is for there to be greater use of arbitration - whether in disputes between States, between States and foreign investors, or between commercial parties. In my own experience, over the past 23 years, I have seen many cases dealt with very effectively by arbitration. The key to achieving this is to understand the process, and recognising that it is often the only manner in which disputes can be resolved fairly. ■



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 * *Khawar Qureshi QC is one of the UK's leading Counsels in Commercial Litigation, International Arbitration, and Public International Law and Energy matters. He has advised or represented parties from more than 70 States from his offices in London and Qatar and acted as Counsel in hundreds of cases including ICSID, UNCITRAL, ICC, LCIA, LMAA and ad-hoc arbitrations all over the world. Contact: office@mcnairchambers.com*

What is the Karakoram Anomaly?

Pakistan is home to the most heavily glaciated area outside the Planet's Polar Regions. The massive glaciers of Baltoro and Biafo stretch for over 60 kilometers each in the Karakoram Mountains. In fact, the area designated as the Central Karakoram National Park in Pakistan has around 711 glaciers, which is double the number of glaciers in the Alps.

Today, the Italian scientists involved in the Social Economic Environmental Development(SEED) project (funded by the Pakistani and the Italian governments and managed by the Ev-K2-CNR Committee based in Italy) are focusing on developing a glacier inventory using remote sensing and some field surveys. The goal is to describe the whole glacier coverage in the Central Karakoram National Park and evaluate glacier changes on a time frame of about a decade.

This is important because unlike in the Alps (which cover 2,500 square kilometers) where each and every glacier has been measured and monitored, there is not much research that has been done in the Karakoram (which cover 16,600 square kilometers).

"There have been few focused studies in these mountains," says Christopher Mayer of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities who is currently doing field research on high altitude glaciers and is working with the SEED project.

He points out that in the high mountain areas of Nepal and Bhutan; the glaciers tend to receive accumulation through snow in the summers while in the Karakoram we receive the most accumulation in winters.

In his view, which is backed up by other scientific studies done in this region, "the Karakoram glaciers are more stable". This is good news for Pakistan,



because scientists say that glaciers in neighboring Himalayan Mountains (where Nepal and Bhutan are located) are rapidly losing mass, which seems to be the global trend due to warmer temperatures caused by climate change.

The Karakoram is in fact the Asian exception and an earlier study from 2001-2010 of glacier changes in the Central Karakoram National Park, described the phenomenon as the "Karakoram Anomaly", "a regional glacier behavior contrasting with the general glacier shrinkage which has been occurring in all the other glaciated zones of the Planet".

The response of the Hindu Kush/ Himalayan/ Karakoram glaciers to global warming has of course been a controversial topic in the media ever since the 2007 report of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was found to have contained the erroneous claim that ice from most of this mountain region (also known as the Third Pole) could disappear by 2035.

There was an outcry when the mistake was detected and the IPCC had to retract the claim. Clearly, the region's glaciers are poorly studied and yet, they provide a vital water source, acting as giant water tanks, for more than a billion people living below in the basins of Asia's mighty rivers such as the Indus and Ganges.

It is of course extremely difficult to study the high altitude glaciers of the Hindu Kush/Himalayan/Karakoram Mountains, given the rugged and remote terrain and the fact that mass balance studies are so time demanding. For example, Christopher Mayer is currently surveying the Baltoro Glacier, where his team (which includes three Pakistani colleagues) has fixed poles in the ice to measure the melt of the ice.

The stakes will eventually move with the ice, so they will know the velocity of the ice movement (which can be up to 150 meters per year) as the glacier moves. By measuring the height of the stakes they can also tell if the glacier is sinking or rising. This summer, his team is going back to the field to maintain the network of poles, measure elevation profiles and monitor debris thickness, all of which is hard work since it will take them 4-5 days of trekking just to reach the snout of the Baltoro Glacier.

■ Baltoro Glacier in Central Karakoram National Park

According to Christopher Mayer, "Alpine glaciers, when they lose mass, the snout retreats back as it melt, but in the Karakoram the glaciers are covered by debris which protects the snout of the glacier from retreating". His team is studying the role of the

debris cover in protecting melt and he says that: "debris cover is actually very effective in protecting glaciers from melting".

His team is also studying two accumulation basins found in the Godwin-Austen Glacier and the Gasherbrum area. They are studying the snow layers by digging snow pits and doing core drills from the surface to a depth of 8 meters. They are researching the accumulation history and by comparing it with climatic records, they can even trace individual precipitation events. This gives them an idea of how precipitation and temperature affect these glacier locations.

Christopher Mayer and his team have discovered that while it seems like the large glaciers in the Karakoram are stable and there is not much happening, there is however, "a lot happening on the local scale", with some glaciers sinking in the middle, while others are losing mass in

their snouts. "With dedicated studies, the dynamics of glaciers need to be better understood," he explains. In some cases, there are special advances of glaciers while in other cases, glaciers are trying to recuperate. "However, we can only work on a small number of glaciers since it is so time demanding. We will try to extrapolate our measurements".

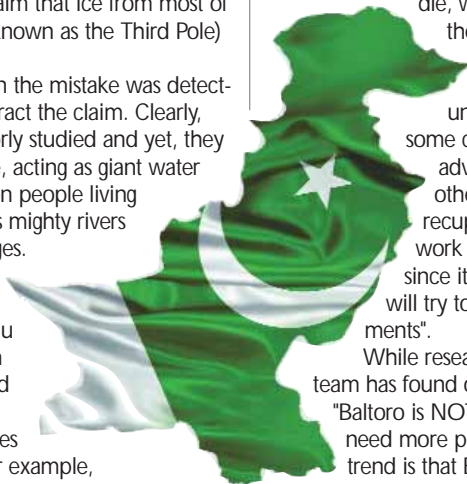
While research is still underway, what his team has found out about Baltoro is alarming - "Baltoro is NOT growing, it is reducing. We need more profiles of elevation but the trend is that Baltoro is reducing". This latest research is in contrast with earlier studies that claimed that the Baltoro Glacier was still growing.

Is this part of a wider new trend in the Karakoram? We don't know as yet, but given that research suggests that larger glaciers across Pakistan may be particularly important to melt volume contributions for the Indus River, we need to support more field surveys of our large glaciers for better understanding of the links between climate change and glacier dynamics.

■ More on this:

Moonweed Digital Productions presents a show reel of their upcoming documentary about climate change on the Karakoram and Himalayan ranges. The documentary highlights the irreplaceable human heritage that is at risk of being lost because of climate change. ■

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 Researched and compiled by Hassaan Bin Altaf of Pakistan based on an article published in October 13, 2013 Dawn.com .



In UNEP Environment Report-2011 it is emphasized that "green economy" stimulates economy and creates workplaces thus reducing risks of such global threats as climate change, water and other resources deficiency. Transition to "green economy" would help the Governments of the countries to enforce the Economic Policy aimed at ensuring sustainable development. Building suitable grounds of National Policy is necessary for accelerating transition process to "Green Economy", facilitating environment-friendly structures of production and consumption plus bringing the level of economic activities to conform to the maximum potential of the ecosystem.

It is obvious that for transition into "green economy" creating certain conditions - national normative-legal acts, policy, subsidies and stimulus, world market, legal infrastructure, reports on goods turnover and financial assistance- are required. The examples of such conditions at national level are: tax laws correction, reforming and reducing Environmentally Harmful Subsidies (EHS); use of new marketing tools; state investments inflow to key "green sectors"; transition to "green" state pur-

chases; improvement of environmental rules and regulations, and also ensuring application of rules.

There are also possibilities at international level for a market infrastructure improvement, foreign trade and financial assistance inflow and also enhancing international cooperation. In UNEP Report titled "Towards Green Economy: Path to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication", it is emphasized that transition into "Green Economy" in 2012-2050 needs investment of only 2% of world GDP in ten key economic sectors : agriculture, housing and communal services, power, fishery, forestry, industry, tourism, transport, waste treatment and water resources management.

The activities of International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNEP in creating "Green Workplaces" testify that



enforcement of strategy and measures in "green economy" creates employment opportunities. Transition process to Green Growth will lead to the creation of new workplaces, including competent ones in new innovative green directions (for example, renewable energy, constructions of buildings with low energy consumption etc.). Only in the European Union, it is expected to create 3 million green workplaces by 2020.

However, some workplaces will be under the threat therefore there is a requirement for assistance to redistribute workers from reduced sectors to growing sectors which replace polluting types of activities with purer alternatives or ecosystem services. Labour Market Policy is to pay attention to employment preservation not to separate workplaces. It should provide opportunities for workers and enterprises for quick adaptation to the changes associated with transition to "green economy".

Today, sustainable development and "green economy" issues have reached a new level in Kyrgyzstan as well as in other countries and have been reflected in the State Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Training opportunities of professional staff in the country who will become

Kyrgyzstan "Green Economy"



conductors of "green economy" in various branches are expanded. It is impossible to deny that "green economy" has more potential in stimulation of economy and creation of new "green workplaces" by decreasing global threats of climate change, water and other resources deficiency.

On this background there is an obvious question: WHAT DOES "GREEN WORKPLACE" MEAN? There is no unique original definition for "green workplaces". However, the analysis of the existing opinions shows that workplaces are considered as green if the nature of the work is exactly environment-friendly (reducing energy consumption, ecosystem and bio-

economy".

Training and reforming of education system play a key role in the transition to "green economy". It is now obvious that education system is not yet able to provide a society with the help of the experts of "green" professions and business sector is not yet ready to employ them.

Kyrgyzstan joined the global process of "green economy" issues integration into a system of initial professional training which is the core of preparation of experts in various fields and spheres - industry, agriculture, economy etc. Research on studying the possibilities of "green economy" issues integration into Professional Training System was held in February-June 2013 in Kyrgyzstan with the support of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Association in which

experts of the Ministries and authorities of Kyrgyzstan as well as the representatives of public organizations participated. The research aims at examination of the prevailing situation, existing possibilities for integration of green professions and skills into PTO system of detection of existing obstacles faced by Kyrgyzstan, possibilities for their removal, demand for "green professions" in addition to preparing recommendations on possible ways of their implementation. Focus-groups, Q&A and detailed interviews in seven regions of the country were organized during the event.

PTO system plays an important role in transition into "green economy" which is the basic supplier of "green professions"



diversity protection or minimizing emissions and waste) and if they are related to such industries or projects oriented on environment preservation (energy efficiency, renewable energy, protection of environment or reduction of emissions). Labour Market Policy should pay attention to the preservation of jobs and provide opportunities for workers and the enterprises to quickly adapt to the changes related to transition to "green



experts. Under the conditions, "green technologies" integration into branches of economy, requirements for professional skills and knowledge in each profession are raising.

For this purpose, APTO is to begin the process of preparation and adoption of internal standard acts (strategies, provisions, acts, instructions, and programs) focused on "green skills" development and labour profession with the participa-

tion of all interested parties - state educational, environment, economic bodies, local governments, business sector representatives of priority branches of economy, employers, employment services, rural consulting services, etc. Transition to "green economy" should ensure training and retraining of experts of "green professions" through education.

Kyrgyzstan Education System is tasked to prepare basic grounds for result oriented qualitative education. Within this framework, it is necessary to introduce new content of education in which Educational Standards at all levels should be developed or updated including primary professional education taking into account "green economy" and "green skills".

Heads of Professional Lycées should strengthen efforts to enhance the existing communications with the potential employers, business sectors involved in priority fields of economy, establish cooperation with the new business organizations in building a platform for "green technology" integration into production

and create "green" market of workplaces. The effective tool for the establishment of close cooperation between PL and the Enterprises is Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

It is necessary to project future requirements for "green" staff and "green" professionals in close cooperation between Enterprises and Educational Institutions, Ministries and Departments, Services of

Employment for "Green" personnel for determining the requirements. Increasing teachers and PL engineering-pedagogical personnel competency in the field of "Green" skills through constantly operating courses of qualification improvement on the basis of RHMS at APTO with the use of successful international experiences and involvement of existing expert potential will also play a positive role in this regard.

Primary Professional Education through introduction of "green" approaches in training by organizing study courses and field trainings with the use of environment technology within the framework of the combined training in classes and at workplaces as well as qualifying requirements and characteristics of profession and specialities should be carried out with the participation of all interested



parties.

Continuous training at workplaces, preparation and constant retraining of personnel will allow workers and employers to adapt to quick changes on labour market in the conditions of introduction of "green" technology in production. Practical measures should be taken and financing provided for the implementation of these programs along with the constant monitoring and coordination of the investments in Primary Professional Education System for increasing the use of financial resources with a view to eliminate duplication.

Kyrgyzstan has a certain potential in the field of "green" skills' integration into a system of Primary Professional Education and it is recommended to use the potential and possibilities of the existing projects realized by APTO with the support

of the international donors: ADB, GIZ, HELVETAS, EC, GEF/PMG, JICA, WB, etc. The projects aimed at sustainable development and formation of "green" skills should be given preference with the support of international donors.

Cooperation with the formal and informal organizations (for example the Interbranch Educational Centre of State Agency on Geology and Mineral Resources at PKR, UCA (Aga Khan), AUCA, KGUCTA, Fluid, Ozone Centre of Kyrgyzstan, BIOM, RCE KG, "Akmena" and etc.) are needed for the integration of "Green Specialities" into Primary Professional Education, to increase competency in the field of "green economy", review the existing programs and elaborate new training modules and manuals on "green economy" as well as "green" specialities and skills.

The Governmental support is needed for the small and medium-sized enterprises which are involved in delivering agricultural resources especially for those firms which offer "Green" agricultural products and services.

Field schools on the basis of the skilled PL sites should be established in countryside for the exchange of experience and sharing know-how in the field of "green" technology in agriculture and also for the exchange of information for practical use of knowledge.

Cooperation with the leading farms, rural consulting services and associations, public and other organisations, water users, farmers, earth and forest husbandry is needed for the creation of "green" workplaces in agricultural sector through utilizing the existing potential for example: Agriculture Platform, Rural Consulting Service, Bioservice, Biofarmer, BioMuras, Zhash Ishkerler Association, Agroproexport, CKC, AgroBillim, Agromarket, AgroLain, Moltushum Cooperative Society, Forest Husbandry Association and Land Users.

Close cooperation should be established and interaction enhanced between Educational Institutions of Primary Professional Education and the basic

employers - the mining companies (Kumtor Operating Company, TalasKoperGold, Atynken, Full Gold Mining, etc.) - which can create proper conditions for sharing practices and training of students to further employ at the enterprises for staffing the mines with "Green Skills" Specialists.

Platform for sharing information and views between Academic and educational institutions, mining companies, international organisations is needed for elaborating programs and projects on introduction of existing and newest world tendencies of "green economy", "green technologies" and "green skills" in mining.

The existing new standards should be reviewed and new standards focused on "green technology" and information awareness have to be developed by referring to the principles of "green economy" in all branches and in Primary Professional Education for the preparation of mining specialities for the Republic. The recommendations are to be considered while developing short-term and long-term strategy for mining branches of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Creation of potentials for the qualified experts in energy conservation, energy efficiency, power efficient buildings and constructions, introduction of power efficient technologies and engineering equipment in Primary Professional Education System is necessary for the integration of "green economy" into Construction Sector.

Curriculum in Primary Professional Education System is to be developed for the improvement of the quality of tourist services corresponding to the world standards based on "green technology" to develop ecological, ethnographic tourism etc. in cooperation with the representatives of the key State Bodies (PTO, Economy, Culture and Tourism, Environment) and representatives of tourism companies (which are potential employers) for the implementation of the joint projects aimed at studying, formation and pilot approbation of new abilities and competency in the field of "green

economy".

New training and specialization courses (for tourist agents, average managers, tour operators, guides-conductors, experts of hotel business etc.) based on principles of "green economy" on the basis of professional lycées are to be held.

Developing new training programs, increasing the potential of pedagogical staff, masters of in-service training, modernization of laboratories and auto repair shops, establishment of partnership with the business sector are needed for the preparation of "green" working specialities for the transport sector to share the practices made and further employ.

Eco-campuses should be established for increasing interest in energy conservation, including the installation of water and heat counters, heat installation in educational buildings (windows and doors etc.),



use of power efficient lamps, installation of photo-electric stations and biogas, warm bathroom units and shower cubicles, waste processing for the formation of "green skills" and practice in Primary Professional Education System on the basis of existing PTL in all regions of the Republic. Strengthening of PL infrastructure, modernisation of Industrial Practice Base (workshops, educational shops, laboratories, educational classes, etc.) is needed on the basis of modern industrial and information-communication technologies.

The success of integration of "Gardening" of Economy in Primary Professional Education System depends on an active position and personal interest of APTO Management, PL and colleges directors teachers and masters of in-service training. It defines necessity of

educational and enlightening activities, purposeful work of Mass-Media, social advertising concerning "green economy", importance of Ecological Education and Ecological Culture.

Existing information resources (TV, radio, mass-media, internet resources, social networks, civil society, non-governmental public organisations and funds, youth movements which have more potential) should be used to increase the society's awareness on sustainable development, "green economy", formation of ecologically reasoned behaviour of the youth and the public and increase the interest of various groups of society.

On the basis of the discussions and deep deliberations on the accession process of Kyrgyzstan to the Customs Union, the pluses and minuses should be estimated, unified state policy to be developed taking into account opinions of all interested parties including Primary Professional Education System as there is a probability that personnel cannot compete on a labour market with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Primary Professional Education System should now take steps on the improvement of quality of preparation of competitive personnel for priority branches of economy of the Customs Union. ■

By Mrs. Zhyldyz Duishenova, National focal point of Kyrgyzstan in OUR





Turkey Implements Environmental Impact Assessment Process

Impact Assessment (IA) is simply defined as the process of identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed action. Impact assessment (IA) is a structured a process for considering the implications, for people and their environment, of proposed actions while there is still an opportunity to modify (or even, if appropriate, abandon) the proposals. It is applied at all levels of decision-making, from policies to specific projects.

Ideally impact assessment (IA) will be an integrated treatment of the likely impacts on any of the facets of the natural and human-modified environment, including people, communities and their wellbeing. To that end, different forms of IA have developed to address specific challenges raised by the need to assess impacts within certain sectors of the environment: hence social IA, health IA, cultural IA, ecological IA, etc. All these forms of IA share the same basic principles, methodology and purpose, but may differ in specific methods and techniques.

The practice of IA relies upon a family of instruments and tools, typically based on the physical and natural sciences and social sciences, in order to predict future expected consequences of possible decisions. Depending on the level of effort and the seriousness with which the process is undertaken, different degrees of success are achieved.

The concept of "environment" in impact assessment evolved from an initial focus on the biophysical components to a wider definition, including the physical-chemical, biological, visual, cultural and socioeconomic components of the total environment. Historically, environmental impact statements (EIS) were a late addition to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in the US, enacted in 1970. The EIS was an enforcing mechanism,

to show how Federal agencies were implementing environmental policy within their major project development activities. This afterthought became the star turn in its own right, and was quickly adopted in several other countries, especially Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The approach was gradually adopted by an increasing number of countries in the following decades, and received a major boost from the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992.

An important consequence of UNCED was that the United Nations agencies concerned in various ways with people and the environment adopted impact assessment as a central tool to support decision-making. Impact assessment is gradually being recognized in international environmental law, as demonstrated, for example, by

- The Convention on EIA in a Trans boundary Context (Espoo convention 1991) and the more recent additional Protocol on SEA (Kiev, 2003);
- The Ramsar convention on wetland conservation;
- The UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (Montego Bay, 1982);
- The Antarctic Treaty (Washington, 1959), which has an Environmental Protocol (Madrid, 1991) that institutes an international EIA system for the Antarctic.

■ Impact Assessment in Turkey

According to the Turkish EIA Regulation ("EIA Regulation"), EIA refers to the studies to be carried out for the determination of the likely positive or negative impact that the projects will have on the environment; studying possible environmental protection measures relating to these projects in order to minimize



Environment

it is planning to provide fast access to all EIA decisions and create comprehensive database. This database will be used during the decision-making process of EIA for new activities.

All assessments which are in the scope of By-Law on EIA are being monitored by the staff of Provinces. Thereby, differences arising from its implementation have been eliminated by ensuring the coordination between Central and Provincial offices of Ministry.

This Project will benefit the public through providing effective, efficient and transparent EIA process. By implementing the EIA process on the electronic media, investors can follow up additional requirements, request for renewal process and monitor the entire procedure of the

negative effects; determining and assessing selected technological alternatives and locations; and monitoring and controlling the implementation of such projects. EIA shall provide information on the potential negative and positive environmental and social impacts of the intended projects. It shall also aim to make recommendations for the mitigation of the potential negative impacts and enhancement of the positive ones. A field survey of the project site shall be conducted and potential environmental impacts of project activities are to be identified, assessed, and documented.

Similarly, by means of public participation process, feeling of confidence has been established between related parties and the institutions and due to its participative structure, EIA process has contributed to the general democratic process of the country. As a result of the EIA studies conducted with this perceptible by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization of the Republic of Turkey; 2986 projects with high pollutive capacity were decided as "EIA positive", 40.705 projects with pollutive capacity were decided as "EIA not required" and 516 projects as "EIA required" country-wide. Furthermore, approximately 3900 projects have been returned since they were found contrary to the related legislations.

■ Online EIA Process Management System

According to the analyses of the industrial processes in Turkey in recent years, there was an increase of 8.5 percent in 2011 and 11.3 percent in 2012. This industrial growth has focused the Ministry on the electronic EIA process to achieve faster, more efficient and transparent assessment process for new as well as energy production facilities and mining sector. Online EIA Process Management System application is the first application in the World in this field.

■ System's Contribution to the Process

By putting EIA Process Management System in to the service,

process transparently.

The system working with electronic signature has great importance for the effective execution of processes and increasing the efficiency. Adding this system to the E-government process will remove the time lost in the mailing. Furthermore, according to the By-Law on EIA, 180 working-days-time required before the implementation of this system is now reduced to 60 working days.

■ System's Environmental & Economic Benefits

Within this system, documents on the environmental impact assessment introduction, the environmental impact assessment report and project presentation which have approximately 400 pages will not be printed any more. In other words, it results in saving 61.500.000 pages of paper and rescuing an average 5.100 trees per year. In this context;

- The release of approximately 1,000 tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions will be prevented which is equivalent to the forestation of approximately 350 hectares of area.

- By saving 300 tons of paper annually, 132,000 tons of clean water will not be wasted and 2.280.000 kWh energy will not be used.

■ System's Technological Eligibility

The whole Process from applying the first stages to the decision-making of the By-Law on EIA is implemented electronically. In addition, the decisions made on the "Environmental Impact Assessment is Required" or "No Environmental Impact Assessment is Required" can be accessible through the maps of IOS and Android applications. ■

Information on "Online EIA Process Management System" in Turkey provided by: The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, Republic of Turkey

ECO-IEST Workshop on

Ecosystem Management of Wetlands

Ramsar Regional Center in Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA) and the ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) organized two back-to-back events in the City of Ramsar in Mazandaran Province in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The goals of the workshop called "Workshop on Ecosystem Management of Wetlands" were to improve regional cooperation on management of wetlands within RRC-CWA parties and biosphere reserves within the SACAM network, promote Ramsar and IPBES linkages and synergy among related initiatives and MEAs, facilitate sharing and exchanging of views and capacity building among regional stakeholders, and focus on promoting strategic thinking on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Around 50 participants from more than twenty countries in the Asia Pacific Region gathered together at the location of the birth place of the Ramsar Convention to analyze information on the latest environmental issues, review subjects presented in last year's meeting and introduce new approach-

es of international and regional environmental conventions. The Collaborative Management Board meeting was held, where recommendations were made by the RRC-CWA and Ramsar Secretariat to encourage member countries to initiate and support projects with local communities for wetland conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, member countries encouraged all parties to link wetlands with climate change issues, as this link can help secure funding for wetland conservation projects to become eligible for carbon funding. Also, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Ramsar Regional Centre in Central and West Asia and the Iran Office of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Experiences and technical information were successfully shared related to projects on wetlands, organization of

regional conferences, seminars and workshops, scientific educational collaboration in holding joint training courses related to the management of wetlands including public participation, education and outreach activities.

Ecosystem Management of the Wetlands Workshop

Session 1 Presentations of Wetlands Ecosystem Management

Sadegh Sadeghizadegan, Executive Director of Ramsar Regional Centre in Central and West Asia, opened the workshop by welcoming all the participants. He talked about the establishment of RRC-CWA in Spain, 2002 expressing hope that among the Non-contracting parties of RRC-CWA (including Afghanistan, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia), RRC-CWA hopes that Afghanistan and Oman will become contracting members of RRC-CWA in the near future. He then highlighted that the current contracting member countries include Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Kyrgyz Republic, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria,



Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Kazakhstan.

He then continued that the Iranian government assists RRC-CWA in terms of budget and authority adding that the RRC-CWA budget is allocated from the host country and Ramsar Secretariat. The following information was shared during the workshop by the various facilitators, which included experts and policy makers from different member countries.

Ramsar Convention Secretariat
Ms. Alzahlawi, Assistant Advisor of
Asia-Oceania

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is located in IUCN in Gland, Switzerland. The definition of wetlands include any type, which can be divided to "inland wetlands" and "coastal wetlands", as well as "human-made wetlands" which have been developed along with the construction of artificial dam.

The importance of wetlands is recognized as 1) provision of water resources and hydro power; 2) soil formation and nutrient cycling; 3) measures against disaster like flood; and 4) cultural aspects including income generation by eco-tourism. However, wetlands around the world face several pressures due to construction and mining industries. Against these challenges, the three pillars of Ramsar Convention are 1) wise use of natural resources; 2) the designation and management of wetlands' international importance; and 3) international cooperation. In addition, three new Ramsar sites have been included in the list of the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Secretariat distributes different kinds of information needed to update Ramsar sites information sheet through their website. Trans-boundary issues are the main problems requiring international cooperation. There are several issues such as soil and biodiversity degradation around coastal Ramsar sites which numbers are limited at present time. The

Centre, however has been very helpful to compliment the low number of staff in the Secretariat.

In the Ramsar Sites Database, helpful information is available for the member countries, such as the correct approaches to be taken in order to manage the respective Ramsar sites.

The best practice of management of the Ramsar sites relate to 1) regularly monitoring system every six years; 2) establishing a national wetland working committee/group; 3) conducting national wetland inventory to identify the prioritized site to conserve; and 4) public participatory programs to raise awareness of the student populations.

The Ramsar Secretariat has distributed technical tool kits for wetland conservation to be translated into Russian and

change impacts, and impaired water cycles in addition to hunting, political instability and gaps in administrative information sharing system.

CAF initiatives are aiming to establish a network to promote the conservation of migratory water-birds as well as to enhance international cooperation, especially for trans-boundary wetland and water birds projects, in order to develop strong networking at each site.

The Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and Other Waterbirds (WCASN) initiative is important from the viewpoint of protecting the Siberian crane, with its stated goal of managing hunting and educating people. The project has released conservation material on water birds issues and management of water birds. Also, the project has implemented training by inviting trainees from five countries to be learning conservation techniques and management in a country-specific manners based on the features of each country.

University of Tarbiat Modares,
Iran, Professor. Saeed Morid,
Lake Urmia Basin

In the Urmia Basin, basin based management is crucial. The water level of this basin is decreasing every year, which has caused several issues including impacts of saltation on agriculture. The Integrated Management Plan for Lake Urmia Basin (IMPLUB) contains drought risk management (Lake Urumia Basin Drought Risk Management or DRM) which evaluates drought occurrence in the Lake and introduces a participatory method for it. It also considers before-drought, in-drought and after-drought measures, including disaster risk management. The project has developed guideline for DRM and held workshops for explaining it. It also established a national DRM organization (DRO) on the local, provincial and national level. Lastly, a drought monitoring system utilizes satellite images to measure inflows.



Arabic languages. Furthermore, the Ramsar Secretariat is offering small conservation grants of up to 40,000 CHF, as well as training courses. The Ramsar Secretariat aims to build capacity, establish a national committee, encourage private sector and national focal points, and cooperate with local NGO's in order to induce local knowledge and a positive impact on local communities.

Central Asian Flyway
Elena Ilyashenko,
ICF/CMS Siberian Crane Flyway
Coordinator in the Central Asian Flyway
(CAF)

Twenty-nine species are threatened in this region, and 98 percent of threatened birds species are living in this East-Asian region. Issues include unstable hydrological annual cycles, climate



These measures help to advance a reduction of the water requirements of the agricultural sector only during drought periods in order to minimize the impacts on food security and livelihoods. The measures include the wise use of irrigation and reduction of cropped areas during a drought spell. The measures consider five levels: a normal level where drought doesn't happen and then drought levels ranging from 1 to 4 where a higher level indicates that the drought is more severe. Water allocation would be adjusted according to the level of drought for several usages including agriculture, portable water, lake and so on. This project's report can be found online.

Applying Ecosystem Approach for Wetland Management: Joint Experiences of the UNDP /GEF

Mohsen Solymani, National Project Manager, and Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP)

The change and evolution in conservation approaches have been experienced from balancing development and conservation to ecosystem approaches which enables co-achieving conservation, sustainable usage of the wetlands and equitable sharing of benefits from the wetlands. Compared with a traditional approach, ecosystem approaches insist on benefit sharing, managerial systems and decentralization within a national framework. It is also crucial to disseminate information and apply the established national management system into management of other Iranian wetlands. Under this approach, the importance of awareness of local communities and recognition in regard to participation are key points of proper management. For the first step, through implementation of several activities, awareness of local persons with respect to the importance of the wetlands will be raised.

Secondly, the management plans will be developed. Then, any institutional framework and collaboration will be established for the conservation of the wetlands. For example, partnership with Lake Parishan management system was established. Following that, management plans must be implemented. Finally, strategies, regulations and plans will be developed at the national level. The three pillars include capacity building through transferring CIWP experiences and responsibilities to the Office of Habitats and Protected Areas, preparing a database, and developing a multi-media CD as a toolkit. The project is aiming to not only establish a national management system, but also to extend it to Iranian wetlands.



Wetlands in West Asia
Ms. Haifaa Abdulhalim,
IUCN-Regional Coordinator World Heritage for Arab States & West Asia
IUCN is an international NGO established in 1948, which has more than 1,000 member organizations and 11,000 scientists and 62 branch offices worldwide. In HQ, the several divisions for protected area, marine, gender and so on are working. IUCN mission has three key words: conservation, sustainable use, and cooperation. Among them, cooperation is important because absence of good management of some wetlands shall leave severe influence on several countries in trans-boundary manner. Conservation of Ramsar Sites stands together with conservation of World

Heritage sites, and Man and Biosphere sites. Challenges are 1) increasing pressures as source of livelihood and natural resources; 2) climate condition; 3) absence of legal and institutional framework to enable efficient management of the wetlands; 4) less awareness of local community in regards to importance of the wetlands; and 5) trans-boundary issue occurred along the border of the countries. The main message is how we can maintain "the integrity of the wetland ecosystem".

Measures are 1) establishment of institutional framework and 2) management system to evaluate and identify benefits, develop alternative livelihood, sharing responsibilities with local resources, integrated ecosystem management system, promote traditional sustainable uses and life style.

Theme1: Trans-Boundary Issues

IUCN: Collaboration at technical level, not at political or institutional level is much easier to be undertaken.

Theme 2: Necessary Capacity Development

International Linkage is needed for information and ideas sharing among countries located in this region in regards to their own good practices. In order to share the experiences, preparing a questionnaire or information sheet concerned with their target or registered sites every six or any years is very useful.

There is a severe problem in information sharing. Although ECO-IEST has held such kind of workshops a lot, and member countries have obtained a lot of knowledge from the other's experiences through these workshops, the delegates have forgotten all they'd been informed in the workshop once they returned to their home countries.

Ramsar Secretariat like to share the list of trans-boundary sites the list of focal points of each country, thus the member countries will be able to contact each other for further discussion.



Theme 3: Linkage with measures against climate change

Since climate change is one of the global issues affecting the ecosystem, the discussion on how to link ecosystem issues with measures for mitigation of climate change should be further made, in order to draw attention from donors and collect larger funds. Linking the project with climate change mitigation does induce financial assistance. International framework such as Ramsar Secretariat and IUCN would monitor and assess the progress of actions based on the strategies because the strategy contains a variety of areas like trans-boundary issue, capacity development, good practice sharing, monitoring etc.

Session 2: Country Presentations on Wetlands and Ramsar Sites

■ **Iran: Mr. Nasser Moghaddasi**

Five categories of 21 Ramsar Sites are in Iran, such as the wetlands in Urmira Basin, the wetlands along the Caspian Sea and the wetlands along the Persian Gulf. Some activities including establishing databases, restoring wetlands, preparing brochures, conducting researches on carbon dioxide offset and taking regional initiatives have been undertaken for the wetland conservation. Future targets are focused on developing scientific research.

■ **Iraq: Ms. Nahal Noori Jabar**

Marsharand is the wetland area of which extends to 10,000km. It is a very important wetland where some projects for water management and socio-economic improvement are being implemented. The livelihood and customs of local residents has not changed since 1,000 years ago. The communities in Iraq have their community leader and they're claiming the importance of the wetland. Their main source of income is provided through fruits production, construction of villages by plants, and the fishery in the wetlands where many unique species live on. Hunting rare species occur in the wetland and these years more attention is paid to sustainable hunting.

■ **Jordan: Mr. Raed Bani Hani**

In 1977, the only Ramsar registered wetland in Jordan, Azraq Wetland was registered in Ramsar Convention. The Azraq wetland has faced severe issues of ground-water depletion, and against this issue, the Prime Minister formed a wetland management committee in 1987. The measures against depletion have been undertaken such as research and monitoring of ground-water, environmental impact assessment, and education or eco-tourism. No water, no life. Water is vital for all creatures and lives.

■ **Kazakhstan: Mr. Roman Jashenko**

Kazakhstan has 10 Ramsar sites registered from 1976 to 2012, two of which

are outside of protected areas and the remaining wetlands are located in the protected area. Management system is organized by the government, provincial administrative institutions and local NGO's. A Committee for forestry and hunting and also for water resources are organized, which are assisted by WB and other donors. In Kazakhstan biosphere reserve, monitoring is being conducted so as to establish a database and release it for the public audience on web. Kazakhstan is now applying for some of its Biosphere Reserves for registration of Ramsar Convention and UNESCO World Heritage.

■ **Kyrgyz Republic: Ms. Nazgul Turddomatova**

Total area of 86 protected areas in the Kyrgyz Republic accounts for 100 million km . Issyk-Kul Ramsar site is the largest lake in the country. Activities in Ramsar Sites include research and education along with some campaigns for raising awareness. Challenges faced are alien species, lack of outreach program.

■ **Tajikistan: Mr. Najbudin Rajabov**

In Tajikistan, large volumes of mineral resources and water are accumulated in mountain ices. Five important wetlands in Tajikistan have been nominated to Ramsar sites.



RRC-CWA's Forth Collaborative Management Board Meeting

The Collaborative Management Board meeting was held following the 3rd Meeting of this board having met in January 2011. This meeting included detailed discussions of the Ramsar Focal Points for the Central Asian region and assessments of experiences and best practices in conservation. Representatives discussed the Strategic Guidance strategy for the Centre, including the approval of finances, future programs and activities, and a review of reports. Meeting started by hearing the expectations of the Ramsar Contracting Parties regarding their hopes on how the RRC-CWA can assist them in implementing the Ramsar Convention. Secondly, it heard more about the activities of other environmental organizations operating in Central and West Asia, so as to seek opportunities for cooperation. Thirdly, it worked with non-contracting parties like Ecosystem Afghanistan to become one of the RRC-CWA contracting parties. Report of activities and achievements of 2012 were reviewed, and summarized such as holding workshop with collaboration of Anzali project supported by JICA in Anzali on December 2012 and organizing annual collaborative board meeting. The financial assistance is derived from DOE accounting for 177,176 USD and Ramsar Secretariat accounting for 30,000 USD. Although at the Meeting of the Standing Committee held in 2012 members showed positive attitude to allocate much more budget to RRC-CWA, in COP11 decision was made to increase by 0% supports from any contracting parties, that's why it's difficult to increase the allocation by the Secretariat. Regional parties are required to decide the prioritized areas of activities.

Objectives of Work Plan for 2013

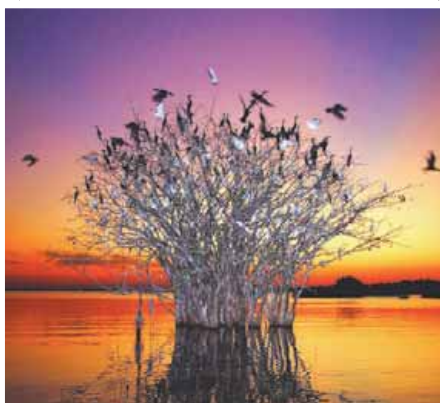
1) Expand member countries among which Afghanistan showed interest; 2)

expand Ramsar Sites 3) facilitate translation of key publications into Arabic and Russian; 4) provide guidance on the Ramsar CEPA program; 5) support demonstration of successful programs and up-scaling some activities; 6) develop partnership with other international frameworks; and 7) employ experts for RRC-CWA.

Other Issues Discussed

1) Anzali project has developed several kinds of promotional materials and now DOE is trying to translate them into other languages, that'll contribute towards the activities by RRC-CWA.

2) Kyrgyz Republic needs technical or financial support for translating documents etc. In addition, since it costs much to translate documents, it's neces-



sary to select and identify documents really required to be translated, not to translate all documents. Furthermore, the strategy to promote these translated documents should be discussed and considered.

3) The areas of work plan should be aligned with the order of priorities. It's really significant to bring and present priorities of targeted areas and achievements of pilot activities in a ground-based manner to the potential partners in order to obtain any supports from the donor communities.

4) RRC-CWA and Secretariat should list up activities to be undertaken and identify the priorities.

5) RRC-CWA should report detail accounting of its budget to DOE and the other relevant organizations so as to clarify if it's sufficient or not.

6) Regarding technical matters, the member countries and potential contracting countries need to know how to monitor items listed in the information sheet and fill out the sheet.

7) Partnership with CEPA should be promoted.

8) JICA considers international/ regional collaboration very important, and has two projects in Oman and Albania. Thus although Anzali phase 2 is under consideration, JICA is expecting to collaborate with RRC-CWA through these on-going projects.

Ecosystem Management of the Wetlands Workshop 26 February 2013

Signing of Memorandum of Cooperation between RRC-CWA & JICA

A memorandum was signed by Sadegh Sadeghizadegan, Executive Director of Ramsar Regional Centre and Takeuchi Yasuto, Chief Representative Iran Office Japan International Cooperation Agency in the presence of the Japan Ambassador H. E. Koji Haneda and Dr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel, Deputy Head of Department of Environment and President of the ECO-IEST.

Willing to further strengthen the friendly relations and the strategic partnership, Ramsar Regional Center in Central and West Asia and Japan International Cooperation Agency will seek to enhance the collaborative works under the umbrella of Memorandum of Cooperation agreed between the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) and JICA on 7 July, 2012. According to this MoC, an international training workshop will be held from 25 to 26 February 2013, as a first collaborative work. Both sides agreed to start dialogue toward further cooperation. ■

For complete article, please visit: <http://eco-iest.org/report-of-the-workshop-on-ecosystem-management-of-wetlands-available-for-download/>



Iran Post Sanctions
Energy and Environment

Iranian Association for Energy Economics
International Conference

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