

1st ECO Interior Ministers Meeting
Report
(*Tehran, 1st November 2006*)

1. In line with their effort to realize the common goals mentioned in the Declarations adopted by the Eighth and Ninth ECO Summit meetings held in Dushanbe, the Republic of Tajikistan, on 14th September 2004, and in Baku, the Republic of Azerbaijan, on 5th May 2006, on coordination of policies on issues such as terrorism, trafficking of drugs and illicit precursors, human smuggling, money laundering and cross border crimes that undermine the peace and stability of the region, the First Meeting of the Interior Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 1st November 2006. The meeting was attended by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan as well as the ECO Secretary General along with the relevant staff of the Secretariat. (List of participants is attached as ***Annex-I***)

2. The Interior Ministers meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials' meeting on October 30-31, 2006, which was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, Minister for Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his inaugural address, the Minister expressed the hope that the deliberations and decisions made during the meetings would contribute to credible security cooperation among member states for the realization of ECO's objectives of economic growth and sustainable development. He emphasized the need for member states to join hands and actively cooperate to that end. (A copy of the statement is placed at ***Annex-II***).

3. In his brief remarks, the ECO Secretary General, Mr. Khurshid Anwar welcomed the delegates and thanked the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the meetings and other member states for their interest and participation. He observed that the meetings offered welcome opportunities for implementation of the calls made by ECO leaders at the two previous Summits.

4. The Senior Officials' meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Abdul Reza-Rahmani Fazli, Deputy Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his opening remarks, he welcomed the participants and thanked the ECO Secretary General and his colleagues for their assistance in preparation and documentation contributing to the success of the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

Statement by a high dignitary from the Islamic Republic of Iran

5. H.E. Mr. Mr. Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, the Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, opened the meeting with his inaugural address. In his statement, the Minister said that ECO held an important place in the development of regional cooperation among the member countries and provided a reliable mechanism to bring them closer further to each other and add greater substance in their relations. He further stated that economic development and security environment are inter-related. He expressed the hope that ECO member states were able to take firm steps towards establishment of an effective security arrangement to counter various menaces and create a safe regional surrounding. He noted the many commonalities and corresponding capabilities contributing to such a cooperation. The Minister assured the meeting of the continued commitment and support of his government to the goals and objectives of the ECO. (A copy of the statement is placed at **Annex-III.**)

Statement by the ECO Secretary General

6. In his statement, H.E. Mr. Khurshid Anwar, Secretary General of ECO, expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran for taking the initiative to host this important meeting. He also thanked other ECO member states for their positive response to make a success of this very constructive effort. He stated that the ECO region should have a stable and secure environment to pursue the social and economic development of the people, to strengthen trade, transport and communications linkages, to enhance energy utilization, to develop agriculture and also be able to sustain it all. There is enormous potential for cooperation in diverse fields. Terrorism and transnational crimes should not take it hostage. He stated that no one country could meet these challenges single-handed. The positive response of the member states symbolizes ECO's determination to jointly address the scourge of terrorism and transnational crimes. He expressed the hope that with sincerity of purpose and with commitment to the higher goals of the ECO, it should be possible to achieve our objectives. (A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-IV.**)

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman and his statement

7. In accordance with ECO's Rules of Procedures, H.E. Mr. Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, the Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Meeting. In his brief remarks, Mr. Mohammadi thanked the participants for reposing confidence in him and expressed the hope that the outcome of the Interior Ministers meeting would bring a useful and beneficial outcome for the Organization.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

8. The meeting adopted the following agenda, which had been earlier reviewed/endorsed by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM):

1. Inauguration of the Meeting
 - a. Statement by a high dignitary from the Islamic Republic of Iran
 - b. Statement by the ECO Secretary General
2. Election of the Chairman and his statement
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Statements of the Ministers/Heads of Delegations.
5. Exchange of views on increasing links and impacts of the transnational organized crimes and terrorism on internal security and stability, and economic growth and sustainable development of ECO member states and considering the possibility of regional cooperation in this regard.
6. Exchange of views on economic-social and political impacts of the transnational organized crimes including the following areas and cooperation of the Member States to combat them:
 - i. Drug and psychotropic substances trafficking
 - ii. Human trafficking
 - iii. Money laundering
 - iv. Illegal migration (Proposal of the Republic of Kazakhstan)
7. Border security and police cooperation
8. Exchange of views regarding intra-regional cooperation and mechanism for enhancement of cooperation with the United Nations Office for Drug and Crime (UNODC) and other relevant organizations
9. Regional Cooperation on prevention, control and relief in the case of natural disasters
10. Regional Cooperation on the ways to establish and promote trade and economical cooperation among neighbouring provinces of the Member States.
11. Follow-up Mechanism for decisions of the meeting.
12. Adoption of the Tehran Declaration
13. Any other business
14. Date and venue of the next Meeting
15. Adoption of the Report of the Meeting
16. Vote of thanks and closing of the meeting

Agenda Item No. 4

Statements of the Ministers/Heads of Delegations

9. The Ministers/Heads of delegations delivered their statements, touching on the issues of terrorism and transnational crimes and expressed their

commitment to cooperation in combating these crimes which posed a challenge to ECO countries and the regions beyond. Copies of the statements are placed at ***Annex-V***.

Agenda Item No. 5

Exchange of views on increasing links and impacts of the transnational organized crimes and terrorism on internal security and stability, and economic growth and sustainable development of ECO member states and considering the possibility of regional cooperation in this regard

10. Under this agenda item, the participants discussed their experiences and efforts to combat transnational organized crimes and terrorism. The meeting condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They called for a joint strategy to eradicate these crimes in the region so that member states could focus on economic and social development of their people. They proposed that each member state should consider establishing a high level group and a Focal Point for exchange of information and to discuss the issue and come up with necessary recommendations. The meeting decided to establish a High Level Experts Group (HLEG) which would examine the causes and suggest measures in this regard. The outcome of HLEG meetings will be presented to the next Interior Ministers meeting. The participants further agreed that member states should exchange information and experiences regarding techniques, facilities and effective ways of combating terrorism on their territories as well as exchange of information with regard to laws and regulations to tackle these crimes. They should also exchange information on methods being used by terrorist groups. They proposed that the Secretariat should enhance its cooperation with the relevant international organizations on these issues.

Agenda Item No. 6

Exchange of views on economic-social and political impacts of the transnational organized crimes including the following areas and cooperation of the Member States to combat them:

i. **Drug and psychotropic substances trafficking;**

11. The participants emphasized that cultivation, production and smuggling of drugs posed a major security problem in the ECO region. International assistance to combat this menace through financial and technical support to ECO members was necessary. Interaction with other countries and organizations including EU and UN should be accorded priority.

12. The member states proposed to strengthen the DCCU at the ECO Secretariat to make it more effective so that it could be repository of information with regard to drugs-related crimes. The Secretary General gave a glimpse of ECO-DCCU activities and informed that it had already launched a website www.ecodccu.org (in English and Russian languages) with the establishment of

a data bank which contains details of information on drug seizure, drug prices, drug abuses and drug cultivation. The common method of gathering and reporting data between the member states has been through secured computerized network.

13. The member states proposed to consider the possibility of transforming Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) into a "Regional Centre for Drug Control and Organized Crimes (RCDCOC)".

14. The meeting welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to provide training facilities to the personnel of member states in the fields of drug and organized crimes.

15. It was recalled that the First Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on Drug Control Matters was held on 20-22 December 2005 in Ankara which agreed to establish a Working Group comprising senior officials/experts both at policy and operational level to review the Action Plan based on its recommendations. The Islamic Republic of Iran offered to host the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) in the first half of 2007 for:

- i. Revision of ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control
- ii. Enhancement of the capacity of DCCU
- iii. Study the possibility of preparation of a Legal Document for Regional Cooperation on Drug Control

The report and outcome of the EGM will be presented to the 2nd Interior Ministers meeting.

ii. **Human trafficking;**

16. The participants agreed that the issue was very important since in recent years smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of human beings for prostitution and slave labour have become two fast growing problems worldwide. The Regional and Global Programmes Against Trafficking in Human Beings would enable member states of origin, transit and destination to develop joint strategies and practical action against the trafficking in human beings. The member states should exchange information and send their National Reports to the Secretariat for circulation. The meeting decided that member states consider factors of human trafficking and its growth, and laws regarding human trafficking, establishment of a data bank and suggest a joint strategy to counter this menace which being a human problem should be dealt with keeping in view human rights.

iii. **Money laundering;**

17. While emphasizing that in today's globalized economy, organized crime groups generate huge sums of money through drug trafficking, arms smuggling

and financial crimes, the meeting stressed that it is very complex issue and proposed setting up a data bank and exchanging experiences, to approve relevant laws and regulations and to use the experience of other countries and regional and international organizations in this regard. The member states should consider signing a common agreement on cooperation to fight against money laundering, compare their laws with regard to money-laundering in regional context and take Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as an example to deal with money-laundering and actively cooperate for extradition of the offenders.

iv. **Illegal Migration**

18. The participants underlined the issue and agreed that it should be solved through close cooperation among member states on the lines of the experiences of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Greece and in light of the experiences gained by the relevant international organizations. They further stated that the origin, transit and destination countries should cooperate in this regard. They further stressed that domestic legislation should be enacted to deal with smuggling of migrants, and utmost respect be given to human rights in their implementation. It was recommended that necessary study and research be made about the causes of human smuggling, including economic background, destination countries, financial burdens and other aspects, suggesting remedial measures. The results of this study should be circulated to the member states and be discussed in HLEG. The participants recommended that special attention should be given to the situation of the victims of the illegal migrants. The meeting also encouraged all member states to become signatory to the “Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air”, supplementary to Palermo Convention 2000.

Agenda Item No. 7

Border Security and Police Cooperation

Border Cooperation:

19. The participants deliberated the issue at length and agreed that cooperation in this area was significant. They emphasized the need for an institutional mechanism and closer interaction between border controlling agencies. The member states should nominate focal points in this regard. They stressed using border controlling systems, information and communication technologies and database to facilitate recognition of criminals and exchange of information. There should be joint sessions of heads of the law enforcement agencies/security forces that protect borders. The participants emphasized development of cooperation to check smuggling of humans, arms and goods within the borders and stressed identifying border points used by smugglers, exchanging information and experiences on prevention of drug related crimes and border control, enhancing border surveillance through workshops in member

states and establishing and promoting facilities on the borders for traveling legally.

Police Cooperation:

20. The meeting recognized it as a most important area which required cooperation at both regional and bilateral levels. Although member states have already been exchanging information through INTERPOL, yet they may also consider the possibility of establishing "ECOPOL" for closer police cooperation within the ECO region. There should be focal points in the police organizations of member states who should meet frequently for concrete cooperation and exchange information with regard to rules and regulations controlling the crimes.

Agenda Item No. 8

Exchange of views regarding intra-regional cooperation and mechanism for enhancement of cooperation with the United Nations Office for Drug and Crime (UNODC) and other relevant organizations

21. The participants agreed that ECO should further strengthen cooperation with UNODC. The activities of DCCU should be expanded by including other transnational crimes. ECO should also take benefit of EU's experience through technical and financial support. More attention and investment should be made for new technologies against cyber crimes provided by the developed countries. It was also suggested that ECO should have cooperation with Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since Central Asian Republics are the members of this Organization and could benefit from its potential.

Agenda Item No. 9

Regional Cooperation on the prevention, control and relief in the case of natural disasters

22. The participants discussed the issue of natural disasters, both in terms of human and economic losses and the consequences in the post-disaster period, and the possible drift, because of financial constrains, towards deviant behaviour such as drug trafficking and illegal migration entailing security problems. There was a need to jointly establish a regional mechanism and exchange experiences for providing assistance to victims. All countries should give serious consideration to this issue. The participants stressed that natural disasters were among the main challenges of the ECO member countries which caused human casualties and economic losses. They agreed that ECO governments should make efforts to mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

23. The meeting accepted the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to set up a Regional Centre for Natural Disasters Management in Iran, the details of which may be finalized in the HLEG. While providing equipment and technology, the

member states should facilitate the promotion of this kind of technology within the region. The efforts of ECO member states should be linked to other international efforts. It was noted that the establishment of a monitoring and control system for forecasting of natural disasters would help reduce losses.

24. The meeting also suggested establishment of a Fund for Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation and possible prevention of natural calamities.

25. The member states agreed with the Iranian proposal regarding signing of an MOU between ECO and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) which would pave the way for contribution of OCHA in the ECO's plans and projects in this regard. The Secretariat has already circulated the draft MOU to member states for their views/comments.

Agenda Item No. 10

Regional Cooperation on the ways to establish and promote trade and economic cooperation among neighbouring provinces of the Member States

26. The meeting deliberated the establishment of mechanism for cooperation among the neighbouring provinces of member states. They emphasized that there should be an institutional framework for close cooperation between the neighbouring provinces of the member states to realize the great potential for cooperation existing in trade-related fields. The member states should also use this alternative method of trade promotion. They further stated that there should be a mechanism and necessary coordination among the respective provinces which should not only focus on trade and economic relations but also on security related issues. It was suggested that the Secretariat should gather all the necessary information with regard to the potential for cooperation among provinces and prepare a document to be discussed by the HLEG before presentation to the 2nd Interior Ministers meeting.

Agenda Item No. 11

Follow up Mechanism for decisions of the meeting

27. The meeting asked the Secretariat to prepare a Plan of Action on the basis of issues discussed in the 1st Interior Ministers meeting and submit the same to the first meeting of High Level Experts Group (HLEG) for finalization.

Agenda Item No. 12

Adoption of the Tehran Declaration

28. The meeting unanimously adopted the Tehran Declaration as recommended by the Senior Officials Meeting. The declaration illustrates the main issues and agreement reached during the meeting. The text of the Declaration is placed at **Annex-VI**.

Agenda Item No. 13

Any other business

29. No issue was discussed under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 14

Date and Venue of the Next Meeting

30. It was decided that the meeting of the Interior Ministers shall be convened annually. The Secretary General was requested to hold consultations with member states in order to determine the date and venue of the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers meeting.

Agenda Item No. 15

Adoption of the Report of the Meeting

31. The meeting unanimously adopted its report.

Agenda Item No. 16

Vote of thanks and closing of the meeting

32. The meeting was concluded with a Vote of Thanks by the participating delegations, expressing deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. They also expressed their warm appreciation to the Chairman, H.E. Mr. Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, the Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for guiding the deliberations to a successful conclusion.

33. The meeting also expressed thanks and appreciation to H.E. Mr. Khurshid Anwar, Secretary General of ECO and other members of the ECO Secretariat for the preparation of the relevant documents and their invaluable services to facilitate the work of the meeting.