

**Report of  
The Second ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting  
(Ashgabat, 26-27 May, 2008)**

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1. The Second Meeting of the ECO Interior Ministers was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2008. The meeting was attended by delegates of 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. Also present in the meeting were delegations of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) headed by the Regional Representative for West and Central Asia and the UNODC Representative in Ashgabat. (List of participants is attached as *Annex-I*)

2. The Second Interior Ministers meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials' meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2008, which was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Iskander Mulikov, Deputy Interior Minister of Turkmenistan. In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Mulikov welcomed the participants and expressed the hope that the deliberations and decisions made during the meetings would contribute to enhancing regional cooperation among member states for the realization of ECO's objectives of economic growth and sustainable development.

**Inauguration of the Meeting**

3. During the inaugural session, His Excellency Mr. Orazgeldi Amanmyradov, Minister for Interior of Turkmenistan, read out the message of His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov, the Honourable President of Turkmenistan. The message noted that the Second ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting had significance for joint efforts to combat terrorism in the region and beyond, for the struggle against drug trafficking and illegal migration and for prevention of other crimes that posed threats to all humanity. Greeting the participants of the meeting, the President added that Ashgabat had always fought against drug trafficking, illegal weapons and organized crimes. His country welcomed and supported all efforts against these crimes. The President observed that such gatherings helped promote sharing of experiences and finding joint solutions to complex issues of regional security. A copy of the President's Message is placed as *Annex-II*.

4. The ECO Secretary General, Mr. Khurshid Anwar also made a statement during the inaugural session. He welcomed the delegates and thanked the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting the meeting and the other member states for their interest and participation. He thanked, in particular, the Honourable President of Turkmenistan for his very kind message to the delegates. The Secretary General said that the sentiments conveyed by the President would guide us in pursuing the aims and objectives of the Interior Ministers' meeting. He noted that ECO's campaign against drugs, terrorism,

human trafficking, money laundering and illicit arms was part of a higher, nobler struggle aimed at the peace and wellbeing of our people, the stability of our region, the progress of our societies and the prosperity of our countries. He emphasized the need to meet all challenges jointly and through coordinated action. A copy of the statement is placed as *Annex-III*.

#### **Agenda Item No. 1**

##### *Election of the Chairman and his statement*

5. In accordance with ECO's Rules of Procedure, H.E. Mr. Orazgeldi Amanmyradov, the Interior Minister of Turkmenistan, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Meeting. In his remarks, Mr. Amanmyradov thanked the participants for reposing confidence in him and expressed the hope that their deliberations would produce a useful and beneficial outcome for the member states. He stated that this meeting was an important milestone for evolving joint strategy against transnational organized crimes such as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering. He reiterated Turkmenistan's readiness to cooperate with all the Member States in a constructive manner. He noted that ECO played a very important role in the development of regional cooperation among our countries and was a reliable and effective forum for promoting stability and development of trade, economy, energy, industrial, transport, scientific, technical, agricultural relations and to fight transnational crimes. A copy of the statement is placed as *Annex-IV*.

#### **Agenda Item No. 2**

##### *Adoption of the Agenda*

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

##### A) **Inauguration of the Meeting:**

- a. Statement by His Excellency Mr. Orazgeldi Amanmyradov, the Interior Minister of Turkmenistan
- b. Statement by Mr. Khurshid Anwar, the ECO Secretary General

##### B) **Working Session:**

- 1) Election of the Chairman and his statement
- 2) Adoption of the Agenda.
- 3) Statements by the Ministers/Heads of delegations
- 4) The report of the 1<sup>st</sup> High Level Experts Group Meeting on Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crimes (Ankara, 29-30 April, 2008)
- 5) The report of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug Control (Tehran, 14-16<sup>th</sup> April 2008).
- 6) The report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Workshop titled Irregular Migration, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in the ECO Region", (Kish, 9-11 March, 2008)

- 7) The report of the First EGM on Corruption and Money Laundering, (Ankara, 13-14 May, 2008)
- 8) Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime(TOC) and their impact on security and stability of the region:
  - i) Terrorism
  - ii) Human Trafficking
  - iii) Illegal Migration
  - iv) Money laundering
  - v) Weapons and Ammunition Smuggling
- 9) Mechanism for cooperation against Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime:
  - i) The Draft Joint Regional Strategy to combat Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes
  - ii) Exchange of information:
    - a. Establishment of a Data- bank on Terrorism and TOC
    - b. Nomination of focal points by the Member States on Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes
    - c. Nomination of an ECO National Coordinator in the Ministry of Interior/Narcotics for exchange of information between the ECO Secretariat and the Member States.
  - iii) Border police cooperation and Iran' offer to host:
    - a. The first Meeting of the officials of the appropriate level/institutions responsible for border control of ECO Member States in August 2008
    - b. A Regional workshop on the use of border control equipments in 2008
- 10) Cooperation for management/relief in natural disasters as well as the under-mentioned workshops to be hosted by I.R. of Iran:
  - i) Strengthening cooperation among the ECO Member States
  - ii) The Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal to host the Third International Conference on management of natural disasters in the ECO region, October, 2008.
  - iii) ECO- ISDR Workshop on Global Risk Assessment, 2008, Tehran.
  - iv) Seismic Risk Reduction, 20-22 July, 2008, Tehran.
  - v) Disaster Risk Management, 16-18 November, 2008, Tehran.
- 11) Adoption of the Ashgabat Declaration
- 12) Any other business
- 13) Date and venue of the next Meeting
- 14) Adoption of the Report of the Meeting
- 15) Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting

### **Agenda Item No. 3**

#### Statements by the Ministers/Heads of delegations

7. The Ministers/Heads of delegations delivered their statements, encompassing different issues relating to terrorism and transnational organized crimes, and expressing their commitment to cooperation in combating these crimes which posed serious challenges to the ECO countries and the regions beyond. The representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) also made their statements. Copies of the statements are placed as *Annex-V*.

### **Agenda Item No. 4**

#### The report of the 1<sup>st</sup> High Level Experts Group Meeting on Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crimes (Ankara, 29-30 April, 2008)

8. The meeting was briefed on the First ECO High Level Experts Group Meeting (HLEG) on Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime held on 29-30 April, 2008, in Ankara. The work done by the HLEG was appreciated by the Interior Ministers and its report approved.

### **Agenda Item No. 5**

#### The report of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug Control (Tehran, 14-16<sup>th</sup> April 2008).

9. The meeting was given briefing on the First Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug Control Matters held on 14-16 April, 2008, in Tehran. The Interior Ministers approved the report of the EGM as well as the following:-

- a) The Revised ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control Matters (*Annex. VI*).
- b) Preparation of a proposal by the Secretariat regarding enhancement of the capacity of the DCCU in view of its increased role.
- c) A legal document for regional cooperation on drug control to be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Member States. It would be submitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) on Drug Control.
- d) Changed the name of the Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) into Drug and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (DOCCU)
- e) Establishment of a training centre on drug demand reduction in Iran.

### **Agenda Item No. 6**

#### The report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Workshop titled Irregular Migration, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in the ECO Region", (Kish, 9-11 March, 2008)

10. The meeting took note of briefing on the First ECO Regional Workshop on Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking organized by the ECO Secretariat on 9-11

March, 2008, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), at the Iranian resort of Kish Island. The meeting approved the recommendations of the workshop (*Annex-VIII*) and recommended that the Secretariat sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the IOM. It would provide for experiences of IOM to be shared with member states to address the challenges of irregular migration, human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

**Agenda Item No. 7**

*The report of the First EGM on Corruption and Money Laundering, (Ankara, 13-14 May, 2008)*

11. The report of the First Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Corruption and Money Laundering (Ankara, 13-14 May, 2008) was presented to the Ministerial meeting. The report was approved. The meeting agreed that money laundering was a very important issue inter-related with other transnational organized crimes, drugs and terrorism. The meeting recommended that member states should further consider the draft plan of action and send their comments to the Secretariat so that the next EGM could finalize the deliberations and forward them to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Interior Ministers' meeting for approval. The meeting welcomed the offer of Pakistan to prepare a draft framework agreement by 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2008.

**Agenda Item No. 8**

*Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crimes (TOC) and their impact on security and stability of the region:*

i) Terrorism

12. Member States explained their respective national laws which were in vogue for tackling terrorism in their respective countries. The meeting agreed that terrorism had been a serious challenge to peace and international security all over the world in recent years. It posed a threat to economic development, national and regional stability. Complexity of this challenge required a collective and comprehensive approach to fight it jointly.

13. The meeting took note that an Expert Group comprising professionals and experienced officials dealing with terrorism should be constituted to evolve a Plan of Action to implement the policies approved by Interior Ministers on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2006. The meeting also appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) in March 2009.

14. The meeting emphasized the need to make the following coordination in the fight against terrorism:

- i) Freeze the financial resources and activities of terrorist organizations;
- ii) Not allow them to carry out propaganda activities on behalf of terrorist organizations (including its media, publication, associations, unions, cultural organizations etc.).

- iii) Develop a common understanding of the acts of terrorism.
- iv) Develop a common attitude to determining terrorists, to their trial and extradition by the member states within their legal framework.
- v) Prevent terrorists from having bases in their respective countries and deny them the use of territories for terrorist purposes.
- vi) Reject terrorist applications for residence permit and refugee status.
- vii) Implement effectively treaties or decisions that were accepted or ratified by the Member States.

ii) Human Trafficking

15. The meeting was briefed on illegal migration and human trafficking as crimes closely related to each other. Human trafficking was of a real concern to all countries of the region. This issue brought more responsibility to all the countries of the region to find ways to tackle the problem.

16. Member States exchanged views on human trafficking as they faced it in their respective countries. It was noted that the Global Programme Against Trafficking in human beings would enable countries of origin, transit and destination to develop joint strategies. The participants emphasized the need for preparing a joint regional strategy on human trafficking, and for practical action. They must also establish a regional data Bank for exchange of experiences.

17. It was decided that the Secretariat should prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in collaboration with the IOM and a plan of cooperation against human trafficking and illegal migration, and circulate these to Member States for consideration.

iii) Illegal Migration

18. The meeting discussed the causes of illegal migration including economic background, destination countries, financial burdens, other aspects, and suggested that since Iran, Pakistan and Turkey had a rich experience regarding illegal migration, they might share their experiences in this field and encouraged other member states (who have not yet signed it) to sign the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementary to Palermo Convention 2000.

19. It was agreed that the member states should pursue common efforts in collaboration with International Organization for Migration (IOM) and unite the efforts to fight illegal migration as the same were negatively affecting the life and economic activities of the region.

iv) Money laundering

20. The Ministers noted that money laundering was a kind of transnational organized crime and urged Member States to create independent monitoring mechanism for establishing Financial Intelligence Unit to effectively combat corruption and money laundering. It was suggested that a regional body be created with participation of heads of national banks to expedite combating financial crimes. The meeting appreciated the offer of Iran to organize training courses for the relevant officials of member states.

21. The meeting took note of the fact that the Global Programme against Money Laundering (GPML) was the key instrument of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and emphasized member states to participate in the GPML. It was noted that through GPML, the UN helped member states to introduce legislation against money laundering and to develop and maintain mechanisms to combat this crime. This programme encouraged anti-money laundering policy development, monitored and analyzed problems and responses, raised public awareness about money laundering, and acted as a coordinator of joint anti-money laundering initiatives by the United Nations with other international organizations.

22. The meeting emphasized the need for enhancing cooperation against money laundering by sharing national legislation already enacted by some member countries, and by preparing a joint strategy. The meeting encouraged member states to sign a common agreement on cooperation against money laundering, compare relevant laws in the regional context and take recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to deal with the issue. It also urged Member States to create independent monitoring mechanism and discuss establishment of a financial intelligence unit.

v) Weapons and Ammunition Smuggling

23. The meeting was briefed that many countries of the region were facing the problem of weapons and ammunition smuggling and the incidents revealed that the same weapons had been used by terrorist groups. After deliberations, the meeting decided that, in order to curb violence in Member States, smuggling of weapons should be strictly discouraged by sharing of information through focal points dealing with trans-national organized crime. It also needed strict legislations so that border police could be more vigilant to tackle those involved in weapons and ammunition smuggling.

**Agenda Item No. 9**

*Mechanism for cooperation against Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime:*

i) The Draft Joint Regional Strategy to combat Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes

24. It was recalled that the 1<sup>st</sup> ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting (Tehran, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006) had decided to establish a High Level Experts Group to prepare a comprehensive cooperation plan to launch a coordinated and organized campaign against drugs, terrorism and other trans-national organized crimes. In line with that direction, the HLEG (Ankara, 29-30 April, 2008), prepared a Joint Regional Strategy to combat drugs,

terrorism and trans-national organized crime. The Ministerial meeting approved the Joint Regional Strategy to combat Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crimes. A copy of the Regional Strategy is placed as *Annex-VIII*. It was also decided that the Secretariat would prepare a follow-up report for implementation of the Joint Strategy and circulate it to Member States.

ii) Exchange of information:

25. The meeting decided that for effective and substantive cooperation, it was necessary that the member states should exchange useful information and, for that purpose, appoint focal points on Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime within three months of the Ashgabat meeting. It was noted that although focal points on drugs were already in place, there was need to work closely with the ECO-DCCU. It was decided that the focal points for Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime would be appointed within three months of the Second Interior Ministers' Meeting.

26. The meeting considered the possibility of nominating an ECO National Coordinator to facilitate the process of acquiring information from the relevant departments in the respective countries. The establishment of a Data-bank regarding Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes was also discussed and agreed to be established in the ECO Secretariat.

iii) Border police cooperation, and Iran's offer to host:

- a) The first Meeting of the officials of the appropriate level/institutions responsible for border control of ECO Member States in August 2008
- b) A Regional workshop on the use of border control equipments in 2008

27. The Member States emphasized that security problems, growth of drug production and psychotropic medicines, human smuggling and increasing illegal immigration in the region necessitated regular meetings of joint border commissions. It was, therefore, decided that the Member States should introduce focal points for exchange of information and communication to facilitate identifying criminals. Through the focal points, member states would develop cooperation to exchange border points used by smugglers of humans, arms and goods. It should also cover exchange of information and experiences regarding prevention of drug-related crimes and tightening border control. The meeting while appreciating the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting (i) meeting of officials of the appropriate level/institutions responsible for border control in August 2008 and (ii) a Regional workshop on the use of border control equipments in collaboration with the IOM before the end of 2008, encouraged member states to actively participate in both events.

28. It was agreed that Member States should make the maximum use of the existing institutions in the region for exchange of information regarding drugs, terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes, in particular with INTERPOL National Center Bureaus. Holding annual meetings among Heads of Interpol National Central Bureaus to enhance police cooperation among the ECO member states could be very useful. Initiatives such as bilateral/trilateral cooperation should be encouraged by Member States regarding border control, in particular between neighbouring States.



### **Agenda Item No. 10**

Cooperation for management/relief in natural disasters as well as the under-mentioned workshops to be hosted by I.R. of Iran:

- i) Strengthening cooperation among the ECO Member States
- ii) The Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal to host the Third International Conference on management of natural disasters in the ECO region, October, 2008.
- iii) ECO- ISDR Workshop on Global Risk Assessment, 2008, Tehran.
- iv) Seismic Risk Reduction, 20-22 July, 2008, Tehran.
- v) Disaster Risk Management, 16-18 November, 2008, Tehran.

29. The agenda item was discussed and the meeting decided that since in some of the Member States, the above issues were not dealt with by the Interior Ministries, it would be appropriate that these be raised at the relevant forums.

### **Agenda Item No. 11**

Adoption of the Ashgabat Declaration

30. The meeting unanimously adopted the Ashgabat Declaration as recommended by the Senior Officials' Meeting. The declaration illustrates the main issues and agreements reached during the meeting. The text of the Declaration is placed at **Annex-IX**. While adopting the Ashgabat Declaration, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan emphasized the priority to concentrate efforts on implementation of objectives as defined by the Treaty of Izmir, with particular reference to provisions of Article-2, and on consecutive legal provision for future prospects of cooperation development, based on present day challenges and threats.

### **Agenda Item No. 12**

Any other business

31. No issue was discussed under this agenda item.

### **Agenda Item No. 13**

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

32. The meeting welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the Third ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting. The Secretariat, in consultation with the concerned Turkish authorities, will decide the exact date and venue of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Interior Ministers' meeting and inform to the Member States.

### **Agenda Item No. 14**

Adoption of the Report of the Meeting

33. The meeting unanimously adopted its report.

**Agenda Item No. 15**

*Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting*

34. Towards the end of the meeting, a letter of appreciation (*Annex-X*) from the participants of the Second ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting was read out expressing thanks and appreciation for His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov, the Honourable President of Turkmenistan for the very kind message he had sent to the delegates during the inaugural session. The delegates wished the leadership and people of the independent and neutral Turkmenistan prosperity and progress as also a happy life.

35. The meeting concluded with a Vote of Thanks by the participating delegations, expressing deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended by Turkmenistan and the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. They also expressed their warm appreciation to the Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Orazgeldi Amanmyradov, the Interior Minister of Turkmenistan, for guiding the deliberations to a successful conclusion.

36. The meeting also expressed thanks and appreciation to the ECO Secretary General and other members of the ECO Secretariat for the preparation of the relevant documents and other valuable services to facilitate the work of the meeting.