

Annex-IX



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)

Ashgabat Declaration
adopted by
The Second Meeting of the ECO Interior Ministers
(Ashgabat, 27th May, 2008)

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The Interior Ministers/Heads of Delegations of the Member States of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), on the invitation of the Government of Turkmenistan and as part of efforts to realize the common goals as defined in the Treaty of Izmir (1996), the Declarations of the Eighth and Ninth ECO Summit Meetings held on 14th September 2004 in Dushanbe and 5th May 2006 in Baku, and the decisions of the First ECO Interior Ministers Meeting held on November 1, 2006 in Tehran, met in Ashgabat on 27th May, 2008.

Re-affirming the significance of the decisions of the ECO Summits for strengthening cooperation among the Member States in their struggle against drug cultivation, drug trafficking, terrorism and trans-national organized crime and renewing their commitment to promote such cooperation in accordance with the Tehran Declaration, the Interior Ministers of ECO Member States agreed as follows:

- 1) Acknowledging that security and stability are fundamental to economic progress and development, and considering that drug trafficking, terrorism and transnational organized crime are menaces that threaten the whole region, emphasized the strengthening of cooperation among Member States to preserve peace and security.
- 2) Appreciating the special geopolitical significance of the ECO region, and considering the political will of the member states to fight drugs, terrorism and transnational organized crime, emphasized the need to follow a Joint Strategy to counter terrorism and trans-national organized crimes and expand cooperation with relevant regional organizations and UN institutions.
- 3) Keeping in view the need for a comprehensive cooperation plan to launch a coordinated and organized struggle against drugs, terrorism and trans-national organized crimes, adopted a Joint Regional Strategy to Combat Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes, as prepared by the 1st Meeting of the High Level Experts Group (HLEG), held on 29-30 April, 2008 in Ankara.
- 4) Condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and firmly believing that a comprehensive approach was needed to effectively contain terrorism, renewed their determination to jointly fight this scourge, taking necessary measures to address the root-causes.
- 5) Called on the Member States to encourage exchange of information and experiences regarding techniques, facilities and effective ways of combating terrorism on their territories and to share best practices and experiences for combating terrorism with particular emphasis on the modus operandi of the terrorists.

- 6) Welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) in March 2009 to work out a Plan of Action to implement strategies dealing with terrorism and recommended that the Secretariat identify suitable training facilities for capacity building and enhancement of professionalism of law enforcement officials charged with combating terrorism.
- 7) Noted that narcotic drugs and basic chemical precursors posing a serious threat to the countries of the ECO region and beyond, necessitated effective and comprehensive international assistance, including fulfillment of all agreed commitments to fight the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs, as fundamental conditions for the containment of narcotic drugs and related crimes.
- 8) Appreciating the outcome of the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug Control Matters in Tehran on 14-16 April, 2008, in particular, the draft Plan of Action on Drug Control prepared by the EGM, recommended that the Secretariat in collaboration with all member states prepare a Legal Document for Regional Cooperation on Drug Control. The meeting also welcomed establishment of a training center on Drug Demand Reduction in Iran.
- 9) Referring to the threats emanating from poppy cultivation and trafficking of narcotic drugs using psychotropic substances and precursors, stressed the need for effective implementation of the Plan of Action, and, to that end, developing active cooperation with, and seeking technical assistance from, other countries.
- 10) Acknowledged the fact that ECO region has potential for the production, transit and consumption of illicit drugs, and requested the UN Agencies to extend increased financial and technical support to this region to better combat cultivation and trafficking of narcotics.
- 11) Given the significance of international conventions against transnational organized crime and supplementary protocols – the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children” supplementary to the “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Palermo 2000” and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air” supplementary to Palermo Convention 2000, urged Member States who had not yet signed/ratified these documents to do so on priority basis and enact, if not done so far, necessary legislation against illegal migration/human trafficking, money laundering and arms smuggling.
- 12) Acknowledging the effective role of law enforcement agencies/security forces in implementing and following up the policies and plans aimed at fighting trans-national organized crime, emphasized the need to upgrade the qualitative level of their activities through appropriate expansion of cooperation in various fields and areas of specialization, including, in particular, the management of borders.
- 13) Appreciated the First ECO Regional Workshop on Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking organized by the ECO Secretariat in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on 9-11 March, 2008, at the Kish Island- Iran, emphasized the need for early implementation of its recommendations.

The meeting also decided that the Secretariat, in collaboration with IOM, prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a plan of cooperation against human trafficking and illegal migration in the region. Experiences of Quadrilateral Working Group comprising Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Greece (with Afghanistan also lately added) shall be studied and disseminated by the IOM for sharing of best practices among the ECO Member States.

14) Expressing serious concern at the scale of financial and economic offenses, especially money laundering and corruption, and appreciating the timely holding of the First Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Corruption and Money Laundering in Ankara on 13-14 May, 2008 called for closer cooperation against these white collar crimes by sharing national legislation and evolving an independent monitoring mechanism including financial intelligence units.

15) Agreed that, in order to curb violence in Member States, smuggling of weapons and ammunition be discouraged by sharing information through focal points dealing with trans-national organized crime and requested Member States to exchange information on Cyber Crimes and about best practices regarding legislation.

16) Acknowledging that strengthening of cooperation and coordination among the member states required exchange of information and experiences, called on the ECO Secretariat to develop a data-bank and the member states to cooperate with the Secretariat for efficient operation of this system. It also called for considering the possibility of designating focal points by the Member States on three main areas of Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime. Each Member State would also consider the possibility of nominating an ECO National Coordinator for exchange of information between the ECO Secretariat and the Member States and vice versa.

17) Acknowledged the importance of establishing a Data-bank regarding Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes and asked the ECO Secretariat to work out necessary modalities.

18) Stressing further strengthening of neighbourly cooperation, requested the member states sharing common borders and coastal areas to initiate bilateral and multilateral arrangements to counter more effectively subversive and sabotage activities. The meeting appreciated, to that end, the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a meeting of the ECO officials/institutions responsible for Border Control in August 2008 and a Regional workshop on the use of border control equipments before the end of 2008 in collaboration with the IOM.

19) Agreed to encourage maximum use of the existing institutions in the region for exchange of information regarding drugs, terrorism and trans-national organized crime in particular with INTERPOL, National Central Bureaus, and emphasized the need for holding annual meetings among the Heads of Interpol National Central Bureaus to enhance police cooperation among the ECO member states.

20) Emphasizing the importance of establishing a High Level Experts Group (HLEG) to launch a coordinated and organized campaign against transnational crimes

and offenses, appreciated holding of the First ECO HLEG on Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime on 29-30 April, 2008, in Ankara, and decided that such HLEG meetings be convened regularly to implement and follow-up the decisions of the Interior Ministers.

21) Expressed sincere thanks to the Government of Turkmenistan for its warm welcome, generous hospitality, and excellent managements for the Meeting.