

April 30, 2008



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)

**Report
of the First High Level
Expert Group (HLEG) Meeting
On Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national
Organized Crimes
(Ankara-Turkey: 29-30 April, 2008)**

ECO Secretariat, Tehran.

Report
of the First High Level Expert Group (HLEG) Meeting
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(Ankara, Turkey: 29-30 April, 2008)

1. The First ECO High Level Experts Group Meeting (HLEG) on Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crime was held on 29-30 April, 2008, in Ankara. The delegations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan as well as officials of the ECO Secretariat participated in the meeting. Also present in the meeting was a delegation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) headed by the Regional Representative for West and Central Asia. The list of participants is placed at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

2. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Emin Arslan, Deputy Director General of the Turkish National Police. Mr. Arslan welcomed the delegates and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to evolve a broad based joint regional strategy for combating drugs, terrorism and trans-national organized crimes. He mentioned that peace and security in the ECO region could only be achieved in a stable and peaceful environment. The threats of terrorism and organized crime had endangered the social structure not only in the region but beyond our boundaries. These had to be addressed squarely.

3. Amb. Hassan Taherian, Deputy Secretary General of ECO, in his statement, thanked the Government of the Republic of Turkey, especially the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC), for making excellent arrangements for the meeting. He called the HLEG meeting a step forward to evolve joint strategies against trans-national organized crimes like terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, human smuggling, money laundering and a host of other challenges. He underlined the need for evolving a Joint Regional Strategy on Combating Drugs Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime. It could be submitted to the upcoming Second ECO Interior Ministers' meeting in Ashgabat. A copy of his statement is placed at **Annex-II**.

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

4. As per ECO Rules of Procedures, Mr. Celal Bodur, Deputy Head of Anti Smuggling and Organized Crimes of the Republic of Turkey, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The meeting adopted its agenda which is placed at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 4

Preparations of the Second Interior Ministers Meeting, 26-27th May, 2008, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

6. The Meeting was briefed that the Government of Turkmenistan had offered to host the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers Meeting on 27 May, 2008. It would be preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 26th May, 2008, at Ashgabat. The Secretariat requested early confirmation of participation by the Member States so that preparations for the meeting could be finalized. The participants appreciated the offer of Turkmenistan to host the meeting and assured that all steps would be taken to make the 2nd Ministerial meeting a great success. The participants were also given the draft agenda of the SOM and the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers Meeting prepared by the Secretariat for views and comments either during the HLEG meeting or after going back to their respective capitals.

Agenda Item No. 5

Considering the report of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug control (Tehran 14-16th April 2008)

7. The meeting was informed that the First Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Drug Control Matters was held on 14-16 April, 2008 at Tehran which revised the ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control Matters. The meeting appreciated the work done by the 1st Experts Group Meeting and recommended that the revised ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control Matters for submission to the Second Interior Ministers' Meeting.
8. While discussing the proposed Regional Center for Drug Control and Organized Crimes (RCDCOC), the meeting decided that the Member States first strengthen and empower the existing institutions like the Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) of the ECO Secretariat and then develop more regional centers or institutions. The meeting agreed that for the time being, the proposal of RCDCOC should be taken out of the formal agenda of the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers' meeting.
9. The meeting also appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the 1st ECO Experts Group Meeting on Drug Control Matters and establishment of a training center on drug demand reduction.

Agenda Item No. 6

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

10. Under this agenda item, the meeting deliberated on the following items individually:

Agenda Item No. 6 – A

Terrorism:

11. The meeting agreed that terrorism had been a serious global challenge to peace and security of the region posing a great threat to its economic development. The meeting emphasized the need to fight terrorism, taking into account a comprehensive approach in coordination with the UN. It was decided that the Member States would exchange information and experiences regarding techniques, facilities and effective ways of combating terrorism on their territories. The Member States would also share information on methods being used by terrorist groups. The Secretariat was requested to work out modalities for enhancing cooperation with the relevant international organizations like UNODC on these issues. The Meeting encouraged the Member States to:

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

Agenda Item No. 6 – B

Human trafficking

12. The meeting appreciated holding of the First ECO Regional Workshop on Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking on 9-11 March, 2008, at the Iranian resort of

Kish Island by the ECO Secretariat in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It was noted that Global Programme Against Trafficking in Human Being would enable countries of origin, transit and destination to develop joint strategies. The need for appropriate action in the light of the recommendations of the 1st ECO Regional Workshop was emphasized. 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 through a meeting and circulate to Member States for consideration.

Agenda Item No. 6 – C

Illegal migrants

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

Agenda Item No. 6 – D

Money laundering

14. The meeting noted that organized crime groups generated huge sums of money by drug trafficking, arms smuggling and financial crimes. The meeting emphasized the need for enhancing cooperation against money laundering by sharing domestic legislation already enacted by some member countries and for preparing a joint strategy. It was agreed that an independent monitoring mechanism be created along with financial intelligence units. The meeting also requested the Secretariat that the report of the First ECO Experts Group Meeting on Corruption and Money laundering scheduled for 13-14 May, 2008 in Ankara, be circulated to Member States for consideration during the forthcoming 2nd Interior Minister's Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 6 – E

Weapons and Ammunition Smuggling

15. The meeting deliberated on the issue and 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.

Agenda Item No. 7

Ways and mechanisms for cooperation among ECO member states against Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime:

16. After detailed deliberations on preparing a Joint Regional Strategy and mechanism among ECO member states against Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national

Organized Crimes, the meeting agreed on a Joint Strategy which would be placed before the 2nd ECO Interior Ministers, meeting. A copy is placed at **Annex. IV**.

Agenda Item No. 7 (a)

Exchange of information

17. The meeting decided that for effective and substantive cooperation in this field, it was necessary that the member states should exchange relevant information. For that purpose, the meeting urged Member States to send their national reports to the Secretariat on regular basis for circulation among them.

18. The meeting agreed to establish institutional focal points by the Member States on three main areas of Drugs, Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes. Each Member State would nominate an ECO National Coordinator for exchange of information between the ECO Secretariat and the Member States and vice versa.

Agenda Item No. 7 (b)

Establishing a Data- bank regarding Terrorism and & TOC

19. The meeting acknowledged the importance of establishing a Data-bank regarding Terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes for combating trans-national organized crimes from our region. The ECO Secretariat would work on modalities in this regard.

Agenda Item No. 7 (c)

Border police cooperation

20. The meeting was briefed that security problems, expansion of drug production and psychotropic substances, human smuggling, increasing illegal immigration in the region necessitated regular meetings at the appropriate level to discuss border cooperation. It was 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 should develop cooperation to exchange border points used by smugglers of humans, arms and goods. It should also cover exchange of information and experience regarding prevention of drug-related crimes and border control. The meeting appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a meeting of the ECO Chiefs of Border Police in August 2008 and a Regional workshop on the use of border control equipments in collaboration with the IOM before the end of 2008.

21. The meeting agreed to maximize using the existing institutions in the region for exchange of information regarding drugs, terrorism and Trans-national Organized Crimes, in particular INTERPOL National Center Bureaus. It also emphasized the need for holding annual meetings among Heads of Interpol National Central Bureaus to enhance police cooperation among the ECO member states. Depending on negotiations with the relevant authorities, the Turkish delegation expressed their willingness to host the First Meeting of the Heads of the Interpol National Central Bureaus. It was further

proposed that initiatives such as bilateral/trilateral cooperation should be encouraged among Member States regarding border control, in particular between neighbouring States.

Agenda Item No. 7 (d)

Police cooperation and considering the possibility of establishing a regional center (ECOPOL)

22. It was agreed that establishment of the ECOPOL, as a long-term policy, be considered in the relevant meetings, especially in the forthcoming meetings of the Chiefs of National Police of the Member States and the Heads of the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus of the Member States.

Agenda Item No. 8

Strengthening cooperation for the prevention/relief in natural disasters

23. The Secretariat briefed the meeting about its activities since holding of the 1st ECO Interior Ministers' meeting including establishment of the Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters in Mashhad, Iran as well as its forthcoming activities. The meeting encouraged the Member States to participate in the subsequent conferences in this regard.

Agenda Item No. 9

Date and venue of the Second HLEG Meeting.

24. The Secretariat, in consultation with the Member States, will convey the exact date and venue of the Second HLEG Meeting on Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crimes.

Agenda Item No. 10

Any other business

25. No issue was discussed under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 11

Adoption of the report for submission to the Second Interior Ministers' Meeting.

26. The meeting unanimously adopted its report for submission to the Second ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting scheduled for 26-27 May, 2008 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

Agenda Item No. 12

Vote of Thanks and conclusion of the meeting.

27. The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair. The meeting expressed profound appreciation for the warm hospitality extended by the Turkish International

Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crimes (TADOC) of the Republic of Turkey and the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. The meeting also expressed thanks and appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for the preparation of documentation and their services to facilitate the work of the Meeting.