**ANNEX-III**

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

**7thMeeting of Heads of National Statistical Offices of ECO Member States**

September 20, 2023, virtual format

 Dear colleagues,

 I am honoured to welcome you to the7th Meeting of Heads of National Statistical Offices of ECO Member States.

 I have taken the floor as the representatives of the Chairmanship of the Economic Cooperation Organization – the Republic of Azerbaijan.

As we all know well that at the 33rd meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) the distinguished representatives of the Member States expressed their desire to hold the high level experts group meetings and meetings of the heads of the national statistics offices separately and it was reflected at paragraphs 29 and 31, I-Sector of ECO Work Program 2023, which was adopted by the above mentioned 44rd RPC meeting.That is why we held the 9th High Level Experts Group Meeting on Statistics on May 16, 2023.

 Needless to say the importance of statistics in the social and economic life of individual countries, regions as well as at the global stage. As regards the area that is covered by the Economic Cooperation Organization, the ECO Member States by holding to summits of heads of state and government in 2021 alone demonstrated their renewed interests to deepen their regional economic interaction.

 In the light of afore narrated I would like to draw the kind attention of the participants’ of today’s gathering to the priorities of the Member States that they expressed at the said two summits, making emphasis in the following areas - transit and transport, energy, water, food security, diversification of economy, green economy, climate change as well as regional security issues.

 Dear colleagues,

 Availing myself of this opportunity, I wish all of us constructive and result-oriented discussions at today’s meeting.