34th Meeting of the

ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)

Working Paper on

Judicial & Parliamentary Coordination and ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (JPC & EAPA)

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Table of Contents

[Table of Contents i](#_Toc150157499)

[Executive Summary 1](#_Toc150157500)

[Priority Area No.1: 1](#_Toc150157501)

[1. Judicial and Law enforcement Coordination 1](#_Toc150157502)

[ECO Vision approach and target 1](#_Toc150157503)

[1.1 Establishment of the Effective Mechanism for Judicial Cooperation /Legal Assistance 2](#_Toc150157504)

[a) Background Information 2](#_Toc150157505)

[b) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC 2](#_Toc150157506)

[c) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations 3](#_Toc150157507)

[1.2 Establishment of ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO) 4](#_Toc150157508)

[a) Background Information 4](#_Toc150157509)

[b) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC 5](#_Toc150157510)

[c) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations 6](#_Toc150157511)

[d) Background Information of Establishment of ECOPOL 6](#_Toc150157512)

[e) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC 8](#_Toc150157513)

[f) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat`s Recommendations: 9](#_Toc150157514)

[1.3 Capacity Building Programs 9](#_Toc150157515)

[a) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33nd RPC 9](#_Toc150157516)

[b) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations 10](#_Toc150157517)

[c) Participation at Non-ECO Events: 11](#_Toc150157518)

[Priority Area No. 2: 12](#_Toc150157519)

[2. Enhancement of Parliamentary Cooperation in the ECO Region 12](#_Toc150157520)

[a) Background Information 12](#_Toc150157521)

[b) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC 15](#_Toc150157522)

[c) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations: 15](#_Toc150157523)

[Priority Area No. 3: 15](#_Toc150157524)

[3. ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA) 15](#_Toc150157525)

[a) ECO Vision approach and target 15](#_Toc150157526)

[b) ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan: 16](#_Toc150157527)

[c) Financial pledges by the ECO Member States: 16](#_Toc150157528)

[d) ECO- Afghanistan Committee: 18](#_Toc150157529)

[e) Establishment of a Special Unit: 18](#_Toc150157530)

[f) First Meeting of the Donors for the ECO Fund for Afghanistan (1st MDECOFA) 18](#_Toc150157531)

[g) Opening of a new bank account of ECO Fund for Afghanistan: 19](#_Toc150157532)

[h) Communications with NBP in Kabul: 19](#_Toc150157533)

[i) Opening of a new bank account in one of the Bank-e-Meli-e-Afghan: 21](#_Toc150157534)

[j) Latest Status of the account in Habib Bank London 21](#_Toc150157535)

[k) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC: 22](#_Toc150157536)

[Proposed Calendar of Events for 2024 23](#_Toc150157537)

# Executive Summary

1. In accordance with the ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control, the Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) was established in 1999 based on a two-phased Project with the UNODC at the ECO Secretariat in order to enhance drug control regional cooperation and coordination among the ECO Member States.
2. From January 2006, DCCU was fully integrated into the structure of ECO under new Directorate of Human Resource & Sustainable Development (HRSD). Thereafter, as per decisions of highest level meetings within the framework of ECO which assigned DCCU to work not only against drug-trafficking but also against all forms of trans-national organized crimes such as terrorism, human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering, weapons and ammunition smuggling, the 18th ECO Council of Ministers Meeting (Tehran, 9th March, 2009) renamed DCCU to DOCCU.
3. The 24th ECO Council of Ministers Meeting (November 8-9, 2019, Antalya, Republic of Türkiye) approved the new organizational chart of the ECO Secretariat.
4. Under the new setup, The “ECO Drugs and Organized Crime Coordination Unit (DOCCU)” and “Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Countries (PAECO)” are renamed as “Judicial and Parliamentary Cooperation (JPC)” in merger with “ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (EAPA)” to continue the concerned ongoing and fresh activities and resulted in the establishment of Section for “Judicial and Parliamentary Cooperation and Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (JPC & EAPA)”.
5. The JPC & EAPA section is entrusted to make coordination among the Member States’ collective efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability, parliamentary, judicial, technical trainings, awareness-raising, information/intelligence exchange and policy collaboration. Moreover, the EAPA is the main ECO agreed framework for assisting Afghanistan in its efforts for stability, prosperity, economic growth and sustainable development in the country.

# Priority Area No.1:

# 1. Judicial and Law enforcement Coordination

## ECO Vision approach and target

1. The regional law enforcement and police organizations/mechanisms to be in place to coordinate and support national and international efforts to combat illegal drugs and human trafficking and other trans- regional organized crimes.

## Establishment of the Effective Mechanism for Judicial Cooperation /Legal Assistance

### a) Background Information

The “First Meeting of Attorneys/ Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States” (April 30 - May 1, 2012, Tehran, Iran) took into account the inevitability of establishing a platform for judicial cooperation amongst the Member States to address the commonly faced issues of transnational organized crimes including human and drugs trafficking, money laundering, terrorism and cybercrimes etc.

During the “2nd Meeting of ECO Attorney/ Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States” (November 3-4, 2015, Antalya, Republic of Türkiye), the ECO Attorneys/ Prosecutors General decided to establish the desired network. The main objective for such cooperation was to streamline the arrangements for mutual legal assistance including facilitation in evidence collection, service of judicial documents, executing searches and seizures, freezing of the assets, examining sites and objects, providing information, identifying and tracing proceeds of the crime and property as well as facilitating voluntary appearances of persons in the requesting states.

The Meeting also decided that the expert group meeting(s) should be organized to work out on concrete measures to realize the intended establishment Judicial/Legal Cooperation Mechanism for ECO Member States.

During the 3rd Meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States (January 30-31, 2018, Islamabad, Pakistan), the host country offered to share the draft framework agreement for judicial cooperation/legal assistance mechanism.

The Expert Group Meeting will provide an opportunity to mull over the draft framework agreement for judicial cooperation/legal assistance mechanism amongst the Member States. The outcomes of the expert group meeting will be submitted to the next Meeting of the Attorneys/Prosecutors General for consideration and final decisions.

### b) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC

The 4th Meeting of the Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States was hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan on 14-16 September 2023 in Baku. The meeting was attended by the representatives of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as ECO delegation headed by Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Jandos Asanov. During the meeting, the Member States agreed to:

* emphasize the need for identifying suitable training facilities for capacity building and enhancement of professionalizing relevant experts/officials involved in combating drug, terrorism and transnational organized crimes,
* develop scientific and research ties among in-service training centers of Attorneys/Prosecutors General Offices,
* hold regular expert meetings and seminars on specific subjects with the aim to explore, in detail, the required elements of mutual judicial cooperation/legal assistance,
* task the Secretariat in collaboration with the Attorneys/Prosecutors General Office of the interested Member States to develop a mechanism for regional judicial cooperation to be considered/deliberated during the relevant Expert Group Meeting(s), keeping in view the draft papers submitted to the First Meeting of the Attorneys/Prosecutors General in Tehran in 2012,
* welcome the offer of the Republic of Tajikistan to host the Fifth Meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States,

Report of the meeting was circulated among the Member States via Note Verbale No. JPC/ProsGen4report/2023/1508 dated September 27, 2023.

### c) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations

The Council may instruct the Member States to update the Secretariat with their focal points.

The Council may task the ECO Secretariat to develop a draft framework agreement for judicial cooperation/legal assistance mechanism for the ECO Region in collaboration with Member States.

The Council may task the interested Member States to offer hosting the “First Experts Group Meeting to Establish Judicial/Legal Cooperation Mechanism for ECO Member States”.

The Council may ask the Republic of Tajikistan to convey to the Secretariat all necessary information as regards hosting of the 5th Meeting of Attorneys/Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States.

The Council may instruct the interested Member States to host the relevant Expert Group Meeting(s) to discuss and finalize the draft framework agreement for judicial cooperation/legal assistance mechanism for the ECO Region.

## Establishment of ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO)

### a) Background Information

To address the corruption issues, ECO Interior Ministers in their last three meetings expressed concerns over the scale of economic crimes, especially money laundering and corruption as well as the adverse impacts of such offenses on economic development and progress of the ECO Member States. They further stressed on the need for consolidation of regional cooperation to effectively cope with the situation.

The “First Meeting of Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and Ombudsmen of ECO Member States” (May 21-22, 2011, Tehran, Iran) decided to establish a Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO). The Meeting further decided to organize an Experts Group Meeting (EGM) in this regard.

The proposed EGM was hosted by the General Inspection Organization of Iran (January 30-31, 2012, Tehran, Iran) finalized the draft Statute of the RCCACO. Iran offered to host an ad-hoc Secretariat of the proposed Center in Tehran with the requisite financial expenditure.

The Second Meeting of the Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen of the ECO Member States was hosted by Republic of Tajikistan on November 21-22, 2012. Adoption of the draft Statute of the Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen was the major outcome of the meeting. The Statute of the Center was signed by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan. The Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic assured the 2nd Meeting about his country’s readiness to sign the Statute shortly. Later, in 2015 Pakistan conveyed its consent to join the Center. On July 10, 2016 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran informed the ECO Secretariat that the Statute of the Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen has ratified.

The Third Meeting of Heads of Anti-Corruption Organization Agencies and Ombudsmen of the ECO Member States (June 6-7, 2017 – Baku, Azerbaijan) was hosted by the Anti-Corruption Directorate of the Prosecutor General’s Office of Azerbaijan, during which Pakistan signed the Statute of the Center and deposited the instrument of ratification in November 2017 to the Secretariat.

During the 233rd CPR Meeting (September 11, 2018) Azerbaijan signed the statute of the Center. Azerbaijan deposited the instrument of ratification on August 14, 2019 to the ECO Secretariat. It’s to be noted that as per provisions of the Statute, the operationalization of the Center is required that four Member States deposit the instrument of ratification. Afghanistan deposited the instrument of ratification of the Center on August 16, 2020 to the ECO Secretariat. The ECO Member States Via Note Verbale No. LA/ Depository/RCCACO/2020, dated September 29, 2020 informed the Member States that the Statute of RCCACO entered into force by deposition of fourth instrument of ratification by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The 4th Meeting of the Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and Ombudsmen of the ECO Member States was hosted by the Republic of Uzbekistan on June 16 – 17, 2021. The event, organized in Tashkent, was attended by delegations of all Member States. The ECO delegation participated in the meeting virtually.

During the Meeting, the Member States agreed to: (i) expedite national procedures for signing/ratification of the Statute of the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO) and its early Operationalization as an effective and useful forum to achieve desired results against corruption as well as other forms of financial crimes; (ii) organize training events concerning fight against corruption on regular basis; (iii) create a smart regional structure for transparency in the fight against corruption; (iv) organize the first Meeting of the General Assembly of the States Parties to RCCACO.

Report of the meeting as well as Tashkent Declaration circulated amongst the ECO Member States via Note Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/ 4th AC Meeting/2021/714 dated July 6, 2021.

### b) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC

The 1st General Assembly Meeting of the State Parties to the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen was hosted by the National Accountability Bureau of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in virtual format on 21 September 2023.

The ECO Secretariat via Note Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/1st GA-RCCACO/2023/ 979 dated July 10, 2023, requested the Member States to ensure participation of the heads of Anti-corruption Organizations of their respective countries.

During the meeting, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the Member States that necessary documents regarding the operationalization of RCCACO will be prepared and conveyed to the Secretariat for circulation among the Member States by the first half of 2024.

Report of the Meeting was circulated among the ECO Member States via Note Verbale No. 1st GA-RCCCACO- Report/ 2023/1549 dated October 1st, 2023.

### c) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations

The Council may instruct the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey all necessary documents for operationalization of RCCACO not later than June 2024.

The Council may ask the interested Member States to host the 2nd General Assembly of the State Parties to the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen during the year 2024.

The Council may request the interested Member States for hosting of the relevant working group(s) to consider and finalize necessary documents for operationalization of RCCACO to be sent to the 5th Meeting of the Heads of Anti-corruption Organizations of the ECO Member States or the 2nd meeting of the General Assembly of the State Parties to RCCACO for adoption.

The Council may task the Republic of Tajikistan to consider ratifying the Statute of the Center.

The Council may ask the Member States who have not signed the Statute of the Center to consider signing it. The Kyrgyz Republic has already expressed its readiness to join the Center.

### d) Background Information of Establishment of ECOPOL

ECOPOL is envisaged to be a forum of ECO Regional Police entrusted with multifarious responsibilities such as exchange of information, investigation and analysis, awareness raising, developing of assistance programmes, etc. It is expected to assist the law enforcement authorities of the ECO Member States in their fight against serious forms of organized crime.

Peace, security and stability were acknowledged by the Treaty of Izmir and ECO Summits as the pre-requisites for sustainable development in the region to secure the ECO’s perceived aims and objectives.

Taking foregoing into view, the Member states considered necessary to expand their police cooperation during the three ECO Interior Ministers meetings in Tehran (2006), Ashgabat (2008) and Istanbul (2010) as well as in two High Level Experts Group Meetings on Combating Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime in Ankara (2008) and Tehran (2010).

The Third ECO Interior Ministers Meeting (2010, Istanbul) adopted the "ECO Joint Regional Strategy to Combat Drugs, Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime". The Strategy emphasizes on further expansion of the police cooperation within the ECO Region and explored the possibility of establishing "Economic Cooperation Organization Police (ECOPOL)" as the required institutional mechanism.

The First Experts Group Meeting for Finalizing Necessary Documents/Formalities for Establishment of ECOPOL (November 21-22, 2011, Tehran, Iran) discussed the draft Statute of the ECOPOL, which was prepared by the Interpol of Iran and the ECO Secretariat.

The draft Statute was submitted for consideration of the First Meeting of Chiefs of Police of the ECO Member States (November 23-24, 2011). The Meeting decided that the draft Statute would need to be further considered by the competent authorities of the Member States and holding another Experts Group Meeting (EGM) was required to finalize the Draft. The EGM scheduled to be held in September 2012 in Ankara. However, it was postponed due to lack of quorum.

In order to facilitate operationalization of ECOPOL the Chiefs of Police Meeting decided to establish an ad-hoc ECOPOL Fund. It was further agreed that the ad-hoc fund will be financed through voluntary grants by the Member States as well as from the ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF). So far, Iran has generously pledged an amount of US$ 100,000/ to this fund. On the part of the Secretariat, it is proposed to allocate an amount of US$ 50,000/ to this fund from the ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund.

A "Draft Convention for ECOPOL" prepared by Republic of Türkiye which was circulated by the Secretariat amongst Member States for their consideration in July 2012.

The 24th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council in February 2014 authorized the ECO Secretariat to host the 2nd Experts Group Meeting for Finalizing Necessary Documents/Formalities for establishment of ECOPOL. The ECO Secretariat proposed June 23-24, 2014, for the 2nd EGM which was postponed due to lack of quorum.

The 25thRPC (March 2015) reauthorized ECO Secretariat to host the 2nd EGM for Finalizing Necessary Documents/Formalities for establishment of ECOPOL.

The 2nd Experts Group Meeting for Finalizing Necessary Formalities/ Documents for Establishment of ECOPOL’ (July 28-29, 2015, ECO Secretariat, Tehran) was attended by experts from Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Republic of Türkiye as well as the officials of the ECO Secretariat. The experts were informed about the draft Statute negotiated during the first EGM and the “Draft Convention of the Economic Cooperation Organization Police Centre (ECOPOL)". The Meeting decided to work on the under consideration text of draft Statute which resulted to an agreed ad referendum.

The Meeting also discussed the proposed draft Terms of References of the ECOPOL Ad-hoc Fund and finalized it to be submitted for final approval of the Member States.

During the 27th RPC Meeting (5-8 December 2016) Republic of Türkiye expressed its readiness to host the 2nd ECO Chiefs of Police Meeting in Ankara. The Council also underlined that the adoption of the Statute of the ECOPOL should be on the Agenda of the Meeting.

During the 33rd ECO Regional Planning Council, the Islamic Republic of Iran has offered to host the 2nd Meeting of the Chiefs of Police of the ECO Member States.

### e) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC

ECO Secretariat via Notes Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/IRAN-2023/252 dated 20 February 2023 and No. JPC&EAPA/IRAN-2023/830 dated June 18, 2023, requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey to the Secretariat the preliminary information as regards organizing the 2nd Meeting of the Chiefs of Police of the ECO Member States.

On 17th of July 2023, a bilateral meeting was organized by the ECO Secretariat and the relevant authorities of police of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the early establishment of ECOPOL. In this regard, the police officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed to host the 2nd Meeting of Chiefs of Police of the ECO Member States in Tehran in 2024.

It should be recalled that the 2nd Meeting of ECO Chiefs of Police as well as 2nd Meeting of the Heads of Interpol of the ECO Member States has authorized to finalize the draft statute of ECOPOL.

### f) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat`s Recommendations:

The Council may instruct the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey necessary information as regards to hosting the 2nd Meeting of Chiefs of Police of the ECO Member States to approve the Draft Statute of ECOPOL and provide it to Ministers of Interior for adoption,

The Council may request the Member States to effectively participate at the above mentioned meeting for early finalization of the Draft Statute of ECOPOL.

## Capacity Building Programs

### a) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33nd RPC

i) 4th virtual training course on Drug Addiction, focusing on Treatment on Harm Reduction Associated with Addiction

The 4th virtual training course on Drug Addiction, focusing on Treatment on Harm Reduction Associated with Addiction which was scheduled for 16 October 2023 has been postponed due to lack of quorum and rescheduled for February 19, 2024.

ii) Training Program to foster cooperation on trends and opportunities in combating narcotic drugs and related crimes

The Training Program to foster cooperation on trends and opportunities in combating narcotic drugs and related crimes” was scheduled to be held from 13 to 17 November 2024 in Türkiye. The ECO Secretariat via Note Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/2023/2023/1711 dated October 24, 2024 informed the Member States that the required quorum for the event has been achieved. Later on, the host country informed the Secretariat that due to some administrative reasons the event will not take place. The ECO Secretariat informed the Member States, accordingly.

iii) Workshop on ECO Workshop on Controlled Delivery and Joint Investigation

The Islamic Republic of Iran offered to organize the ECO Workshop on Controlled Delivery and Joint Investigation on 4th quarter of 2023.

The ECO Secretariat via Notes Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/Iran-2023/252 dated February 20, 2023 as well as No. JPC&EAPA/Iran-2023/830 dated June 18, 2023, requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey the preliminary information regarding the event. The concrete response from Iran is still awaited.

iv) Training Course on fight against corruption

The Islamic Republic of Iran proposed to host a training course on fight against corruption. Accordingly, the ECO Secretariat through Notes Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/RPC-AC/2023/277 of February 26, 2023 as well as No. JPC&EAPA/VTC/2023/829 dated June 18, 2023, requested the host country to convey necessary information as regards the meeting. Moreover, the issue was followed-up through the relevant focal point. The concrete response from the host country is still awaited.

v) Training Course on Awareness of Drugs and Precursors

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan via self-explanatory Note Verbale No. No.ECO-7/19/2023-(B)/06/307 informed the Secretariat that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan will host the subject event in 4-8 March 2024 in physical mote. The host country will provide all the expenditures (except air fare) for one participant from each member states.

### b) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations

The Council may task the Secretariat to coordinate with Member States for organizing the following training programs:

* The Islamic Republic of Iran has offered to host some virtual training courses on fighting against corruption. The Islamic Republic of Iran is expected to convey the preliminary information about the events.
* During the 1st General Assembly meeting of the State Parties to the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan offered to host a virtual training session in the field of anti-corruption and anti-money laundering in November 2023.The host country is kindly requested to provide preliminary information about the event to be circulated among the ECO member States.

The Council may request the Member States to actively participate in the envisaged event. Relevant capacity building programs would be organized based on the interest and requirements of the Member States.

### c) Participation at Non-ECO Events:

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During the year 2023, ECO Secretariat participated at some non- ECO events as following:

i) The 7th edition of the INTERPOL Dialogue on an effective multilateral policing architecture against global threats

The 7th edition of the INTERPOL Dialogue on an effective multilateral policing architecture against global threats was co-hosted by INTERPOL and the Gulf Cooperation Council-POL (GGC-POL) with the support of the Ministry of Interior of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 25th to 26th October 2023, with the participation of the following entities: The Arab Interior Ministers’ Council (AIMC), the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), the Police Community of the Americas (AMERIPOL), ASEANAPOL (ASEAN countries structure for cooperation of police forces), the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), the Gulf Cooperation Council-POL (GGC-POL), the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO-RATS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The ECO Secretariat was represented by Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Jandos Asanov.

The heads of delegation to the event were received by His Highness [Sheikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheikh) Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

The heads of delegation also took part in an informal meeting hosted by His Highness Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of the United Arab Emirates, where Ministers of Justice and Interior of Bahrain, France, Netherlands and Singapore were also present.

While addressing the Dialogue, ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Jandos Asanov stated that the cooperation with INTERPOL had proven useful for the Economic Cooperation Organization in staying familiar with the global security agenda and practical steps in this field. He further maintained that ECO may need INTERPOL’s experience and expertise in the activities of the ECO Regional Centre for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen (RCCACO), the headquarters of which will be operational in the near future.

The 7th edition of the INTERPOL Dialogue deliberated on the Revised Global Policing Goals and their Implementation and adopted the Abu Dhabi Declaration.

ii) Ministerial Meeting on Counter narcotics

Within the framework of the Triangular Initiative”, Ministerial Meeting on Anti Narcotics was took place on 14th June 2023, in Tehran. The Minister of Counter Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, President of the Drug Control Headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chiefs of Anti-narcotics of both countries, UNODC`s representative in Iran as well as representatives of International organizations participated in this important meeting. The ECO Secretariat also participated in the meeting.

# Priority Area No. 2:

# Enhancement of Parliamentary Cooperation in the ECO Region

## a) Background Information

The proposal for establishment of an “ECO Parliamentary Association” was presented by Pakistan during the 3rd COM[[1]](#footnote-1). (Feb 1993 - Quetta, Pakistan). However, no progress could be made on the proposal until 2011.

Dr. Fehmida Mirza, former Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan during her meeting with Mr. Mohammad Yahya Maroofi, former ECO Secretary General in March, 2011 reiterated Pakistan’s earlier proposal, conveying that this could provide the parliamentarians of the Member States an appropriate forum to interact in their relevant areas of work for expanded multi-regionalism playing effective role in the desired areas of cooperation.

The Representative of Pakistan informed the 179th Meeting of CPR that Pakistan also announced its willingness to host the Meeting on ECO Parliamentary Forum in Islamabad to discuss the Concept Paper and the relevant draft Charter.

The said meeting, held in Islamabad on September 4-5, 2012, was attended by the Members of Parliaments/Experts of the respective Parliaments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Republic of Türkiye. The Secretariat was represented in the meeting by ECO Secretary General.

A draft Charter for establishment of the PAECO, prepared by the National Assembly Secretariat of Pakistan, was finalized by the participants of the meeting. It was decided that first General Conference of the proposed forum would be held in Islamabad whereby the relevant Charter to be finalized for approval of the COM.

The 180th CPR Meeting established a Working Group to decide and finalize the provision of entry into force of the Draft Charter of PAECO for its submission to 20th COM.

The Meeting of established Working Group was convened on September 23, 2012 that discussed and finalized the following mechanism to operationalize the PAECO’s Charter:

*“The Charter of the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO shall be approved by the ECO Council of Ministers’ (COM). The Charter shall enter into force immediately after four Member States sign and notify the ECO Secretariat that the required internal legal procedures have been fulfilled.*

*The Secretariat shall inform the Member States on the date of the entering into force of the Charter.”*

The 181st CPR Meeting endorsed the procedure as recommended by the Working Group for final approval by the 20th COM.

The 20th COM (October 15, 2012, Baku Azerbaijan) extended full support to the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO as an affiliated body. The COM also welcomed that the First General Conference of the proposed Parliamentary Assembly of ECO will be held at Islamabad in December, 2012. While the Conference could not be organized that year, it was held on February 11-12, 2013.

During the First Conference of the PAECO (February 11-12, 2013, Islamabad), the participating delegates expressed their views regarding the role of parliamentary oversight in promoting intra-regional trade and investments for sustainable socio-economic development in the ECO region. Earlier, the First Meeting of the Executive Council of PAECO and the Women Parliamentarians’ Meeting were also held within the framework of the Conference. The Member States that participated in the event - Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Republic of Türkiye - signed the charter of PAECO.

The 2nd Conference of the PAECO was scheduled to be held in Afghanistan. However, it could not be held due to various reasons. Later during the 29th RPC Meeting, Pakistan offered the hosting of the event in 2019.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan via Note Verbale No. ECO-7/8/2020 (D)/32 dated October 14, 2020, has expressed its readiness to host the 2nd Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Countries (PAECO) in 15-18 December, 2020. However, due to the increase of COVID-19 infections, the event was postponed.

The 2nd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) was hosted by the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from May 31 to June 2, 2021 in Islamabad. The event, inaugurated by Dr Arif Alvi, honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was attended by the Speakers/Heads/ representatives of the Parliaments of ECO Member States in hybrid format. The ECO Secretary General Dr Hadi Soleimanpour virtually participated in the Conference.

The inaugural session comprised a welcome address of the Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan Mr. Asad Qaiser and statements of Speakers and Heads of delegations of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Republic of Türkiye and Uzbekistan, as well as key note addresses by the honourable President and honourable Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan being Chief Guests of the Conference.

The Republic of Azerbaijan prior to the 2nd General Conference of PAECO ratified the Charter of PAECO. Thus the number of Member States that ratified the Charter of PAECO reached four countries – Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Pakistan – and the Charter entered into force.

The 3rd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO Member States (PAECO) was hosted by the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku on May 16-18, 2022. The Heads/Deputy Heads of Parliaments of the ECO Member States, including Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan, as well as the ECO Secretary General participated in the Conference.

## b) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC

The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its readiness to host the 4th General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO Member States (PAECO) in Tehran on 10-11 October 2023.

On the request of the honourable Secretary General of PAECO, the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to postpone the above mentioned event.

## c) Expected outcomes for 2024 and Secretariat Recommendations:

The Council may ask the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey to the Secretariat the preliminary information about organizing the 4th PAECO Conference. The host country may designate the focal point for the meeting.

The Council may instruct the Member States which have yet to sign the Charter of the PAECO to sign it.

The Council may ask the Member States to nominate/update their focal point for Parliamentary Cooperation.

# Priority Area No. 3:

# 3. ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA)

## a) ECO Vision approach and target

The ECO Vision 2025 acknowledges the strong interdependence between peace and development and reiterates the belief that peace and stability are essential for realizing the genuine goals of sustained economic growth, sustainable development and welfare of our countries and peoples. Under the Vision, it is recommitted to continue supporting the national, regional and global efforts to help achieve lasting peace and prosperity in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

## b) ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan:

At the 12th Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) on October 12, 2002 in Republic of Türkiye, the idea to establish an ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan emerged with a view to shouldering the government of Afghanistan in its reconstruction efforts. The idea was further supported by the Heads of the Member States in the 7th ECO Summit Meeting at Istanbul in 2002.

Foregoing in view, a Plan of Action (2003-2007) was approved by the 13th COM held on June 11, 2003 at Bishkek in order to devise a mechanism for rationalizing the ECO’s efforts towards the infrastructural revival in Afghanistan. The “Modality for the Establishment and Operationalization of ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan” were developed by financial experts of the Member States and approved by 14th COM in Dushanbe on September 12, 2004 followed by establishment of the perceived Fund in October 2004.

During the 9th ECO Summit and 16th COM Meeting on May 4-5, 2006 in Baku, the Member States expressed receptivity towards the implementation of the framed action plan, reiterating further support to Afghanistan. The ‘Plan of Action’ was extended by 17th RPC in Tehran on February 19-22, 2007 until the formation of a new line of action in preference with the developmental priorities of Afghanistan.

## c) Financial pledges by the ECO Member States:

Total pledges made by the Member States to the formerly established ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan stood at US$ 11.150 million, comprising US$ 5 million (Pakistan), US$ 5 million (Republic of Türkiye), US$ 1 million (Iran) and US$ 0.150 million (Azerbaijan).

Out of the total committed amount, contributions of US$ 3,550,000 were materialized including US$ 2 million by Pakistan, US$ 1 million by Iran, US$ 0.4 million by Türkiye and US$ 150,000 by Azerbaijan.

Project Implemented under ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan

Subsequent to the establishment of the ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan and receipt of contributions, the following four projects were approved by the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR):

i) Construction of Dehmazang Public Park and Maintenance of Kabul Zoo Project:

The project was completed by the Afghan Construction Company; total budget of the project was US$ 1.3 Million, about US$ 1.105 Million was transferred to the contractor and the Secretariat vide its Note Verbale 1027 Dated 27th June 2012 which has been sent to the Afghan Embassy in Tehran marked this project as completed. (Completed)

ii) Construction of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) Training and Research Centre (Block A) Project:

The project was completed by the Kotwal Construction Company; total budget of the project was US$ 0.6 Million. (Completed)

iii) Construction of a 50-Bed Maternity Hospital Project in Faryab Province:

The project was completed by the Kohsar Sharq Construction Company; about US$ 0.859 Million was paid to the contractor. (Completed)

iv) Construction of Naswan Zargaran 8-Classroom School Building Project in Bamian Province:

The project was awarded to the Style Construction Company but yet to be completed, budget of the project was US$ 0.15 Million and US$ 35,249 was transferred to the contractor. (25% completed, no progress report received).

ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (EAPA)

In line with newly adopted ECO Vision-2025 it was decided to adopt a new approach to projects being implemented in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA), was adopted at 23rd COM (April 16-17, 2018, Dushanbe). EAPA expanded the scope of ECO Fund for Reconstruction of Afghanistan and adjusted the title of Fund as ECO Fund for Afghanistan. The “Modalities for the Operation of the ECO Fund for Afghanistan” were prepared and approved by the COM through silence procedure on January 20, 2019.

## d) ECO- Afghanistan Committee:

In line with the Article-6 of the EAPA and Para-7 of the Modalities, the “ECO Afghanistan Committee” was required to be established to make necessary EAPA monitoring and review exercises. In this regard, the draft terms of reference of the Committee was prepared by the Secretariat and circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat’s Note Verbale No. ADM/AFG/2020/230 dated 13/4/2020.

The "ECO Afghanistan Committee" is responsible for monitoring and ensuring the proper implementation of the "ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA)." The committee is composed of all ECO Member States and may invite ECO partners and donor countries to attend its meetings. The committee is co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan and the Permanent Representative of the ECO Member State holding the chairmanship of the Council of Ministers. The committee convenes at least two regular meetings annually, and a quorum of a simple majority of Member States is required for the meetings. Decisions of the committee are made by consensus. The committee reviews and discusses project/programme proposals and makes necessary recommendations for their approval by CPR, including their funding from the Fund or any other resources. It also reviews the progress reports of the implementation of ongoing projects/programmes jointly prepared by Government of Afghanistan (Special Unit) and ECO Secretariat. The committee keeps liaison with relevant focal point to be appointed by the Government of Afghanistan to deal with matters related to ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA) through the relevant Section established at the Secretariat.

The 247th Meeting of the CPR (July 22, 2019) adopted the TOR of ECO Afghanistan Committee.

## e) Establishment of a Special Unit:

In line with the Section 4 of the EAPA and Para-8 of the relevant Modalities, internal arrangements in Afghanistan are required which includes, setting up a Special Unit in the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan to coordinate the ECO related activities with the focal points in relevant ministries, agreed ToR for selection of projects and proper procedure for prioritizing, shortlisting and proposing of all priority project proposals to the ECO Secretariat.

ECO Secretariat vide its Notes Verbale No. ADM/AFG/2019/875 dated September 18, 2019 has requested Afghanistan to provide information about the latest progress on establishment of the Special Unit.

During the 252nd of CPR Meeting (26 April 2021), the Permanent Representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, informed that the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan had already established the Special Unit, with participation of the focal points from different Ministries, which mainly focuses on preliminary measures, including (i) reviewing the related ECO documents, (ii) making the arrangements regarding the opening of new bank account in respect to the ECO Fund for Afghanistan and (iii) evaluating the new projects to be funded through ECO Fund for Afghanistan under revised modalities.

## f) First Meeting of the Donors for the ECO Fund for Afghanistan (1st MDECOFA)

The donors’ meeting is required to be organized in line with the Section 5 of the EAPA and Para-12 of the Modalities. In this context, a meeting of the ECO Member and Non-Member States, International / Regional Organizations, NGOs and philanthropists were expected to be convened in 2019/2020 to attract financial and technical assistance for ensuring the implementation on ECO-sponsored activities / programmes / projects in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan offered to host 1stMDECOFA at Kabul in 2019. However, the said meeting was not held due to lack of quorum.

The Secretariat vide its Note Verbale No. EAPA/2020/444 dated August 25, 2020 requested the Member States to host the event.

The 31st RPC Meeting requested the interested Member States to consider hosting 1st MDECOFA in 2021 that could not be held previously. The Meeting further encouraged the Member States to make adequate contributions to the ECO Fund for Afghanistan to support the efforts of the ECO and the Government of Afghanistan for reconstruction and sustainable development as well as economic growth in Afghanistan.

The Secretariat via Note Verbale No. JPC&EAPA/ 1st MDECOFA/2021/374 of April 6, 2021 requested the ECO Member States to convey their willingness for hosting of the meeting.

## g) Opening of a new bank account of ECO Fund for Afghanistan:

As per Section 5 of the EAPA the bank account of the “ECO Fund for Afghanistan” may either be transferred to the Habib Bank branch in Kabul or a new account may be opened at any other private or public bank in Afghanistan for smooth transaction of committed contributions.

Furthermore, Para-9 of the Modalities for the Operation of ECO Fund for Afghanistan states that, "the financial contributions to and payment obligations of the Fund will be done through an account of the ECO Secretariat at a bank as envisaged under Section 5 of the EAPA or any other bank deemed appropriate by the Secretariat through consultation with CPR".

In this context, the 237th CPR meeting held on March 11, 2019, authorized the opening of a bank account in respect of ECO Fund for Afghanistan at the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) in Kabul for transferring of the existing amount of the Fund from Habib Bank London.

## h) Communications with NBP in Kabul:

Following the CPR’s authorization, the Secretariat immediately started formal/informal communications with the NBP in Kabul to open the said bank account. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Tehran was also requested to facilitate the matter vide Note Verbale No. ACC/Pakistan-Habib Bank/2019/278 dated 7/4/2019.

The NBP through the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan requested the provision of required documents and other related information for opening of the requested account and relocation of the existing fund from HBL to NBP in Kabul vide Embassy’s Note Verbale No. ECO-7/25/2019/18 dated August 20, 2019.

A response containing explanation and documents was provided to the Embassy of Pakistan vide Secretariat’s Note Verbale No. ACC/ Pakistan-Habib Bank/2019/804 dated September 25, 2019.

The Secretariat further requested the government of Afghanistan for nomination of a person to open, on behalf of the ECO Secretariat, the required account in NBP at Kabul along with particulars of the nominee enabling the Secretariat to authorize him/her for opening of the intended bank account vide its Note Verbale No. ACC/Bank Account/2019/985 dated November 6, 2019.

The Government of Afghanistan, therefore, conveyed the nomination of Mr. Mohammad Ayoub Azizi, Director of United Nations System and Financial/Regional Organization of the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan (MoEc) for the required purpose vide Embassy’s Note Verbale No. 2532-5 dated December 11, 2019.

Subsequently, an authorization letter was signed by the Secretary General allowing Mr. Mohammad Ayoub Azizi to carry out the required procedures for the sole purpose of opening of account in respect of the ECO Fund for Afghanistan account at the NBP in Kabul. The letters were communicated with the Embassies of Afghanistan and Pakistan vide Secretariat’s Notes Verbale No. ACC/NBP-Kabul/2020/77 dated February 4, 2020 and No. ACC/NBP/2020 22 dated January 16, 2020, respectively.

Upon receipt of the authorization letter, communications started between the MoEc and the NBP in Kabul.

The MoEc was informed by the NBP branch in Kabul that the issue of opening of account of the ECO fund for Afghanistan had been referred to their main branch in Pakistan.

## i) Opening of a new bank account in one of the Bank-e-Meli-e-Afghan:

While the opening of said bank account was under process, the Embassy of Afghanistan in Tehran vide its Note Verbale No. 843-5 dated August 26, 2020 forwarded a copy of self-explanatory note verbale of the Embassy of Pakistan in Kabul (Note Verbale No. Pol.2/5/2020-KBL dated June 15, 2020) containing a request to the Government of Afghanistan to explore the possibilities for opening the said account in Bank-e Millie Afghan or any other bank as deemed appropriate.

The Secretariat conveyed the cited communications to the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran for views, vide Secretariat’s Note Verbale No. ACC/Bank Account/2020/452 dated August 31, 2020.

The Secretariat received Note Verbale No. 953-5 dated September 14, 2020 from the Embassy of Afghanistan in Tehran, conveying that concerned authorities of Afghanistan unanimously considered and selected Bank-e-Millie Afghan for opening of a new bank account in respect of ECO Fund for Afghanistan. The same was circulated amongst Member States for information.

The 246th (held on September 15, 2020) and 247th (held on November 25, 2020) Meetings of CPR discussed the issue and requested the Secretary General to consult with the Permanent Representatives of the concerned Member States for making the fund operative as early as possible.

The Government of Afghanistan, re- nominate Mr. Mohammad Ayoub Azizi, Director of United Nations System and Financial/Regional Organization of the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan (MoEc) for the required purpose vide Embassy’s Note Verbale No. 814-5 dated 29 June 2021.

## j) Latest Status of the account in Habib Bank London

The last bank statement, issued by HBL, London, transpired the closure of the bank account for ECO for Reconstruction of Afghanistan on December 29, 2020.

The information related to closure of account was also conveyed to the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran. The esteemed Embassy was further requested to expedite the response of their relevant authorities to speed up the process of opening of a new bank account at Bank-e-Millie Afghan as well as smooth transfer of the fund from HBL, London to the proposed bank in Kabul (Reference Notes Verbale No. 2020/590, No. 2021/30 and No. 2021/129 dated November 2, 2020, January 11, 2021, February 8, 2021 and April 8, 2021, respectively).

At the very outset, opening of a new bank is required before initiating of such transfer process of the balance fund available in the Habib Bank, London, to the new bank account in Kabul.

An amount of US$ 979,000.00 is left in the ECO account of the Fund for sponsoring future activities/projects/programmes in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan via Note Verbale No. 814-5 dated June 29, 2021 has introduced Mr. Mohammad Ayoub Azizi for opening of an ECO Account for in respect of ECO Fund for Afghanistan at the Bank-e-Millie Afghan in Kabul. Accordingly the ECO Secretariat via Not Verbale No. EAPA/2021/813 of August 3, 2021 informed the Member States in this regard.

## k) Recent Development, Latest Decisions and progress since 33rd RPC:

Unfortunately, due to current developments in Afghanistan, presence of the ECO projects in the country is experiencing certain difficulties.

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Annexe

### Proposed Calendar of Events for 2024

ECO Events

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Event/Activity | Venue | Date |
| 1 | 5th Meeting of Heads of Anti-Corruption Organizations and Ombudsmen of the ECO Member States | TBD | 2024 |
| 2 | The 2nd General Assembly of the State Parties to the ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen | TBD | 2024 |
| 3 | Expert Group Meeting to discuss and finalize the draft framework agreement for judicial cooperation/legal assistance for the ECO Region. | TBD | 2024 |
| 4 | 2nd Meeting of Chiefs of Police of ECO Member States | Tehran - | 2024 |
| 5 | 2nd Meeting of Heads of INTERPOL of ECO Member States | Tehran - | 2024 |
| 6 | 5th Meeting of Attorneys and Prosecutors General of the ECO Member States | Dushanbe | 2024 |
| 7 | 2nd Meeting of Chiefs of Anti-narcotics Police of the ECO Member States | Tehran | 2024 |
| 8 | Experts Group Meeting to Establish Judicial/ Legal Cooperation Mechanism for the ECO Member States | TBD | 2024 |
| 9 | 4th Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Countries (PAECO) | Tehran | 2024 |
| 10 | First Meeting of the Donors for the ECO Fund for Afghanistan (1ST MDECOFA) | TBD | 2024 |

Workshops/Training Courses

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Event/Activity | Venue | Date |
| 1 | ECO Workshop on Controlled Delivery and Joint Investigation | Tehran | 2024 |
| 3 | Training program to foster cooperation on trends and opportunities in combating narcotic drugs and related crimes | Ankara | 13-17 November 2023 |
| 4 | Training Course on fight against corruption | Pakistan-virtual | 2024 |
| 5 | Training Course on fight against corruption | Online-Tehran | 2024 |
| 6 | Training Course on awareness of Drugs and Precursors | Islamabad | 4-8 March 2024 |

Non-ECO Events[[2]](#footnote-2)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Event/Activity | Venue | Date |
| 1. | INTERPOL Dialogue on an effective multilateral policing architecture against global threats | TBD | 2024 |
| 2. | Intercessional/Intergovernmental Working group on Prevention of Corruption | TBD | 2024 |
| 3. | Expert meeting to enhance international cooperation under the United Nations Convention against Corruption | TBD | 2024 |
| 4. | Paris Pact Initiative’s Expert Working Group (EWG) meeting on Drugs/ Precursors | TBD | 2024 |
| 5. | Paris Pact Expert Working Group meeting on Illicit  Financial Flows | TBD | 2024 |
| 6. | Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) | TBD | 2024 |
| 7. | Relevant UNODC Meetings (Subject to invitation) | TBD | 2024 |
| 8. | Relevant INTERPOL Meetings (Subject to invitation) | TBD | 2024 |
| 9. | Relevant Parliamentary Meetings (Subject to invitation) | TBD | 2024 |
| 10. | Afghanistan related Meetings/conferences (Subject to invitation) | TBD | 2024 |

1. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 15) of the 3rd COM Meeting:

   22. While recognizing the importance of promoting greater contact between the parliamentarians of the ECO countries, the Council noted the proposal by His Excellency the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to establish an ECO Parliamentary Association. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . Subject to availability of financial resources [↑](#footnote-ref-2)