

Joint Statement

of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Environment of the ECO Member States

9 December 2023

On 9 December 2023, the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) released this **Joint Statement** following their Informal Ministerial Meeting on Environment, which was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates on the sidelines of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28).

The Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization

Call for a stronger regional cooperation and solidarity in environmental and climate action that are imperative to protect our common environment; **resolve** on defining common grounds and niches in the areas where the Member States strive to make progress and strengthen regional capacities to accomplish this goal; **re-emphasize** the need in enhancement of cooperation amongst the ECO Member States within major global entities and conventions on environment; and **advise** that a more networked, coordinated, inclusive, and effective ECO could be evolved for environmental action and SDG acceleration through concerted and collective endeavours.

Reiterate that the environment and impacts of climate change have been designated as a cross-sectoral priority of the Organization; **call for** further mainstreaming the environment and climate resilience in development planning, programming, and budgeting nationally and across the region; and **realize** the need to concentrate on regaining balance with nature and exploring ways to provide clean energy for all.

Welcome the outgoing ECO Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2023 under the vigorous theme of “Green Transition and Interconnectivity”.

Note with appreciation the development of the new “ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2023-2030)” and its two Annexes, namely “Work Program on Climate Change in ECO Region (2023-2030)” and “Work Program on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2023-2030)” as a long-term regional strategy, which streamlines key priorities and action areas in the ECO Region for environmental cooperation in view of the rapidly evolving global environmental and climate agenda; therefore **recommend** the subject Cooperation Framework for adoption by the decision-making bodies of ECO; also **recommend** to hold detailed consultation and coordination with a view to agree upon a common ground document for guiding the regional activities on such topical issues for ECO Region as desertification, land degradation, sand storm and dust haze.

Recognize the need to incorporate scientific findings into policymaking that will have long-term benefits for ECO Member States from the sustainability perspective, and to promote a more just and sustainable paradigm of development.

Emphasize the importance of the High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation, which was established in the course of the 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)

held on 24 January 2023 in Tashkent, as a promising advisory mechanism involving academia and contributing to environmental sustainability in the ECO Region; **underscore** that the subject Platform may find solutions to environmental challenges, explore ways to enhance cooperation on environment and determine the scope of regional collaboration in the ECO Region; **welcome** in this vein, the willingness of the Republic of Uzbekistan to organize the first meeting of this Platform within the framework of the Samarkand Climate Forum in 2024 and jointly develop the Samarkand Declaration with a view to enhance efforts to combat sand and dust storms.

Welcome the proposal of Uzbekistan to host the 6th Ministerial Meeting on Environment of the ECO Member States during the Samarkand Climate Forum in 2024.

Note with appreciation the existing country-led global initiatives with strong focus on environmental action by some of ECO Member States, notably International Decade for Action ‘Water for Sustainable Development’ by Tajikistan, ‘Sustainable Mountain Development’ by the Kyrgyz Republic and ‘Zero Waste’ Initiative by Her Excellency, Emine Erdoğan, the First Lady of Türkiye as the most recent one.

Recognize that a gradual transition to a regenerative economic model is critical for climate neutrality and needs multilevel governance to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, GHG emissions and resource use; thus **resolve** to jointly advocate for a just transition to a resource-efficient, circular and regenerative economy, and support coherent policies for circularity and more sustainable management of natural resources in the ECO Region; **welcome** the Regional Initiative on Resource Efficiency, Sustainability and Circular Economy in the ECO Region (RESCUE), initiated by the ECO Secretariat in partnership with the Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan in ECO, as a possible collaborative platform to launch and advance the future-oriented joint action in this respect; also **take note** that RESCUE may contribute to positioning the ECO Region as a proponent of just and sustainable transition in international arena to address climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

Appreciate the breakthrough decision on formal launching of the Loss and Damage Fund during the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai for countries affected by the adverse impacts of climate change; **express hope** that the subject Fund will address the developing countries’ needs and priorities, and therefore **call for** its earliest and effective operationalization; **commit** to enhance cooperation among ECO countries for mitigation and adaptation activities against climate risks.

Take note of the Resolution A/RES/76/300 adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2022, recognizing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right; and **recognize** that while not legally binding, UNGA resolutions can serve as catalysts for action.

Call upon the climate-related funds to further simplify the procedures for disbursement of resources so as to take into consideration the special conditions within developing country Parties like the ECO Member States.

Express readiness to work together towards promotion of investments and innovative technologies aimed at transformation to green development, notably acceleration of sustainable

energy transition, scaling up investments in environmental education and capacity building in ECO Region, raising the funds available where it matters the most; and unlocking higher ambitions.

Accentuate the significance of access to clean energy investments and technologies on preferential terms as an absolute necessity in the context of international commitments undertaken in UN climate change conferences; further **highlight** that energy transition and shift to low-carbon development model is directly related to the scale of sustainable energy investments and financing.

Express conviction that the energy transition process necessitates a broad dialogue between energy producers and consumers, and that subtle differentiated approach between developed and developing states is crucial to enable the countries with diverse national circumstances, socio-economic development and resources to deliver the climate and energy transition goals; further **reaffirm** that the developing countries must be ensured access to clean energy investments with a view to achieve net zero, and that all decisions on energy transition should be based on a holistic approach to issues of energy and environmental security.

Welcome the decision on the establishment of the Clean Energy Centre of ECO (CECECO) in Baku as a contributor to regional climate action and **invite** the ECO Member States, which have not done so, to sign and ratify its Charter.

Call for organizing sectoral events on the environment, including the Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Working Group Meeting on Environment on a regular basis.