

**34th Meeting of the**

**ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC)**

**Working Paper on ECO’s International Relations & ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions & Affiliated Bodies**

(Prepared by IR Section)

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# Executive Summary

1. Nearing fifth decade into existence, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) with its ten member states, landmass of eight million square kilometers and population over 450 million people, is one of the oldest and most recognized intergovernmental organizations in the region and beyond. ECO is a dynamic, vibrant and fast evolving organization. ~~Like~~ Similar to the United Nations, ECO System comprises ten member states, three Observers, three Specialized Agencies, and a host of Regional and Affiliated Bodies.
2. ECO enjoys close collaborative relations with numerous regional and international organizations to advance sustainable socio-economic development in the region. To that end, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds, and programs have been a crucial partner of ECO. The latter enjoys observer status in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and participates regularly in its ~~the~~ annual sessions in New York.
3. ECO relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Developing-8 Organization of Economic Cooperation (D-8), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), etc. are also on upward trajectory
4. ECO Secretariat seeks support from regional and international organizations including the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to further the cause of regional integration and development and ultimately sustainable socio-economic development in the region.
5. ECO aims at augmenting its visibility across the region and beyond. It intends to obtain observership in regional and international organizations on reciprocal basis. Recently, ECO obtained observer status in the ~~Organsiation~~ Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which was granted during the 10th OTS Summit, held in Astana, Kazakhstan on November 3, 2023.
6. ECO has also applied for observership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is highly encouraging that the application of ECO for observership in the SCO is under consideration of the SCO Member States. Similarly, ECO has formally conveyed its intention to acquire observer status in the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
7. ECO has a longstanding tradition of recognizing its invaluable human resources. ECO Awards are presented biennially to researchers, scholars, historian and academicians, and scientists of the region to appreciate their outstanding contribution in five fields of excellence: science & technology, agriculture & environment, history, culture, literature & fine arts, education, and economics. ECO Awards 2023 were presented on the sidelines of the 16 ECO Summit, held on November 9, 2023 in Tashkent.
8. Economic Cooperation Organization is a rapidly expanding organization, which aims at making multipurpose and multifaceted cooperation a reality in the region. In this regard, ECO establishes more and more new bodies and organs; the ECO Clean Energy Center and the ECO Research Center in Baku hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan are cases in point.

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# ECO’s External Relations

# UN System

1. ECO has observer status in the United Nations General Assembly and several agencies/entities/conventions of the UN namely the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). ECO also assumed the reciprocal Observer Status in the International Energy Charter. Moreover, the application of ECO for observership in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is under consideration by the latter.
2. ECO has been steadily growing its partnership relations with the United Nations specialized agencies, funds, and programmes, including the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Economic Commission on Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Office of High Representative for Least Developed Countries), the Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries (UN-OHRLLS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Children Fund and United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and others. The support of the UN Specialized Agencies and other partners is very vital or the realization of these ECO’s goals. A number of joint programmes/projects are being implemented with the support of our partners.
3. ECO regularly features in the United Nations General Assembly Annual Sessions as an observer. Interaction with UN specialised agencies and several other regional and international organizations on the sidelines of the UNGA sessions provide ample opportunities to excel ECO’s visibility. ECO Delegation to the 78th UNGA Session was led by the ECO Secretary General, Amb. Khusrav Noziri (September 18-23, 2023). The Secretary General had a bilateral meeting with Heads of several international organizations, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Cypriot State ~~H.E.~~ Mr. Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu and the Director of UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UN-OSSC) Ms. Dima Al-Khatib.
4. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and ECO have 29 years of collaboration on knowledge, capacity-building and supporting policy dialogue in Asia at sub-regional and regional level. The MoU between two organizations was signed in 1994 and renewed virtually on the sidelines of the 15th ECO Summit in Ashgabat in 2021. Moreover, the ECO-ESCAP-IDB joint project on operationalization of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) railway is operating smoothly. Besides, UNSCAP has agreed to provide technical support to develop feasibility study on the ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM). Apart from this, participation in each other’s activities is a common feature of ECO-UNSCAP relations.
5. ECO has partnership relations with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The Clean Energy Centre in Baku is a joint ECO-UNIDO project. The latter is also a partner and co-sponsor in ‘Feasibility Study on Setting and Implementing Energy Efficiency Targets in the ECO Region’. In 2022, the ECO Secretariat approached UNIDO for the implementation of the Fourth Phase of ECO-UNIDO Project. UNIDO has also suggested some seed money for this project.
6. ECO has ~~warm~~ close relations with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The ECO Secretariat attended the 65th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) held on March 14-18, 2022. The Secretariat also attended virtually the Paris Pact Initiative's Expert Working Group (EWG) meeting on Cross-border Cooperation on October 5-6, 2022. The ECO Secretariat was also invited to the Senior Official Meeting and the Ministerial Meeting, jointly organized by the International Relations Office of the Drug Control Headquarter and the Environment and Sustainable Development Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the UNODC Country Office in Pakistan and the UNODC Country Office in Iran on June 13-14, 2023 in Tehran.
7. ECO intends to renew Memorandum of Understanding with the World Customs Organization (WCO). In the light of the decision of the Eighth Meeting of the ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administration (CHCA), held on November 13-14, 2017, the MoU was reviewed and Secretariat was tasked to take up the revision in MoU with WCO after legal examination. The WCO and ECO exchanged views for a final draft MoU and the final draft is with the WCO for its consideration.
8. ECO has collaborative relations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The ECO Regional Program for Food Security (ECO-RPFS) was prepared with the technical assistance of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to ensure food security in the region and develop cooperation and implement programme and activities in an effective and efficient manner. The draft Program for upgrading the ECO Regional Programme for Food Security was updated and finalized with the technical assistance of the FAO and approved at the Seventh ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture on July 6, 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Another joint project with the FAO is support for the transformation of the ECO Regional Coordination Centre for Food security (ECO-RCCFS) from a programme-based organization into a self-sustainable institution, which has been funded by the Government of Türkiye under the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme (FTPP-II) on Food and Agriculture.
9. ECO has maintained strong linkages with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The MoU between ECO and UNCTAD was signed on November 4, 1999. ECO-UNCTAD Collaboration is taking place in Investment Policy Review of the ECO Member States. The ECO Secretariat initiated process of compiling the investment policies and approached UNCTAD; the latter has drafted and shared a project proposal which is under consideration for Investment Policies’ Review (IPRs). The project will be pursued once resources are allocated by UNCTAD and other development partners.
10. The Secretariat works closely with International Road Transport Union to establish ECO-TIR Associations Consultative Group (ECO-TIRACG). The ECO Secretariat jointly with the IsDB, UNECE and IRU implemented the project on promotion of e-TIR and e-CMR in the region. The Secretariat is working with the IRU to establish ECO-TIR Associations Consultative Group (ECO-TIRACG) to involve the private sector in the negotiations of the relevant meeting of the TTCC. ECO and the IRU are also working to further institutionalize bilateral relations and expand cooperation.

# Regional/International Organizations

1. ECO enjoys interactive relations with the Association of South East Asian Nations. The MoU between the ECO and ASEAN was signed on January 18, 2006. The 15th Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, convened on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly Session in New York on September 22, 2023, was held after a long hiatus of nine years. During the meeting, both Organizations finalized and adopted the Framework of Cooperation to implement the MoU.
2. The MoU between the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was signed in 2008. In order to implement the MoU, a draft Joint Plan of Action was prepared by the ECO Secretariat and is under consideration amongst SCO Member States. Apart from this, the ECO Secretariat has formally conveyed its intention to acquire observer status in the SCO Secretariat and the matter is under consideration amongst the SCO Member States. Besides, participation in each other’s events is a notable feature ECO-SCO relation.
3. ECO also enjoys good relations with the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building measures in Asia (CICA). The ECO Secretary General attended the Sixth Meeting of CICA Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Sixth CICA Summit held on October 11-12, 2021 and October 12-13, 2022, respectively, in Astana, Kazakhstan. CICA also participates in the high-level events organized under ECO framework; the Secretary General of CICA attended the 26th and the 27th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers, held in Tashkent and Shusha, respectively.
4. ECO has active partnership with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). The former approached the latter for financial assistance vis-à-vis Fourth Investment Conference in Islamabad. However, the Conference has been postponed and rescheduled for 2023. Currently, the ECO Secretariat is working with the UNECE and the IsDB for commencing ‘creation of a comprehensive GIS database and related maps, including the maps of ECO Region, for displaying regional and sub-regional transport networks and geo-mapping of infrastructure projects along these networks’. The IsDB allocated financial contribution to ECO for implementing the ECO Gate project. The latter is following up the necessary arrangements for the new joint ECO-UNECE-IsDB project on the “Application of Unified Railway Law in the Routes”. The ECO Secretariat jointly with the IsDB, UNECE and IRU implemented the project on promotion of e-TIR and e-CMR in the region and cooperating to further conducting joint projects for promoting digitalization of transit transport in the Region particularly through implementing e-CMR and e-TIR and any other digital technologies.
5. ECO intends to further its ties with the Developing-8 Organization of Economic Cooperation (D-8). The MoU between the two Organizations was signed 12 years ago. The Secretary General D-8 Economic Cooperation Organization also paid an official visit to the ECO Secretariat on June 17, 2022. At the invitation of the D-8 Technology Transfer and Exchange Network, Pardis Technology Park, the ECO delegation participated in the Fifth Mostafa Prize Award on October 2, 2023 in Isfahan, Iran. Moreover, the ECO Secretariat also participated in the Panel Discussion on “Technology Transfer and Role of Regional/International Organization, held in Pardis Technology Park on October 4, 2023.

1. ECO and the International Renewable Agency (IRENA) have been collaborating since 2014. Nine ECO Member States are also members of IRENA. In 2022, ECO invited IRENA to consider partnering in the ECO Clean Energy Centre and supporting it in its preparatory and operational phases as well as for conducting study on establishment of Clean Energy Corridor in the region that could target the identification of potential coherence, synergies and complementarities among the CECECO Project, ECO-REM and the possible establishment of ‘Clean Energy Corridor’ in the region. Both sides also expressed willingness to design and implement joint on-demand and tailor-made bankable projects that could contribute towards energy transformation and supporting member countries in renewable energy financing and risk mitigation efforts. IRENA invited ECO to support the process of implementation of the ‘Regional Action Plan unlocking Renewable Energy Potential in Central Asia.

# ECO Observers

1. Observership in ECO is open to regional and international organizations, states and institutions. Turkish Cypriot State (2012), Organization of Turkic States (2014), and International Energy Charter (2017) are three ECO Observers.
2. ECO enjoys reciprocal Observership in the International Energy Charter and the Organization of Turkic States. The ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM) has been identified as an area for possible area of cooperation and is expected to be implemented through joint consortium. The International Energy Charter participated in the Fourth ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting, held virtually on June 24, 2021. The Meeting approved the Charter on Establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre and the roadmap for realization of ECO Regional Electricity Market Project.
3. Turkish Cypriot State became observer of the Economic Cooperation Organization in 2012. On the sidelines 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the ECO Secretary General had a bilateral meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Turkish Cypriot State. The honorable President of Turkish Cypriot State also held a bilateral meeting with the ECO Secretary General on the margins of the 16th ECO Summit in Tashkent. Turkish Cypriot State regularly features in the high-level events organized under ECO framework.
4. The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) became Observer in the Economic Cooperation Organization in 2014. The ECO Secretariat formally expressed its intention for Observership to the OTS Chairman for 2023. Resultantly, Observership was granted during the recently-summoned 10th OTS Summit in Astana on November 3, 2023.

# MoUs/Agreements between ECO and other Regional and International Organizations

1. In order to develop meaningful cooperative relations with regional and international organizations, ECO has signed around 50 MoUs and agreements with the UN system as well as other organizations. The list of key MoUs/Agreement is given below:
2. MoU between ECO and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Istanbul, 7th July, 1993.
3. MoU between ECO and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Istanbul. 7th July, 1993.
4. MoU on Cooperation between ECO and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Tehran, 25th January, 1994.
5. Relationship Agreement between ECO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Tehran, 25th January, 1994.
6. MoU between ECO and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), New York, 30th September, 1994.
7. MoU between ECO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), New York, 4th October, 1994.
8. MoU between ECO and United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP), Islamabad, 15th March, 1995.
9. MoU between ECO and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Islamabad, 15th March, 1995.
10. MoU between ECO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 8th December, 1997.
11. MoU between International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Aleppo, Syria, 8th June, 1999.
12. MoU between ECO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 23rd November, 1999.
13. MoU between ECO and the International Union of Railways (UIC), Tehran, 31st January, 2001.
14. MoU between ECO Secretariat and the International Trade Center UNCTAD/WTO, 8th March, 2001.
15. MoU between ECO and the Organization for Cooperation of Railways (OSJD), Warsaw, 17th March, 2001.
16. MoU between ECO and the World Custom Organization (WCO), Brussels, 17th March, 2003.
17. MoU between ECO and the Colombo Plan (1 Version), 13th May, 2003 (Joint Communiqué of 24th November, 2009, signed in Tehran, is attached to this document).
18. MoU between ECO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 24th June, 2004.
19. MoU between ECO and UNEP, Tehran, 18th August, 2004.
20. MoU between ECO and WMO, Geneva, 10th December, 2004.
21. MoU between ECO Secretariat and the Secretariat of ASEAN, 18th January 2006.
22. MoU between ECO and the UN International Strategy for Disasters Relief (ISDR) Tehran, 9th May, 2007.
23. MoU between ECO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Ashgabat, 11th December, 2007.
24. MoU between ECO and International Road Transport Union, Istanbul, 15th May, 2008.
25. MoU between ECO and the Conference of Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Almaty, 25th August, 2008.
26. MoU between ECO and the Universal Postal Union (UPU), Bern & Tehran, 20th November, 2008
27. Technical Assistance Agreement (Grant) between ECO and the Islamic Development Bank, 7th January, 2009.
28. MoU between ECO and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva, 27th January, 2009.
29. MoU between ECO and the and The European Commission (EC) on Implementation of EC-financed project under the Instrument For Stability on “Fight Against Illicit Drug Trafficking from/to Afghanistan” with ECO Member States, Tehran, 3rd February, 2009.
30. MoU among ECO, ESCAP and the Islamic Development Bank on Transport Development Bangkok & Tehran, 9th March, 2009.
31. MoU between ECO and Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), Istanbul, 9th June, 2009.
32. MoU between ECO and the Permanent Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Commission (TRACECA)), Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan, 16th June, 2009.
33. MoU among Economic Cooperation Organization, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on Transport Development on 9 March 2009 (signed through an exchange of letters in March 2009, as per article XI (b) this MOU was renewed in 2012 and expired in March 2015 ).
34. Protocol between ECO and Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) on reconstruction, 5th August, 2010, at Tehran.
35. MoU between ECO and International Rail Transport Committee (CIT), 30 August, 2010.
36. MoU among Economic Cooperation Organization, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Concerning Transport Development in Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Region, 30 March 2011.
37. MoU between ECO and D8, 6 October 2011.
38. MoU between ECO and the Organization of Turkic States signed on 23 September 2014.
39. Agreement between ECO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (contribution of ECO to provide support to the “Seed Sector Development in Countries of the ECO” (Project)) Signed through an exchange of letters in May 2015).
40. MoU between ECO and UNOSS, signed: September 2017.
41. MoU between ECO and SESRIC signed on 16 January 2018 at the ECO Secretariat.
42. MoU between ECO and WIPO concluded between the Parties on 22 January 2018.
43. MoU between ECO and TEPAV signed in Ankara on 12 February 2018.
44. MoU between ECO and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 2021.

**New Proposals**

# Extending Observership in ECO

1. ECO Brainstorming Session at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers was held in 2022. It recommended enhancing visibility of ECO in the international landscape. One way of gaining visibility at national, regional and international level is to seek Observership in inter-governmental organizations on the basis of reciprocity, if possible. Observer status may be granted to regional and international organizations based on the following criteria:

a) Commitment to regional and international economic cooperation.

b) Commitment to promote socio-economic development in ECO region.

c) Commitment to respect Treaty of Izmir and other basic documents of ECO.

d) Harmony of principles.

e) Potential to contribute to the goals and objectives of ECO.

1. As mentioned above, ECO acquired observer status in the Organization of Turkic States. ECO is also in process to seek Observership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO also seems to be receptive to new applications, which could be manifested from its fast expanding membership Observership in the SCO would be a win-win situation for both Organizations The international Organization for Migration (IOM) has also been notified about the desire of ECO to seek Observership in the former.

# Reframing Modalities on ECO Awards

1. ECO has a strong and renowned tradition of recognizing its skilled and effective human resources, who contribute tremendously to the cause of the region. In this regard, ECO Awards are presented biennially to the academicians, scientists, and scholars from across the region. ECO Awards are presented in line with the modalities which were framed in 1998. Given the fact that new fields of excellence have come to fore, it is time Modalities for ECO Awards are reframed and made more relevant and clear to be apace with new trends. The Modalities must contain marking criteria to do justice with nominations, and be open to the individual nominations in addition to member countries.

**Reframing Modalities on ECO Observers**

1. In order to streamline participation of ECO Observers in important ECO meetings and events and enhance ECO visibility, the modalities on ECO Observers need to be modified and made simpler. Providing Observers with the right to automatic participation in ECO meetings and events and converting the status of "temporary observer" into "permanent observer" after a certain period (for example, 3 or 4 periods).

**Reframing Modalities on ECO ~~Observers~~ Specialized Agencies**

1. The 242nd Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (RPC) has approved the establishment of Ad-hoc Committee to look into the modalities and the efficacy/performance of the specialized agencies, regional institutions and affiliated bodies. So far the Committee has organized four meetings with active participation of the Member States. However, due to COVID-19, the process was halted temporarily halted.

# ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions & Affiliated Bodies

1. Article-X of the Treaty of Izmir envisages the establishment of the Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions in specific fields of cooperation. In order to deepen and expand the scope of cooperation amongst Member States, ECO has established a number of Regional Institutes, Affiliated bodies, and Specialized Agencies. These bodies work for social, economic and cultural cooperation. These units cooperate in areas such as science, education, culture, trade, banking, agriculture, environment, economic research, etc... Presently, the number of such bodies stands around 20. These bodies are located in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. While most of these bodies have already been established and are functional, some are in the process of being established.
2. The Specialized Agencies of ECO include the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) Tehran, the ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) Islamabad, and the ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI) Ankara. As per the Treaty of Izmir, Specialized Agencies are classified as the organs of ECO that have been established by the decision of the Member States and have legal personality and autonomy in management to promote close cooperation among themselves in social, cultural, technical and scientific fields in coordination with the ECO Secretariat.
3. Regional Institutes include the ECO Consultancy & Engineering Company (ECO-CEC) Lahore, the ECO Research Center (ERC) Baku, the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) with its rotating headquarters currently in Tehran, the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) Istanbul, and the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) Tehran. Regional Institutes, according to the Treaty of Izmir, are defined as the economic, commercial and financial organs of ECO having self-sustained budget, legal personality and autonomy in management and that have been established to promote economic growth of ECO region through provision of financial and commercial facilities and investment of funds within the region.

1. ECO Affiliated Bodies include the ECO College of Insurance Tehran, the Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO Countries (PAECO) Islamabad, the ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) Ankara, and the ECO Postal Staff College Islamabad.
2. As per the Modalities for the Establishment of Regional Centres and Specialized Units and Grant of Affiliation to Non-ECO Bodies and Organizations, the following definitions are presented:
	1. Regional Centres: Any Specialized Institution, Agency, Body of ECO, having its own Charter, Rules of Procedure and a well defined Sphere of Activity and Autonomy.
	2. Specialized Units: Unit established for a specific purpose to function within the Organizational Structure and under supervision of the Secretariat, for a specified period of time.
	3. Affiliated Bodies: Any Independent Public or Private Sector Organization, Institution, Agency or Body, having its own Governing document, Rules and Regulations, a well defined Sphere of Activity and Autonomy granted Affiliation by ECO.

# ECO Cultural Institute

1. The ECO Cultural Institute is one of the three Specialized Agencies of ECO. It was established during the third ECO Summit, held in Islamabad on March 14-15, 1995. It is headquartered in Tehran.
2. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Türkiye have signed and ratified the ECI Charter. The Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan have signed but not ratified the Charter. The Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan are not signatories of the Charter.
3. The aim behind establishment of the Institute was to bind peoples of the region together through cultural cooperation. Today, the ECI hosts literary and cultural functions, organize exhibitions of folk, traditional and modern arts, takes measures to promote regional cooperation through organizing major sports events, publishes materials in English and other major languages of the region on the common cultural heritage of its Member States to promote further understanding amongst its people, stimulates the interest of the people of the member countries towards the existing cultural, educational and social problems of the Region and disseminates information on the cultural events of the Region.
4. One of the major challenges faced by the ECO Cultural institute is that it is not patronized by all ECO Member States; it lacks comprehensive membership. The Institute will be more relevant, more diverse, and more functioning if patronized by all member states. The Cultural Institute also faces severe budgetary challenges. Resultantly, the Institute has limited a number of cultural activities.

**ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)**

1. The ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)is another Specialized Agency of ECO. The ECOSF Charter was signed in Islamabad in March 1995 by all ECO Member States. Additional protocol to the Charter was approved during the 17th Meeting of ECO Council of Ministers (COM), held in Herat in 2007. Subsequently the Foundation was established in Islamabad, Pakistan on December 20, 2011.
2. The Foundation plays an active role in engaging key stakeholders and partners to bring meaningful impact in the economic development through scientific and technological ventures among its Member States. It serves as a platform to promote Science and Technology Policy & Research as well as the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education through the implementation of Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) pedagogy with an end goal to strengthen the science base for future generations. The ECOSF undertakes a number of programmes and initiatives to augment STI activities with the help of partners to boost regional cooperation, socio-economic potential and cultural integration through science education and literacy in the region in line with ECO Vision 2025 and the SDGs.
3. The key objectives of the ECOSF are development of human resource capacity in science, Technology and Innovation as well as science education, strengthening institutional capacity in scientific research and technological development, Scientific, Technological and Research collaboration and cooperation, exchanging/ disseminating of Information on Scientific and Technological Research and Development through workshops, conferences and meetings etc.
4. The ECOSF Host Country Agreement has finally been signed between Government of Pakistan and ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) on December 15, 2021. The ratification of the ECOSF Charter and its Additional Protocol have so far been undertaken by fine Member States; Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The non-ratifying Member States have been requested to ratify the ECOSF Charter and its Additional Protocol.
5. So far, only two ratifying Member States (Pakistan and Iran) have been contributing the mandatory share of budget of the Foundation. Pakistan has been contributing consistently and paid budget contribution for the years 2012-2017; however from 2018 onward, Pakistan is contributing around 75% of its mandatory contribution because of undervalued currency exchange rate. The Islamic Republic of Iran has paid for the year 2012 and partial for the years 2013, 2017 and 2018 as support to ECOSF events in Iran. However, Islamic Republic of Iran has not made any contribution since 2019. Other three ratifying members: the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have not made any budgetary contribution so far.
6. The ECOSF has been compelled to scale down its core activities and appointed less than 50% staff. The Foundation finds it extremely challenging to manage its day-to-day affairs including the payment of staff salaries including President ECOSF.

# ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI)

1. The ECO Educational Institute is one of the three Specialized Agencies of the Economic Cooperation Organization. It was founded in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 1998. During the Eighth Meeting of ECO Council of Ministers (COM), held in Almaty on May 9, 1998, the Charter of ECO Educational Institute was opened for signing on May 9, 1998. It is headquartered in Ankara, Türkiye.
2. Till now, all ECO Member States, except Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, have signed the Charter of the ECOCI; however, Kazakhstan is yet to ratify the Charter.
3. The ECOEI acquired the legal status of a diplomatic mission in May 2022 when the procedures for the ratification of “The Host Country Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and Economic Cooperation Organization Educational Institute (ECOEI) relating to the Rights, Privileges, and Immunities of the ECOEI” were completed.The ECOEI is working together with Turkish authorities to make all necessary arrangements to use the rights and privileges granted by this agreement.
4. The aim behind establishment of the ECOEI was to broaden cooperation among ECO countries in the field of education and training along the principles, aims and spirit of the Treaty of Izmir. The ECOEI promotes educational cooperation and strengthens academic and training activities amongst the member states.

**Follow-ups of Recommendations of 33rd RPC Meeting**

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| **Recommendation** | **Action Taken** |
| a) **INTER-REGIONAL ECO ACTIVITIES**(i) **ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies** |
| **ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF)** |
| The Council requested the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Türkiye, and the Republic of Uzbekistan to expedite ratification process with regard to the ECOSF Charter. | The Foundation approached the Ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Kyrgyzstan to follow up on the matter of ratification. The President of the Science Foundation also paid a visit to Türkiye and Azerbaijan and held the meetings with relevant ministries to pursue the matter of ratification. |
| The Council took serious note of the financial Problems faced by the ECOSF due to non- payment of the annual contributions by Member States and encouraged urgent payment of mandatory annual budgetary contributions to the foundation along with arrears. The Council requested the ECO Secretariat to devise mechanisms to facilitate the transfer ofarrears. | The Science Foundation is of the view that the mechanism for transfer of the funds is already exists. |
| The Council took note of the 5th Meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of ECO Science Foundation on 14 February, 2023 in Esfahan, Iran. The Council also encouraged the MemberStates to participate actively in the meeting. | The Fifth Meeting ECOSF BoT was hosted and successfully held in Isfahan, Iran on 14 Feb 2023. |
| **ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI)** |
| The Council requested the non-signatory and non-ratifying ECO Member States to sign andratify the ECOEI Charter | President ECOEI invited Deputy Minister of Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan to become a full member during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 4th ECOEI BoT on 5 August 2023 in Istanbul. No changes to the membership as of 2 November 2023.  |
| The Council appreciated the Republic of Türkiye to accord legal status to the ECO Educational Institute by singing Host Country Agreement and requested the Republic of Türkiye and the ECO Educational Institute to expedite working on the use of the rights and privileges granted under the Host Country Agreement. | The process of searching for and allocating a separate building to the Institute is underway as per the commitments made by the Turkish Government. |
| The Council requested the Member States to pay annual budgetary contributions to the Institute in a regular and timely manner. | Islamic Republic of Iran deposited approximately two years of membership fees to the Institute’s bank account on 26 October 2023.  |
| The Council welcomed the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran on activating Olympiad Diplomacy through exchange programs among Member States to enhance their capacities on international Olympiad. The Islamic Republic of Iran can facilitate in coordination with the ECOEI based on its rich experience and hosting special workshops for the students of theMember States. | The Islamic Republic of Iran’s proposal concerning Olympiad Diplomacy has been integrated into the ECOEI Work Program 2023-2026, which has been adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ECO Educational Institute.  |
| The Council requested the Member States to consider extending their project proposals for inclusion in the future **“ECOEI Work Program”** to be discussed at the next ECOEI Board of Trustees Meeting. The relevant information may be sent to the ECOEI including the objective/s of the activities, time, venue and participants, cost-sharing if any, and other necessary information. | Republic of Azerbaijan and Republic of Türkiye have sent formal proposals to be included in the ECOEI Work Program 2023-2026. All of the proposals sent by Member States have been discussed, adopted and included into the ECOEI Work Program at the Fourth Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ECO Educational Institute. |
| **Regional and Affiliated Bodies** |
| **(ii) ECO’s External Relations** |
| The Council appreciated ECO Secretariat’s commitment to expand mutually beneficial relations with the United Nations System, International Organizations and non-ECO countries. | ECO Secretariat does it utmost to expand its sphere of relations with regional and international organization as well as non-ECO Member States. In 2023, the Japanese and Chinese delegations visited ECO Secretariat and were briefed on activities of ECO. Moreover, ECO delegation attended 78th Annual Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. On the sidelines of the Session, 15th Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting as well as th 25th Informal Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers were held. |
| The Council expressed deep satisfaction over the efforts of the ECO Secretariat to deepen its ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and supported the ECO initiative for obtaining Observer Status in the SCO on reciprocal basis. | ECO Secretariat has formally expressed its desire to obtain observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The matter is pending with the SCO Secretariat. |
| The Council took note of the under-process draft Joint Action Plan for Implementation of MoU between the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Shanghai CooperationOrganization. | ECO Secretariat made amendments to the draft shared by the SCO counterpart. The matter is pending with the SCO Secretariat. |
| The Council appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretariat to revive the forum of JointASEAN-ECO Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of UNGA Session in New York. | The 15th Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held on the sidelines of the 78th Annual Session of the UNGA in New York. |
| The Council took note of the under-process Draft Framework of Cooperation between theASEAN and the ECO. | Framework of Cooperation was adopted during the 15th Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, held on the sidelines of the 78th Annual Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.  |
| The Council noted with appreciation the under-consideration Joint ECO-ASEAN Ambassadorial Meeting (s) in Tehran and Jakarta, encouraging for early organization of the event to ensure ECO cooperation. | The Secretariat has repeatedly approached country coordinator for external relations of ASEAN Member States; however, no concrete response had been made by ASEAN.  |

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# Proposed Calendar of Events 2024

**ECO Events**

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| **No.** | **Event/Activity** | **Venue** | **Date** |
|  | 79th Session of the UN General Assembly | New York | September2024 |
|  | 16th Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting  | New York | September2024 |
|  | 2nd Brainstorming Meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers  | Tehran | May 2024 |
|  | ECO Training Workshop/seminars for foreign services officers (officers dealing with external relations) from ECO Member States | Islamabad | 2024 |
|  | Bilateral Visits to ECO Member States |  | 2024 |
|  | Meeting of ECO Ministers of Culture |  | 2024 |
|  | Meeting of ECO Heads of National Libraries |  | 2024 |
|  | Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Cultural Institute |  | 2024 |
|  | High-Level Events of ECO Observers |  |  |

**Non-ECO Events**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Event/Activity** | **Venue** | **Date** |
|  | UNOSSC Global South-South Development Expo | Tbd | 2024 |
|  | 80th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  | Tbd | 2024 |
|  | Third Antalya Diplomacy Forum  | Antalya | 2024 |
|  | CICA Foreign Ministerial Meeting |  | 2024 |
|  | Conferences/Meetings on International day of Neutrality  | Ashgabat | 2024 |
|  | High-level events of UN, EU, ECO Observers, CICA, SCO, D-8, OTS, BSEC, OIC, ACD, ESCAP, etc... |  | 2024 |