

28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)
3 December 2024, Mashhad, Iran

Mashhad Communiqué

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs/Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States, convening at the 28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) on December 3, 2024 in Mashhad-Iran under the Chairmanship of H.E. Dr. Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran;

Reiterating our commitment to the foundational principles of the Treaty of Izmir and the objectives outlined in ECO Vision 2025, alongside the collective aspirations of ECO Heads of State/Government, as articulated most recently during the 16th ECO Summit, to deepen comprehensive cooperation and drive sustainable progress and economic development across the region;

Commending the Islamic Republic of Iran for effectively pursuing the ECO Chairmanship in 2024 under the vigorous yearly theme “Enhanced and Resilient ECO Region through Expansion of Intra-Regional Trade”;

Reaffirming Shusha Declaration adopted at the 27th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) on October 10, 2023, in Shusha, Republic of Azerbaijan”;

Realizing the imminent conclusion of ECO Vision 2025 as an opportunity to craft a new course for regional cooperation; **Highlighting** the importance of adopting a forward-looking framework that addresses the evolving priorities and challenges of the region;

Welcoming the ECO Chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2025 under an important regional theme “*Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development*”;

Realizing the need to accelerate the pace of existing cooperation among Member States in all areas of common interests that includes exploring all possibilities to achieve the goals and objectives of the ECO and to promote the ECO as more effective regional organization, as enshrined in the Ashgabat Consensus for Action adopted during the 15th ECO Summit in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 28 November 2021;

Recognizing the pivotal role of trade and investment for accelerating economic growth and acknowledging its significance as a top priority for the ECO in achieving goals for sustainable development in the region, including through fostering a business and investment friendly environment in the region to address the emerging economic global challenges;

Acknowledging the need for a renewed focus on regional cooperation to diversify Member States' economies and boost intra-regional trade and increase contribution of the ECO in global trade;

Acknowledging the importance of fostering a meaningful and sustained conversation on finance and banking issues to deal with payment related challenges and risks faced by businesses and to secure funding for key economic projects in the ECO region;

Underscoring the need for inclusive, sustainable and environmentally friendly connectivity through the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA); **Focusing** on increasing the region's share in international transit transportation, expanding corridors to global markets and facilitating cross-border transit trade by digitalizing transport, customs and border processes; **Stressing** the importance of strengthening collaboration to decarbonize the transport industry;

Highlighting the urgency of cooperation in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Industry 4.0, Satellite Internet, and space technologies to address sophisticated challenges and ensure these technologies are accessible and beneficial to all of humanity;

Recognizing that enhancing energy security and sustainability through wider energy access and trade is a strategic objective of the ECO coupled with the ongoing endeavours of the Organization towards scaling up a just and sustainable energy transition to advance regional energy connectivity, integration and coordination of infrastructure, resources and markets to strengthen energy security and system resilience;

Highlighting that a healthy environment is an essential requirement and key enabler for sustainable development, and the need to further integrate and mainstream the environmental and climate related issues, including melting glaciers, into all aspects of development activities and cooperation in the region to transform ECO into a greener region in line with “ECO Vision 2025” and Tashkent Communiqué of the 16th ECO Summit, and UNFCCC COP29 Presidency Action Agenda’s global and regional initiatives aimed to align climate action with sustainable development;

Emphasizing that water is critical for sustainable development, eradication of poverty, hunger, and indispensable for human development, health and wellbeing of the people, and is a vital element in achieving the SDGs and other relevant goals in the social, environmental and economic fields in line with the main priorities of the ECO, in this regard; **Recalling** the importance of the International Decade “Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028;

Emphasizing the need to enhance capacity of the Member States, individually and collectively through regional cooperation, to address food insecurity and its underlying environmental causes; **Cognizant** of the crucial role that agriculture plays in advancing the economies of the ECO region towards food security and sustainable socio-economic development;

Recognizing the need for developing quality management infrastructure and harmonization of standards in the region, as complementary and compulsory pillars

of trade, in close cooperation and coordination with the ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (ECO-RISCAM);

Recognizing the tourism sector as a vital driver of economic growth, job creation and cultural exchange, and its potential to boost regional development through enhanced cooperation, infrastructure improvement and preservation of natural and cultural heritage;

Reaffirming our profound appreciation for the visionary establishment of the ECO Tourism Capitals tradition, showcasing the rich cultural and tourism heritage of selected cities;

Recognizing the need for strengthened regional cooperation on natural disasters and health issues which is essential for enhancing resilience and ensuring a more coordinated and effective response to cope with the current and emerging challenges;

Considering the need to strengthen bilateral and regional legal and judiciary cooperation mechanisms for enhancing the security, sustainability and economic growth of the Member States;

Recognizing that strong family institution and sustainable population growth are foundational to economic stability and prosperity;

Recognizing that effective parliamentary cooperation is essential for providing legislative support that can enhance economic collaboration among Member States;
Welcoming the upcoming Meeting of the ECO Parliamentary Assembly (PAECO) in Tehran;

Acknowledging the critical importance of supporting Afghanistan in its pursuit of peace, stability and socio-economic development including through implementation of currently suspended "ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan";

Commending the Secretariat for its ongoing and future efforts to strengthen the Organization's ties with the United Nations, ASEAN, SCO, ACD, D8, development banks and other key regional and international institutions, as well as ECO observers; i) Turkish Cypriot State, ii) Organization of Turkic States and iii) International Energy Charter, thus fostering deeper and more impactful partnerships;

Have agreed to:

1. **Reaffirm** our firm dedication, as the highest decision-making body within the ECO, to continue to support the ECO joint initiatives, efforts, programmes and projects.
2. **Emphasize** the need for continued comprehensive reforms to enhance effectiveness of the Organization and align its activities with our emerging national and regional

needs as well as global agenda, and in this regard; **Acknowledge** the significant role to be played by the ECO High Level Committee (HLC) established at the level of deputy foreign ministers of the Member States.

3. **Endorse** the decisions and measures taken by the ECO ministerial and other important high-level meetings during 2024 and earlier, aimed at pursuing our common goals and objectives for greater economic integration in the region.
4. **Express** our heartfelt appreciation to Member States for their individual and collective contributions to the goals and objectives of our Organization, including through generous hosting of and active participation in the ECO events in 2024.
5. **Underscore** the significance of the integrity, coherence and consolidation in the ECO, and accordingly; **Call upon** the Member States, who have not done so, to join/sign/ratify the ECO agreements, centers and agencies, arrangements, activities and projects.

ECO Vision 2025 and beyond

6. **Welcome** and endorse the outcomes of the Review Committee of the ECO Vision 2025, including priorities selected for implementation until its completion; **Support** the upcoming measures in 2025 under the chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan to develop a new ECO Vision for beyond 2025.
7. **Recall** the need to take into consideration the instructions and initiatives by the ECO Heads of State and Government in the process of developing the next ECO Vision, including the initiative of strategic goals of economic cooperation-2035, proposed by the honorable President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
8. **Formulate** a new Vision Document for beyond 2025, building upon the ECO Vision 2025, and aligning with the proposals made by the honorable ECO Heads of State and Government with a view to deepening economic and trade cooperation among member countries, and fostering development and implementation of result-oriented programmes and projects; **Request** the Organization to develop a roadmap to accomplish the objectives agreed upon by all member state.

Enhanced regional cooperation

9. **Recall** the ECO Vision 2025 envisioned Free Trade Area (FTA), and while welcoming the outcomes of the 9th ECOTA Cooperation Council Meeting and encouraging non-signatories to join ECOTA; **Thank** the ECOTA Contracting Parties for their constructive approach to review and amend the ECOTA through a technical negotiation/renegotiation process, to be mandated by the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade; **Appreciate** Türkiye for their offer to host the said ministerial meeting in first half of 2025.
10. **Re-emphasize** the need to strengthen the ECO Trade and Development Bank (TDB) by both expanding its membership to all ECO Member States; **Recommend** also

strengthening the Bank's role in project financing and in fund raising from international partners for prioritized ECO projects.

11. **Invite** Ministers of Finance to convene ministerial meetings as frequent as needed, including on the sidelines of the next IsDB Annual Meeting, with a view to taking possible steps in addressing the payment related challenges and risks faced by businesses and secure funding for key economic projects in the ECO Region.
12. **Reaffirm** our support to the ECO activities for greater trade facilitation and trade promotion; **Call for** conclusion of the ongoing negotiations for the ECO Trade Facilitation Strategy/Agreement and early operationalization of the ECO Reinsurance Company.
13. **Recall** the continued priority of intra-regional connectivity for the ECO and the increasing role of the ECO as transit region to connect neighboring regions and countries and; **Call upon** all stakeholders within the ECO to effectively and responsibly implement decisions of the ECO ministerial and other meetings (on different modes of road, rail, air, maritime) and actively participate in the upcoming activities and meetings, including in the context of the new ECO Multimodal Transport Committee.
14. **Call for** commercialization and expansion of the ECO corridors to the neighboring regions and markets as well as facilitation of border crossing and transit procedures within the ECO Region and accession of the Member States, who have not done so, to the relevant regional and international agreements and conventions with a view to boosting regional trade and connectivity, and in this regard; **Request** the Secretariat to explore joint arrangements with the relevant international organizations to improve and expand regional connectivity, as it is the case through UNECE/ECO Coordination Committee on Trans Caspian and Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul Corridors.
15. **Acknowledge** the challenges and opportunities associated with the rapid pace of new and emerging technologies for countries and peoples, including in the ECO Region and; **Task** the ECO Secretariat to strengthen its ICT-related capacities, including through creating a special ICT unit in the Secretariat within the current budget.
16. **Underscore** the significance of energy trade, efficiency and security for the ECO Region in parallel with the need to establish the ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM); **Welcome** collaboration with relevant regional and international partners/stakeholders to take initiatives, including through the UNESCAP's ongoing "Energy Connectivity for Sustainable Development in the ECO Region".
17. **Appreciate** soft launch of the ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO) within the framework of UNFCCC COP29 held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, while highlighting future important role of the CECECO in facilitating renewable energy efficiency projects in the ECO Region; **Call** on Member States for the support of early

operationalizing of the CECECO; **Call** the non-signatory Member States to sign and ratify the charter of the Center.

18. **Call on** the non-signatory/non ratifying Member States to sign/ratify founding documents of the regional centers/specialized agencies/affiliated bodies, including ECO Research Center and Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM), in order to take result-oriented steps for their full-fledged and effective functioning.
19. **Support** gradual transition to resource-efficient, low-emission and nature-positive regional cooperation within the ECO through partnerships and access to globally available funds and technologies; and **Welcome** the Regional Initiative on Resource Efficiency, Sustainability and Circular Economy in the ECO Region (RESCUE), jointly launched by the ECO Secretariat and the Republic of Azerbaijan at the UNFCCC COP29.
20. **Welcome** the initiatives such as ECO High-Level Sustainable Development Working Group (HLSDWG) and ECO Forum on Sustainable Development for further fostering collaboration and coherence among member countries to address the challenges of the regional dimensions for sustainable development.
21. **Highlight** the importance of introduction of energy efficient and resource saving technologies and, in this regard; **Take note** for consideration the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic to establish a regional center in Bishkek.
22. **Re-emphasize** the unexplored potential for enhanced tourism cooperation in the ECO Region which is one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the world , and Urge the Member States to upgrade regional tourism cooperation through enhanced tourism initiatives and strategies while welcoming adoption of ECO Tourism Capital annually (with Erzurum, Türkiye and Shusha, Republic of Azerbaijan, as ECO Tourism Capitals for the years 2025 and 2026 respectively), ECO Tour Operators Forum, Honorary ECO Tourism Ambassadors, ECO tourism visa facilitation.
23. **Urge** the Member States to engage constructively in the work of the ECO Advisory Committee on tourism to shape regional tourism strategies.
24. **Accentuate** the importance of strengthening cooperation among the member states to ensure regional food security; **Call for** member states to participate in the activities to be conducted within the framework of ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS); and **Commend** the efforts made by ECO Regional Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCCFS) for its continued endeavors.
25. **Reaffirm** the role of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the sustainable economic growth for poverty reduction in the region; and **Encourage** the relevant authorities/stakeholders (public/private partnership) of the member states to share their experiences with other member countries in this regard.

26. **Prioritize** efforts and support enhanced cooperation among key stakeholders of the ECO Region in fields of the protection and strengthening of family institution and maintaining strong population as an essential driver of long-term economic development.
27. **Acknowledge** the encouraging interests among Member States to cooperate against crimes, including through legal and judicial cooperation by offices of the ECO Attorneys/Prosecutors General, ECO Regional Center for Cooperation of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen, the envisaged ECOPOL, etc.; and **Value** the dedication of the parliaments in the ECO Region to support the Member States' governments, including through Parliamentary Assembly of the ECO (PAECO).
28. **Reaffirm** strong commitment to the timely resumption of activities under the currently suspended ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan; **Urge** the international community to take decisive actions in addressing the challenges facing Afghanistan, with a focus on promoting stability, sustainable development and ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need.

International and regional developments

29. **Appreciate** and support the efforts by ECO Member States through hosting, initiating and chairing multiple other fora outside the ECO Frameworks in 2024.
30. **Welcome** the convening of the Summit of the Future which adopted the UN Resolution 79/1 entitled "The Pact for the Future" and its annexes; and **Call upon** the UN system to effectively work with the regional organizations to maximize the development impacts of such global initiatives.
31. **Emphasize** the important role of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) successfully held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan on 11-22 November 2024, first time in the ECO region, for its valuable inputs in addressing environmental and climate related global challenges by advancing relevant initiatives and negotiations with involvement of all stakeholders.
32. **Welcome** and support Kazakhstan's intention to host Regional Climate Summit in 2026.
33. **Welcome** the International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation, to be held in Tajikistan in May 2025; **Encourage** the ECO Member States to contribute to the success of this important event.
34. **Note** the declaration by the UN of 2023-2027 as "Five Years of Action for Mountain Development" in order to guide international cooperation on mountain agenda and its further effective implementation; and also **Take note** for consideration of the "Declaration on Climate Action, Mountains and Glaciers"; **Welcome** and support Kyrgyzstan's intention to hold the Second Bishkek+25 Global Mountain Summit in 2027.

35. **Acknowledge** the trade, connectivity and development challenges of the land-locked developing countries, including the seven ECO Member States, and in this regard; **Appreciate** the ECO Secretariat and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLLS) for their recent approach to enhance relations.
36. **Commend** the initiative of the ECO Secretariat for formulating “The Mechanism and Principles of Collaboration between the ECO and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)”; **Request** the Secretariat to explore the possibility of cooperative mechanisms with other partners and interested financial institutions aimed at securing funds and other advocacies for the ECO regional projects and programmes.
37. **Express** deep concern over the escalation of situation in Gaza Strip and the repeated violation of ceasefire in Lebanon, and **Call for** an immediate and permanent ceasefire and unrestricted access to relief and essential humanitarian assistance, **Reaffirm** our support for the full membership of Palestine in the UN and a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue.
38. **Reject** unilateral coercive measures, sanctions and economic pressures as breach of purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms of international law as well as the Right to Development of the people, which hamper the stability and prosperity in our region and; **Express** support to the ECO Member States and observers affected by such measures.

We express our deep appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the Honourable Foreign Minister Dr. Seyed Abbas Araghchi, for outstanding leadership of the ECO in 2024, as well as the successful organization of the 28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) and excellent hospitality arrangements extended to delegations.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its next ECO Chairmanship; **Express** sincere wishes for the Organization’s continued success and growth under Kazakhstan’s leadership in 2025.

We express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for its proposal to host the 17th ECO Summit on 3-4 July 2025 in Azerbaijan.

We acknowledge the invaluable support provided by the distinguished ECO Secretary General Ambassador Asad M. Khan and his team at the Secretariat in Tehran, whose efforts were instrumental in ensuring the preparations and successful holding of the 28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in Mashhad.
