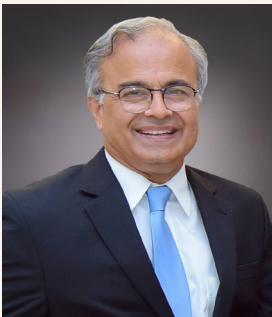




ECO Newsletter

Economic Cooperation Organization

October, 2024 - No. 2



Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share this second edition of the ECO Newsletter for the month of October. Last month, we embarked on this initiative to keep our Member States and partners informed about our activities and collaborative efforts. I hope this newsletter to be both informative and useful for all those interested in our work and activities across the region and beyond.

The month of October brought about significant progress for the ECO. We participated in various international forums, most notably the International Conference entitled “Interrelations of Times and Civilizations” in Ashgabat, celebrating the 300th birth anniversary of Magtymguly Fragi. I have had the privilege of briefly interacting with the ten Heads of State in attendance at the conference. In my remarks at the conference, I highlighted Fragi’s timeless message of unity, peace and resilience, which resonates strongly in today’s conflict-torn world. I also emphasized Fragi’s international legacy, and commended Turkmenistan’s significant role in fostering global peace and development and the country’s contributions to regional cooperation. I also engaged with Turkmen senior leadership, appreciating Turkmenistan’s active role in the organization and advocating for deeper collaboration, particularly in trade and transport.

During my visit to Uzbekistan as an international observer for the Parliamentary elections, I interacted with the country’s senior leadership and apprised them of ECO activities and plans. In my meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economy, I stressed the importance of greater engagement of central banks and finance ministries within the ECO to advance ECO’s trade and connectivity agenda.

I also participated in the International Conference Commemorating the International Day of Rural Women and the World Food Day in Tehran, where in my remarks I conveyed ECO’s commitment to the empowerment of women across the region in alignment with ECO Vision-2025 and Agenda 2030. This month, we also revisited the “ECO Tourism Capital” selection criteria to celebrate and promote the rich cultural heritage and tourism potential within our region.

As we move forward, the ECO remains focused on initiatives that aim to elevate our region to new heights of progress and prosperity. We are dedicated to building a resilient and thriving community, interconnected by shared goals and ambitions.

Secretary General
Economic Cooperation Organization

Secretary General Attends International Conference in Ashgabat



Ashgabat – October 11, 2024

Dr Asad M. Khan visited Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in connection with attending an International Forum titled: “Interconnection of Times and Civilizations – the Basis of Peace and Development” dedicated to celebrating the 300th Birth Anniversary of Magtymguly Fragi, renowned Turkmen poet and philosopher.

Chaired by Honourable President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Serdar Berdimuhamedov, the event featured heads of state from Armenia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, alongside key international figures. The conference highlighted Magtymguly’s cultural legacy and

his contributions to national statehood and universal values.

In his remarks at a session “The Peace Doctrine of Magtymguly Fragi and the Diplomacy of Neutral Turkmenistan, Dr. Khan praised Fragi’s timeless message of unity, peace and resilience, which he said resonates strongly in today’s conflict-torn world. He emphasized poet’s international legacy, and commended Turkmenistan’s significant role in fostering global peace and development. He also highlighted the country’s contributions to regional cooperation, notably in transport and energy, and congratulated Turkmenistan on the establishment of the smart city of Arkadag as a model of innovation and sustainability.

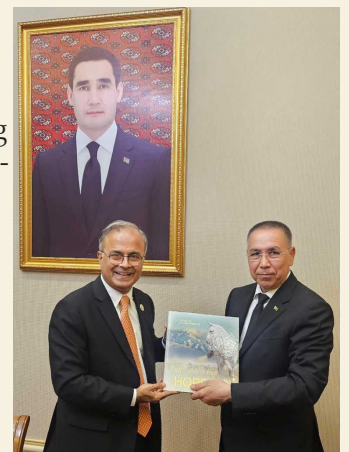
Meeting with Senior Turkmen Leadership

Ashgabat - October 11, 2024

On the sidelines of the International Conference in Ashgabat Dr. Asad M. Khan held discussions with senior Turkmen leaders, including H.E. Mr. Hojamyrat Geldimyradow, Deputy Chairman for Economy and Finance, and H.E. Baýmyrat Annamämmedow, Deputy Chairman for Construction, Industry, Energy, and Ashgabat City.

Dr. Khan emphasized the need to expedite the appointment of an Economic Advisor at the ECO Secretariat and proposed convening the Informal ECO Meeting of Ministers of Finance and Economy in 2025 in Washington D.C. Dr. Khan invited Turkmenistan to join the ECO Trade Agreement and the ECO Trade and Development Bank, highlighting the benefits of economic integration. He also acknowledged Turkmenistan's contribution to the ECO feasibility study on the Shared Border Trade Zone with Iran and encouraged participation in the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment and the ECO Reinsurance Company.

Mr. Geldimyradow expressed Turkmenistan's intent to explore these opportunities, committing to enhancing its role within the ECO and boosting trade and connectivity. Dr. Khan also commended Turkmenistan's active participation in ECO initiatives on energy and sustainable development, inviting it to sign the Charter of the ECO Clean Energy Center and participate in the RES-CUE initiative and Circular Economy Meeting. He encouraged Turkmenistan to ratify the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters and join the ECO Transit Transport Framework. Dr. Khan praised the preservation of Ashgabat's beauty, highlighting its role as a model of urban excellence.



Participation in Uzbekistan's Legislative Chamber Elections

Tashkent - October 27, 2024

Dr. Asad M. Khan, ECO Secretary General, participated as an international observer in the Uzbekistan Legislative Chamber elections, underscoring ECO's dedication to democratic values.

The elections, held under a new mixed electoral system, demonstrated Uzbekistan's commitment to transparency and fairness. Dr. Khan observed significant voter turnout, particularly among the youth, highlighting potential for increased civic engagement.



Secretary General Meets Uzbek Foreign Minister

Tashkent - October 27, 2024

Secretary General Asad M. Khan met the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan H.E. Bakhtiyor Saidov during his visit to Tashkent as an international observer of the Parliamentary Elections.

The meeting focused on the implementation of H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoev's proposals for the advancement of the Organization's initiatives, and the schedule of important upcoming ECO events. They agreed on ECO's potential as a catalyst of economic integration in the region, as well as on the need to develop practical instruments of efficient cooperation.



Engagements with Senior Uzbek Officials



Tashkent - October 27, 2024

During his visit, Dr. Khan held meetings with key Uzbek officials to discuss regional cooperation. He met with H.E. Mr. Baxtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to explore strategies for enhancing transport linkages and sustainable development. Dr. Khan also met with H.E. Mr. Jamshid Anvarovich Kuchkarov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance, emphasizing the importance of engaging central banks and finance ministries. Additionally, he had a comprehensive discussion with H.E. Mr. Laziz Shavkatovich Kudratov, Minister of Investments, Industry, and Trade, focusing on trade integration and innovation. These interactions reaffirm ECO's commitment to fostering collaboration and sustainable development across the region.



International Day of Rural Women

Tehran – October 15, 2024

ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan participated in the First International Conference and the 8th Ceremony Commemorating the International Day of Rural Women and the World Food Day in Tehran, hosted by Ministry of Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dr. Khan highlighted the pivotal role of rural women for promoting sustainable agriculture and development. Noting that ECO has a strong commitment to empowering rural women across member states in line with ECO Vision-2025 and Agenda 2030, he stressed the importance of collective approach, multilateralism and international cooperation in ensuring equitable access to food resources, sustainable agriculture and the need for a stronger role of rural women in these processes.



21st Meeting of the Project Monitoring Group

Tehran – October 21, 2024

The Project Monitoring Group convened its 21st meeting, to review ongoing projects and evaluate their efficiency. The meeting was attended by representatives from the embassies of ECO Member States in Tehran and key staff from the ECO Secretariat. The meeting underscored the importance of intensifying the exchange of views among relevant agencies of Member States and the ECO Secretariat's directing staff to enhance project effectiveness and collaboration.



During the meeting, ongoing projects were presented and discussed, with evaluations and critical feedback shared. ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan emphasized the need for a new, institutionally grounded approach to projects, highlighting the importance of aligning them with ground realities to ensure result-oriented outcomes. ECO Deputy Secretary General, Amb. J. Asanov, noted observable progress in some projects while identifying others that require further evaluation and discussion.

Secretary General Meets Ambassador of Russia

Tehran – October 14, 2024

Dr. Asad M. Khan met with the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Alexey Dedov. He informed the Ambassador about ECO's origin, evolution and its key activities. The meeting also discussed the important relevance of ECO as well as its specialized agencies and affiliated institutions in fostering economic cooperation across the region.



Secretary General Meets Philippine Ambassador

Tehran – October 30, 2024



Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Roberto G. Manalo, the Ambassador of the Philippines to Iran. Dr. Khan briefed the Ambassador on the Economic Cooperation Organization and the recent Joint ECO-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in New York during the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2024.

The discussions highlighted the importance of establishing a robust network between ECO and ASEAN embassies in Tehran and Jakarta to expedite the implementation of agreed elements under the Framework of Cooperation between ECO and ASEAN.

3rd ECO Think Tank Forum

Baku – October 4, 2024

The 3rd ECO Think Tank Forum convened in Baku, with the theme "Next Generation Economics: Challenges and Perspectives." The event was jointly organized by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Economic Scientific Research Institute, and the ECO Secretariat.

Economists and experts from ECO Member States, as well as several other countries, participated in the forum. ECO Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Jandos Asanov, commended the Republic of Azerbaijan for its significant contributions to advancing the goals and objectives of the ECO. He further highlighted that Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan, has been designated as the Tourism Capital of the Organization for 2026. Ambassador Asanov also expressed his confidence that the establishment of the ECO Economic Research Centre in Baku will transform it into a leading think-tank within the ECO region.



Erzurum Prepares for ECO Tourism Capital 2025

Tehran – October 9, 2024



A virtual consultative meeting was held to advance Erzurum's preparation as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025. ECO Secretariat, Türkiye and local stakeholders attended the meeting.

ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Jandos Asanov highlighted that the initiative to select cities from the region as the ECO Tourism Capitals has become a well-known tradition of the organization, and the events planned for next year in Erzurum, including next ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism will help showcase the city's rich cultural heritage, historical significance and untapped tourism potential.

Mr. Muharrem Çıgık, coordinator of the Erzurum events, outlined a series of activities leading up to the main event in April 2025, when Erzurum will be officially declared the ECO Tourism Capital, in the presence of honorable President of the Republic of Türkiye and notable representatives from the ECO Member States.

Representatives of the Turkish authorities involved, including the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of the Republic of Türkiye, the Erzurum Governor's Office, the Erzurum Metropolitan Municipality and the universities based in Erzurum, expressed their strong support for the initiatives to promote the city.

In conclusion, Ambassador Asanov thanked Mr Çıgık and urged the Turkish side to provide the Secretariat with timely planning updates for the smooth running of the events to promote tourism in Erzurum.

ECO Reviews "ECO Tourism Capital" Selection Criteria

Tehran – October 28, 2024

The ECO Secretariat hosted and chaired a virtual meeting to review and update the selection criteria for the "ECO Tourism Capital" initiative. This annual initiative highlights a city from ECO Member States for its historical, cultural, and tourism potential. Representatives from the tourism authorities of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan attended the meeting.



Mr. Jasur Rajabov, ECO Director for Tourism, emphasized the initiative's alignment with ECO Vision 2025 goals for sustainable development and regional integration through tourism. Delegates assessed each criterion, focusing on heritage preservation, inclusivity, and sustainable tourism practices.

Launched in 2019, the ECO Tourism Capital initiative celebrates the cultural heritage and natural beauty of cities within the ECO region. The designated city gains regional visibility, attracting tourism-related investment, strengthening local economies, and improving infrastructure. Currently, Shahrizabz in Uzbekistan holds the title, which will pass to Erzurum in Türkiye in 2025.

First Working Group Meeting on Joint Trade Zones

Tehran - October 2, 2024

The First Meeting of the Working Group on ECO Joint Trade Zones was convened to exchange views and discuss the development of policy framework, legal documentation, and guiding principles for establishing Joint Trade Zones. Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the ECO Secretariat attended the meeting.



ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Silapberdi Nurberdiyev emphasized that free trade and special economic zones facilitate the import, storage, manufacturing, re-export of goods with reduced customs duties and regulatory barriers, and enhance economic activity by streamlining trade among neighboring countries.

Delegates shared recent developments in their respective countries concerning the establishment of free trade zones. Furthermore, Turkmenistan proposed an initiative to establish joint trade zones with Iran.

The meeting concluded with a consensus to promote the establishment of free trade zones along the borders in the ECO region. The productive discussions at this inaugural meeting laid a strong foundation for developing joint trade zones, which are expected to enhance economic collaboration and boost trade among ECO Member States, ultimately contributing to regional prosperity.

ECO Consular Officials Meeting

Tehran - October 6, 2024

The Meeting of the Consular Officials of the Member States was convened to exchange views and discuss the latest developments regarding visa simplification procedures, implementation the provisions of the TTFA and sharing experiences, implementation of the "Visa Pilot Scheme" to help further facilitation of visa procedure for the drivers, views on the consular issues affecting transit transport and others. Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and ECO Secretariat, attended the meeting.

ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Silapberdi Nurberdiyev briefly outlined that simplification of visa issuance will improve transit and road traffic among Member States and contribute to trade promotion in the region. The meeting concluded with a consensus to interact frequently.



High Level Experts Meeting on Visa Facilitation

Tehran – October 23, 2024

A virtual ECO High-Level Experts Meeting on Visa Facilitation was held, involving representatives from Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan. The meeting highlighted the importance of improved travel facilitation and connectivity across the ECO region to enhance tourism, a key focus of the ECO Vision 2025.

Discussions centered on current visa regimes and recent initiatives by Member States to streamline tourism visas. Participants also explored the development of common visa applications to further promote regional tourism. It was agreed that Member States will continue sharing up-to-date information on tourism visas through regular meetings.

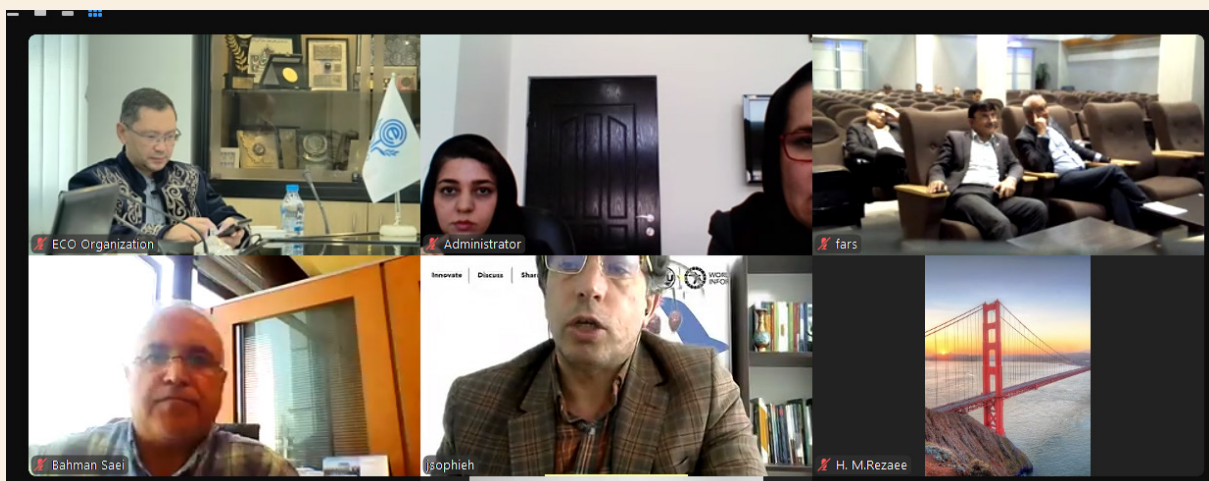


Workshop on Measuring Digital Economy

Tehran - October 16, 2024

The ECO Secretariat, in collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Iran, hosted a virtual Workshop on Measuring the Digital Economy. The event brought together representatives from across the region to explore the digital economy's crucial role in national development. With a focus on data-driven approaches, the workshop aimed to enhance understanding of how to accurately measure the digital economy's impact, which is vital for fostering innovation, job creation, and sustainable growth. Experts from the ICT Research Institute of Iran shared their experiences, offering valuable insights to other ECO Member States.

Mr. Zeinolla Kalymbetov, ECO Program Officer, emphasized the organization's commitment to digital transformation and the importance of precise measurement for informed policy-making. The workshop covered key topics such as the fundamentals of the digital economy, quantitative measurement concepts, and international guidelines. Participants discussed challenges in collecting reliable statistics, identifying stakeholders, and implementing effective measurement plans, all of which are expected to aid countries in improving their assessments and shaping future policies.



Training Course on Fight against Corruption

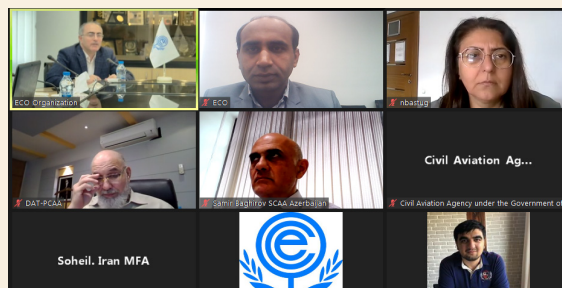
Tehran - October 7, 2024

A virtual training course titled Fight against Corruption was organized by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as ECO Secretariat attended the course. The host comprehensively highlighted collaborative efforts in addressing corruption in the region. The training course aimed to enhance the skills and knowledge of participants in effectively tackling corruption.

While highlighting Pakistan's valuable role in fostering regional anti-corruption cooperation in the region, ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Asanov appreciated NAB for organizing the event. The training course covered several key topics, including Modern Techniques of Investigation of White Collar Crimes and Money Laundering Criminalization and Prosecution of White Collar Crime and Recovery of Illegally Obtained Assets, Use of Digital Forensics and Open Source Intelligence.



ECO Working Group on Civil Aviation Advances Regional Cooperation



October 17, 2024

The ECO Secretariat hosted the 3rd Meeting of the ECO Working Group on Civil Aviation virtually, bringing together representatives from ECO Member States. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Akbar Khodaei, Director for Transport and Communications.

Key discussions focused on enhancing civil aviation cooperation across the ECO region. Participants reviewed the progress of establishing a "Regional Framework Agreement on Civil Aviation" and the development of ECO Air Hubs at Samarkand and Gabala. Additionally, the meeting highlighted efforts to enhance training and advanced education for inspectors and specialists within the civil aviation industry.

The meeting reaffirmed the collective commitment of ECO Member States to strengthen civil aviation cooperation, improve regional connectivity, and establish a solid foundation for future collaboration. The outcomes are anticipated to drive significant advancements in civil aviation, benefiting the economies and communities throughout the ECO region.

High-Level Working Group of ICT Regulatory Authorities



October 21, 2024

The Economic Cooperation Organization hosted the inaugural meeting of the High-Level Working Group of ICT Regulatory Authorities. This virtual event brought together senior ICT regulators and policymakers from ECO member states to enhance regional collaboration.

ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Silapberdi Nurberdiyev emphasized the importance of cooperative regulatory frameworks in light of advancements like AI, 5G, and cybersecurity. The meeting focused on national ICT updates, forming technical committees, and fostering regional and international cooperation to ensure the ECO region's competitiveness in the global digital economy.

Survey on Regional Quality Policy Implementation

The ECO Secretariat has initiated a survey to assess awareness and implementation of the ECO Regional Quality Policy among its Member States. This effort aims to gather insights from stakeholders to better understand quality infrastructure challenges and identify areas for capacity building.

The survey features five brief questions and takes only a minute to complete. The feedback will be instrumental in enhancing trade cooperation and harmonizing quality standards across Member States. Stakeholders are encouraged to participate by accessing the survey online, available in English and Russian, until the end of January 2025 at this link.

6th International Congress on Economics, Finance and Energy



October 24-25, 2024

The ECO Secretariat participated in the 6th International Congress on Economics, Finance, and Energy, co-organized by Fatih Sultan Mehmet University, Ahmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, and the Association of Economics, Finance, and Energy. The event, themed "Economic Resilience for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in the Multi-Crises Era," attracted experts, scholars, and representatives from the private and public sectors across 11 countries.

During a panel session, Dr. Husnu Teki presented on "The Role of Regional Organizations for Achieving SDGs: Case of Economic Cooperation Organization." Dr. Tekin highlighted ECO's main activities, the current status of SDGs in the region, and the organization's efforts to enhance global partnerships. He also discussed preparations for developing an Action Plan on Policy Coherence and plans to convene the 1st Sustainable Development Forum on SDGs.

The ECO Secretariat values your participation in this important initiative. For more information, please contact the ECO Directorate Trade and Investment. This survey stems from the ECO Regional Quality Policy, a key outcome of the third phase of the ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project.



8th North and Central Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of SDGs

Tehran - October 9-10, 2024

ECO Secretariat participated virtually in the 8th North and Central Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, hosted by UNESCAP Sub-regional Office of North and Central Asia. The event evaluated the progress on the thematic SDGs encompassing Goal 3 (good health and well being), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 14 (life below water) and Goal 17 (Partnership for the goals).



In the panel session titled “Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, Dr. Husnu Tekin, ECO Director for Human Resources & Sustainable Development (HRSD), informed the participants about the main activities of ECO on SDGs, including preparations to develop an Action Plan on Policy Coherence and to convene the 1st Sustainable Development Forum as well as formulation of the SDGs Performance Index for the region.

ECO-UNIDO Enhanced Collaboration on Sustainable Energy and Circular Economy

Tehran - October 16, 2024.

The ECO Secretariat convened two virtual meetings with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to strategize for the upcoming Ministerial Meeting on Circular Economy, which will be held on the margins of COP29 in Baku. These discussions highlighted the critical role of circular economy initiatives across various sectors and emphasized UNIDO's contributions to enhancing resource efficiency. Both organizations view COP29 as a pivotal opportunity to advance climate action and have pledged to intensify their collaborative efforts to promote circular economy projects within the ECO region.

In related developments, a coordination meeting for the ad hoc committee on the establishment of the ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO) took place on October 16, 2024. This meeting included representatives from the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, the ECO Secretariat, and UNIDO. UNIDO

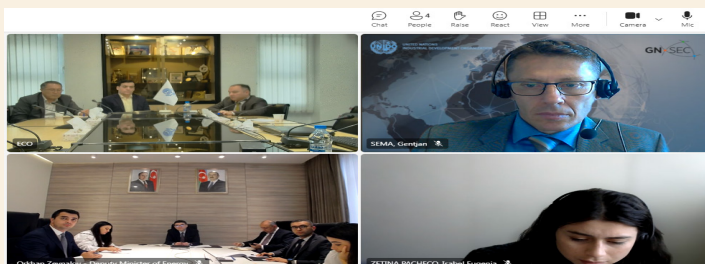
provided updates on ongoing fundraising activities and underscored the importance of joint resource mobilization. Mr. Orkhan Zeynalov, Deputy Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan, shared insights on expediting the Centre's operationalization, focusing on the ratification of the Charter and host country agreement. The meeting stressed the urgency of these processes and the need to secure funds for CECECO's prompt launch.

Coordination Meeting on Establishment of Clean Energy Centre

Tehran - October 1, 2024

The coordination meeting on establishment of the ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO) was held between ECO Secretariat and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in virtual format.

UNIDO updated the ECO Secretariat about its ongoing fund-raising efforts. The latter exchanged views on the modalities on the soft launch of CECECO on November 15, 2024 during COP29 in Baku. The meeting highlighted the need for accelerating logistic and administrative preparations for the event.





Economic Cooperation Organization



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