

28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)

Report

*December 3, 2024
Mashhad – Iran*

Report

The 28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held on December 3, 2024 in Mashhad, Iran. The Honourable Foreign Ministers/Heads of Delegations of the ECO Member States, including the Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran (Chair/Host)**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyz Republic**, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, Republic of **Türkiye**, **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** participated in the meeting. The Delegations from ECO Observers, namely; Turkish Cypriot State and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), as well as the ECO Secretary General along with his team also participated in the meeting. Moreover, the Presidents of ECO Cultural Institute (ECO-CI), ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF), ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), ECO Supreme Audit Institute, ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECORCRM), Secretary Generals of ACD and D-8, ECO College of Insurance and CICA representatives also attended the event. **Annexure-I** contains the list of participants.

Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

2. A Senior Officials Meeting (SoM) was held on December 2, 2024 to review and finalize the contents of draft (s) Agenda and Report as well as the Mashhad Communiqué to be considered and adopted by the COM.

3. The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Asad M. Khan, delivered an insightful briefing to the Senior Officials, presenting a comprehensive report on ECO's multifaceted activities and strategic efforts aimed at deepening engagement and fostering robust connections with its international partners. His Excellency's complete statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

4. H.E. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari, Permanent Representative to ECO, Director General, Multilateral & International Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, welcomed the delegations and thanked the ECO Secretary General and his team for their facilitative approach and effective coordination to ensure successful organization of the meeting. He also highlighted the main deliverables and events held during the Chairmanship of Iran in 2024.

Council of Ministers Meeting (COM)

Inauguration

5. As the current ECO Chairman, the Honourable Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, **H.E. Mr. Abbas Araghchi** formally opened the meeting, and expressed his warm greetings to the participating delegations. In his statement, he underscored Iran's commitment to ECO, highlighting the country's key regional priorities under the theme of "the Year of Enhanced and Resilient ECO Region through expansion of Intra-regional Trade". His Excellency's complete statement is placed at **Annexure-III**.

6. The Honourable Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, in his capacity as COM Chairman in 2023, also delivered a statement. His Excellency's complete statement is placed at **Annexure-III**.

7. The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. Mr. Murat Nurtleu also delivered a statement, in his capacity as the next ECO Chairman in 2025 under the theme of "Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development". His Excellency's complete statement is placed at **Annexure-III**.

8. The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Asad M. Khan, extended his sincere gratitude to H.E. Mr. Abbas Araghchi and his team for their cordial hosting of the 28th COM Meeting in Mashhad. Acknowledging the Islamic Republic of Iran's successful chairmanship in 2024, the ECO Secretary General underscored the urgency of implementing the ECO Trade Agreement, enhancing trade facilitation and addressing barriers like regulatory harmonization and regional payment systems. In his remarks, connectivity, tourism and climate action emerged as priorities, with calls for bolstering transport networks, environmental frameworks and disaster preparedness. He also welcomed the Republic of Kazakhstan as it prepares to assume the ECO Chairmanship in 2025. His Excellency's complete statement is placed at **Annexure-III**.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

9. As proposed by Senior Officials Meeting, the Council considered and adopted the following Agenda of its meeting:

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Statements by Ministers/Heads of Delegation of Member States
Other statements;
 - Statements by the ECO Observers (*if any*)
 - Statement by Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions
 - Statement by the Heads of Regional/International Partners
3. Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General on activities of the Organization
4. Review and approval of:
 - Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings
 - Report of Sectoral Ministerial Meeting
 - Reports of Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions
 - Report of the ECO Vision 2025 Review Committee
5. Organization of Summit and COM Meetings on annual basis
6. Adoption of Mashhad Communiqué.
7. Treaty Event
8. Any other business
9. Date and venue of the next COM meeting
10. Adoption of Report and closing of the Meeting

Agenda Item No.2

Statements by:

Ministers/Heads of Delegations of the Member States

10. The Ministers/Heads of Delegation from ECO Member States highlighted the need for stronger regional cooperation to address global challenges that hinder economic progress. They stressed the vital role of ECO's specialized agencies, regional institutions, and affiliated bodies in advancing the organization's diverse goals, such as cultural, educational, and scientific initiatives. Additionally, they shared updates on their countries' national programs and policies within the ECO framework. Their Excellencies' complete statements are placed at **Annexure-III**.

ECO Observers

11. The Representatives from the Turkish Cypriot State and the Organization of Turkic States also delivered statements in their respective capacities as ECO Observers. They emphasized their shared vision and commitment to strengthening collaboration in alignment with ECO's goals and priorities. Their complete statements are placed at **Annexure-IV**.

Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions

12. The Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions, including the ECO Cultural Institute (ECO-ECI), ECO Science Foundation (ECO-SF) and ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), ECO Supreme Audit Institute, and ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECORCRM) delivered their comprehensive statements, highlighting their respective programs, initiatives and achievements. They underscored their contributions toward advancing ECO's regional development goals. Their complete statements are placed at **Annexure-IV**.

ECO International Partners

13. The Secretary Generals of ACD and D-8, and CICA representatives delivered a statement, highlighting the significance of their establishing partnership with ECO. His complete statement is placed at **Annexure-IV**.

Agenda Item No.3

Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General on activities of the Organization

14. The Council expressed its satisfaction with the detailed and thorough report presented by the ECO Secretary General, which covered the sector-specific activities of the organization following the 27th COM meeting and:

Follow-up of the decisions of 28th COM Meeting

15. Given the growing challenges both regionally and globally, the Council called for enhanced cooperation and coordination amongst the ECO Member States and the

Secretariat, emphasizing that this collaborative effort is crucial to minimizing the negative impacts that these ongoing and emerging challenges may have on the progress of the region.

16. The Council also emphasized the need for all ECO initiatives and activities to be closely aligned with the Organization's strategic framework. It further stressed the importance of promptly addressing the COM's decisions and recommendations to ensure the timely and effective realization of ECO's ambitious economic agenda.

ECO Agreements/Treaties concluded among Member States

17. The Council, while reviewing the status of ECO's legal frameworks, called for enhanced collaboration among both signatory and non-signatory Member States, and urged them to expedite their internal procedures for the signing and ratification of all ECO agreements, aiming to strengthen the Organization's legal framework and promote greater regional cohesion.

Implementation of ECO Projects and Programmes

18. The Council acknowledged the progress made in the implementation of ECO projects and expressed its anticipation for the swift completion of all ongoing and upcoming initiatives. It emphasized the importance of aligning these projects with the Organization's sector-specific economic priorities, as outlined the Council's decisions and recommendations.

ECO Relations with International Partners

19. The Council commended the Organization's ongoing efforts to expand and strengthen its ties with regional and global partners, emphasizing that ECO's multilateral interactions at international forums can be highly effective. It stressed the importance of continuing these efforts to enhance the Organization's visibility and broaden its outreach.

20. The Council further highlighted the need for strengthened coordination between ECO and UN agencies on critical issues. In this regard, the Council encouraged the ECO Secretariat to continue fostering this collaborative approach to promote ECO's objectives and regional economic agenda on all relevant global forums.

Agenda Item No.4

Review and Approval of:

- Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings
- Report of Sectoral Ministerial Meeting
- Reports of Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions
- Report of the ECO Vision 2025 Review Committee

- i. Reports of (280th to 290th) Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR);
- ii. Report of 9th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on September 17, 2024);
- iii. Annual Reports of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated bodies;
- iv. Report of the ECO Vision 2025 Review Committee.

21. The Council adopted all the Reports presented for its consideration.

22. The Council acknowledged and emphasized the critical contribution of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies in advancing the Organization's goals of fostering diverse cooperation. It urged these entities to continue their dedicated efforts in implementing innovative programs and initiatives that drive collective and sustainable progress across all ECO domains.

Agenda Item No. 5

Organization of Summit and COM Meetings on annual basis

23. Taking note of the current practice of the annual alphabetical rotation of the ECO Chairmanship, as well as the established schedule of hosting the ECO Summit biennially and the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) meeting annually, the Council recognized the importance of ensuring that the Chairing country hosts both the COM and Summit meetings in a back-to-back manner on an annual basis to enhance organizational coherence and efficiency.

24. The Council further considered the possibility of either securing the agreement of relevant Member State (s) to skip their turn in the rotational schedule for hosting Summit events or organizing two Summit meetings in 2025. This initiative aims to align the schedules of these meetings and establish a consistent and orderly cycle for hosting these two vital events under the ECO Chairmanship on annual basis.

25. In this context, the Council tasked the Secretariat, together with CPR, to develop a proposal to ensure the annual holding of COM and Summit meetings under one ECO Chairmanship.

Agenda Item No. 6

Adoption of Mashhad Communiqué

26. The Council adopted the Mashhad Communiqué, which reinforces Member States' commitment to ECO's core objectives and provides policy guidelines for the Organization's sectoral activities, with a renewed emphasis on advancing regional integration and sustainable development. The adopted document is placed at **Annexure-V.**

Agenda Item No.7

Treaty Events

27. The Council welcomed the signing of the Charter of ECO Clean Energy Centre by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, encouraging the remaining Member States to sign/ratify it for early operationalization of the Center. Copy of the Charter is place at **Annexure-VI**.

Agenda Item No. 8

Any other business

28. No issue was discussed under this Agenda item.

Agenda Item No. 9

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

29. The Council appreciated and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Kazakhstan to organize the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in Astana in the third quarter of the next year.

Agenda Item No. 10

Adoption of Report of the 28th Meeting of Council of Ministers

30. The Council unanimously adopted the Report of its 28th Meeting held on December 3, 2024 in Mashhad, Iran.

Agenda Item No. 11

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

31. The Council extended sincere gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Mr. Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the H.E. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari, for effectively and efficiently chairing the 28th COM and the Senior Officials Meetings. The Council also commended the excellent hospitality provided by Iran to the participating delegations in Mashhad.

32. Moreover, the Council appreciated participation of the Heads/Members of the Delegations and their fruitful contribution to the meeting.

33. The Council also acknowledged the facilitative assistance rendered by distinguished ECO Secretary General and the members of his team, ensuring smooth preparations and successful organization of this 28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in Mashhad, Iran.
