



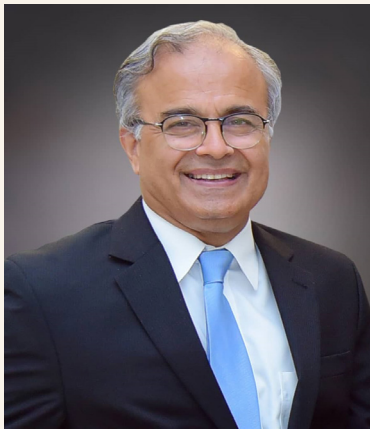
ECO Newsletter

Economic Cooperation Organization

January 2025- No. 5



Dear Readers,



I am pleased to present the January 2025 edition of the ECO Newsletter, summarizing a month of productive engagements and progress in advancing regional cooperation under the ECO framework.

In January, we had the formal handing over of ECO chairmanship from the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Kazakhstan during the 292nd Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The Council thanked Amb. Seyed Jalaedin Alvi Sabzevari, the Permanent Representative of Iran, for his able stewardship of ECO throughout 2024 and welcomed Amb. Ontalap Onalbayev, the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, as new Chair. Earlier, I had a detailed meeting with Amb. Onalbayev to exchange views on Kazakhstan's priorities under their ECO Chairmanship. During the CPR, we also reviewed the preparations for key upcoming events, including the High-Level Committee Meeting on ECO Reforms and the 17th ECO Summit.

I also had the opportunity to undertake a bilateral visit to Türkiye, where I held constructive discussions at the leadership level and with key officials. Our talks focused on strengthening regional connectivity, trade integration, environment and tourism cooperation, which are critical to achieving sustainable development in the ECO region. We also prioritized updating the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to enhance intraregional trade and reviewed preparations for major upcoming events in 2025, including the 17th ECO Summit in Azerbaijan on July 3-4, 6th Tourism Ministerial Meeting in Erzurum on April 18, 13th Transport Ministerial Meeting in May in Tehran, and 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Trade in Istanbul on June 25.

During the visit, I also availed the opportunity to have in-depth exchange with President of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) and his team in Istanbul to discuss ETDB's expansion and support for ECO's development activities. I also inaugurated the ECOSA Plant Breeding Workshop in Ankara where I met ECO Seed Association officials. Subsequently, I visited the ECO Educational Institute where I received a detailed briefing on its activities.

As we begin 2025, I am encouraged by the collective efforts of our Member States and partners to strengthen regional cooperation and integration. We will continue to work together to achieve ECO's vision of a connected, resilient, and prosperous region.

Secretary General
Economic Cooperation Organization

Kazakhstan Assumes ECO Chairmanship 2025

Tehran – January 26, 2025

The ECO Council of Permanent Representatives held its 292nd session to discuss key organizational matters, including preparations for the inaugural Meeting of the High-Level Committee set for February 3, 2025, in Tehran and the 17th ECO Summit, which will be hosted by Azerbaijan on July 4, 2025. The session also reviewed the follow-up action plan from the 28th ECO Council of Ministers meeting, held in Mashhad on December 3, 2024.



H.E. Ontalap Onalbayev, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, chaired the session, officially beginning his tenure as CPR Chair. The meeting commenced with a vote of thanks to the outgoing Chair, H.E. Dr. Seyed Jaleedin Alavi Sabzevari, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ECO, for his exemplary leadership and commitment to the Organization's mission.

Secretary General Meets Kazakh Ambassador



Tehran – January 15, 2025

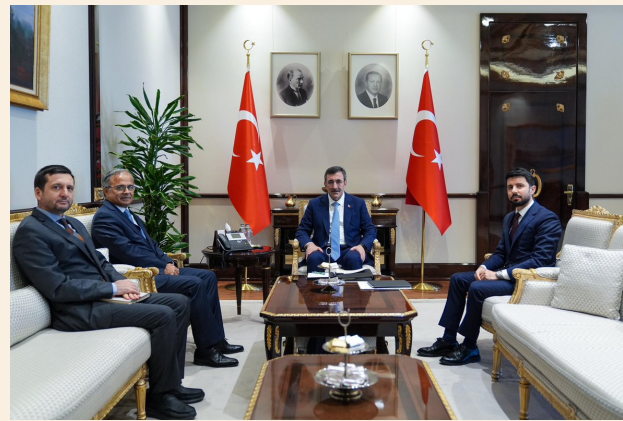
Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Ontalap Onalbayev, Kazakhstan's Ambassador and the new Chairman of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives, to discuss ECO's priorities under Kazakhstan's 2025 chairmanship. Key topics included preparations for the 17th ECO Summit and 29th Council of Ministers meeting, the need for comprehensive organizational reforms, and the chairmanship's central theme of "transport connectivity." They also deliberated on strategies for drafting a new vision document for the organization, following the mandate set by the 28th COM Meeting in Mashhad on December 3, 2024, as the ECO Vision 2025 approaches its conclusion.

Secretary General Undertakes Bilateral Visit to Türkiye

Meeting with Vice President

Ankara – January 27, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met Türkiye's Vice President H.E. Cevdet Yılmaz to discuss advancing regional cooperation under the ECO framework. Regional connectivity, trade facilitation and energy cooperation were recognized as critical to achieving ECO's objectives for greater economic development and integration of the region. Discussions further highlighted regional priorities in agriculture, tourism and disaster risk management. Erzurum's selection as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025 and the upcoming ECO Ministerial Meetings on Tourism and Trade were also discussed.



Meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister



Ankara – January 27, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Berris Ekinci, Deputy Foreign Minister of Türkiye. The meeting highlighted the importance of enhancing ECO's role and capacity in unlocking the region's potential for greater cooperation in trade, agriculture, transport and tourism. Emphasizing the need for strengthening the Organization for more effective deliverables, the interaction then discussed some important ECO events and initiatives, including the upcoming High-Level Committee Meeting on ECO Reforms on February 3, 2025, inauguration of Erzurum as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025, upcoming ECO Trade Ministers Meeting in June 2025, as well as the 17th ECO Summit to be hosted by Azerbaijan in July 2025.

Meeting with Trade Minister

Ankara – January 28, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Professor Dr. Ömer Bolat, Minister for Trade of Türkiye, to discuss strengthening trade cooperation and regional economic development within the ECO region. Dr. Khan commended Türkiye's constructive contributions at the 9th ECOTA Cooperation Council Meeting and appreciated the country's offer to host the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade in June 2025. He also highlighted ongoing efforts to make the upcoming Ministerial Meeting a milestone in establishing a robust regional trade framework.



The discussions also covered the need to update the ECOTA agreement to facilitate trade liberalization and enhance regional trade. Both sides agreed on the importance of holding annual meetings among ECO Trade Ministers, aiming to deepen trade cooperation.

Meeting with Deputy Minister for Trade



Ankara – January 27, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Mustafa Tuzcu, Deputy Minister for Trade of Türkiye. Discussions emphasized the need to update the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to boost intra-regional trade and explore opportunities to involve non-member states. The ECO region's trade potential was highlighted. Türkiye's leadership in exports within the region, contributing 64% of ECO exports and 57% of imports, was recognized, along with its vast potential to expand trade in high-demand products like pharmaceuticals, machinery and electrical appliances.

Dr. Khan expressed appreciation for Türkiye's efforts in trade facilitation and customs cooperation, particularly its contributions to capacity-building initiatives. The Secretary General also praised Türkiye's key role in regional collaboration and its offer to host the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Trade in June 2025. He emphasized Türkiye's support for advancing regional trade, expressing confidence in its leadership to drive ECO's reform agenda and shared economic growth goals. The meeting then discussed extensively the prospects of regional trade and preparations for the upcoming Ministerial Meeting in this regard.

Meeting with Transpor Minister



Istanbul – January 30, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Abdülkadir Uraloğlu, Türkiye's Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, to discuss enhancing regional connectivity and transport cooperation within the ECO region.

The meeting highlighted Türkiye's pivotal role in fostering integration, the revitalization of key transport corridors particularly the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) corridor and the importance of digitalization in the transport sector. Both sides also discussed preparations for the upcoming 13th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport, reaffirming their commitment to advancing regional trade and infrastructure development.

Meeting with President of Strategy and Budget

Ankara – January 28, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. İbrahim Şenel, President of Strategy and Budget of Türkiye. Progress on ECO Vision 2025 was discussed, with particular attention to sustainability and the involvement of line ministries in the implementation process. Türkiye's leadership in coordinating multi-ministerial engagement was recognized as crucial for the success of the new ECO Vision document.

Türkiye's status as the largest economy in the region was noted, along with the country's continued and cooperation in sectors like transport and ICT. The interaction further highlighted the need for strengthening the Organization's impact through a target-oriented new Vision, which takes into account the development priorities of the Member States.



Secretary General Meets ETDB President



Istanbul – January 30, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met the President of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB), Mr. Mohammad Hashem Botshekan, in Istanbul. The meeting discussed the ways to foster the existing cooperation between the ECO Secretariat and the Bank. Collaborating with international financial institutions and development partners, and establishment of trilateral mechanisms to finance regional projects, as well as the need to expand ETDB's membership was emphasized during the interaction.

The meeting underscored the importance of the increasing international focus on designing and financing of environmentally friendly projects, including climate resilience to better align with the Sustainable Development Goals throughout the ECO region. Both sides agreed to continue dialogues aimed at strengthening their partnership to drive regional economic growth, infrastructure development and sustainable practices.

Meeting with Deputy Treasury and Finance Minister

Ankara – January 29, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Osman Çelik, Deputy Minister for Treasury and Finance of Türkiye, to discuss progress and challenges in implementing the ECO Vision 2025. The discussions focused on facilitating the movement of goods and capital across the region and emphasized the importance of engaging line ministries to shape and support the new ECO Vision. Both sides highlighted the need for stronger communication among Finance Ministries of Member States, with the upcoming 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Finance and Economy in May 2025 identified as a key platform to address issues such as resource allocation and regional economic integration.

The meeting also explored opportunities for regional cooperation, particularly through enhancing the activities of the ECO Trade and Development Bank, establishing an ECO Clearing Union, and creating a network between Sovereign Wealth Funds of Member States. These initiatives were recognized as critical steps toward strengthening financial collaboration and fostering economic growth across the ECO region.



Türkiye: The Engine Driving Growth for Eurasia, Says ECO Secretary General



ANKARA

In an exclusive conversation with Anadolu Agency, Dr. Asad M. Khan described Türkiye as the "engine" driving growth for Eurasia, connecting South, Central, and West Asia with the Caucasus, and serving as a "window to the Western world." Highlighting Türkiye's pivotal role in fostering regional connectivity and development, Dr. Khan stated, "Türkiye is the linchpin for growth, posing great significance for the region." "One of the key agenda items in my conversations here in Ankara was to flag the need to draw up the next vision for the next 10 years," Dr. Khan noted.

Stressing the importance of economic and development cooperation, Dr. Khan emphasized a focus on sustainable development issues such as education, health, and trade. His visit underlined Türkiye's central role in advancing ECO's mission of fostering regional development and connectivity.

Secretary General Visits School of International Relations, Iran MFA



Tehran – January 13, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan visited the School of International Relations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. H.E. Ambassador M. Reza Dehshiri, Dean of the School, welcomed Dr. Khan and provided an overview of the institution's 125-year history in training diplomats. Both sides explored opportunities for collaboration between the ECO Secretariat and the School. Discussions focused on initiatives such as briefings by the ECO Secretariat on its activities and projects, as well as internship opportunities for the School's students.

Meeting with Deputy Minister for Culture and Tourism

Ankara – January 29, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Serdar Çam, Türkiye's Deputy Minister for Culture and Tourism, to discuss enhancing ECO initiatives, with a focus on facilitating people-to-people movement and promoting shared cultural values.

Dr. Khan highlighted Erzurum's designation as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025 and preparations for the ECO Tourism Ministers Meeting in Erzurum in April 2025. The meeting aims to strengthen collaboration between public and private institutions and enhance knowledge-sharing in the tourism sector.



Secretary General Inaugurates ECOSA Plant Breeding Workshop

Ankara – January 27, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan inaugurated the Plant Breeding Workshop organized by the ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) in Ankara. Dr. Khan highlighted the critical role of the seed sector in ensuring food security and enhancing agricultural exports. He also praised ECOSA for its role in knowledge exchange through eight ECOSA International Seed Trade Conferences organized so far, as well as the Plant Breeding Training Program taking place on January 27-31, in Ankara.

On the sidelines, Secretary General met the President of the ECOSA Mr. Yıldırım Gençer, and his team to discuss the activities of the Association, which was established in 2010 as an ECO affiliated body. The discussion highlighted the need for finalization of the ECO Regional Seed Agreement to harmonize seed regulations and promote free movement of plant varieties, while also emphasizing the need for enhanced collaboration between ECOSA and the ECO Secretariat to ensure the success of joint initiatives.



Secretary General Meets Executive Director ECO Educational Institute

Ankara – January 28, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan, ECO Secretary General, met with Mr. Abdolkarim Sadeghdoost, Executive Director of ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI), to discuss enhancing ECOEI's role in scholarship programs and training courses on Sustainable Development, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Health. The meeting emphasized the need for a joint action plan to promote education across the ECO region. Discussions also covered upcoming initiatives, including the "World is Our Home" project and a youth workshop on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification, aimed at raising environmental awareness and fostering sustainable futures among the youth.

The Secretary General encouraged ECOEI to integrate environmental education into its curricula, fostering sustainability awareness and equipping future leaders with essential knowledge on environmental challenges and solutions. He also acknowledged ECO-EI's role in ensuring the organization of the "1st ECOEI Expert Group Meeting on the Internationalization of Higher Education in the ECO Region," scheduled for April 16-17, 2025 in Pakistan.



77th Annual Session of Pakistan Engineering Congress

Islamabad- December 26, 2024

At the invitation of the Pakistan Engineering Congress (PEC), the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Dr. Asad M. Khan, attended the 77th Annual Session of PEC. In his address, Dr. Khan commended the Pakistan Engineering Congress for its significant contributions to national infrastructure development and advancing engineering excellence in Pakistan. He emphasized the importance of fostering innovation and collaboration in the engineering sector to support sustainable development across the region.



While sharing insights into ECO's ongoing activities and initiatives, Dr. Khan highlighted the potential for enhanced cooperation between ECO and PEC. He underscored the importance of leveraging synergies to address regional challenges and promote infrastructure development, which is a key priority for the ECO member states.

The session provided an excellent platform for engaging with engineering professionals and exploring avenues for collaboration in areas of mutual interest. Dr. Khan reiterated ECO's commitment to strengthening partnerships with institutions like PEC to achieve shared developmental goals.

IOM Chief of Mission Visits ECO



Tehran – January 21, 2025

Ms. Lalini Veerassamy, Chief of Mission of International Organization for Migration (IOM) Iran, led a delegation to the ECO Secretariat and delivered a presentation on the IOM-ECO collaboration titled "Counter-Trafficking and Smuggling: Addressing Mixed Migration Flows along Migration Routes in the ECO Region." The presentation highlighted innovative approaches, such as live simulation exercises and capacity-building initiatives, to tackle human trafficking (THB) and smuggling of migrants (SOM).

Building on the outcomes of the July 2024 ECO-IOM Workshop in Tehran, the discussion addressed key challenges, including digital exploitation, low detection rates, legislative gaps, and inadequate protective measures. The proposed live simulations aim to train 200 participants from various sectors in managing mixed migration flows while combating THB and SOM. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening regional collaboration, mobilizing resources, and harmonizing efforts to combat these pressing issues effectively.

Secretary General attends NDMA Briefing

Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan, Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), attended a briefing by Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on the National Emergencies Operations Center (NEOC). The event showcased NEOC's innovative approach to proactive disaster management. Dr. Khan praised NDMA's predictive and assessment capabilities, emphasizing their potential to benefit the entire ECO region by enhancing disaster resilience and preparedness.



With advanced technologies for disaster prediction and response, NEOC highlights Pakistan's leadership in disaster management. Dr. Khan stressed the importance of regional collaboration, noting NEOC's expertise as a model for ECO member states. This initiative aligns with ECO's goals of regional cooperation and sustainable development, setting a regional benchmark for disaster management and climate resilience.

Secretary General Meets Azerbaijan's Permanent Representative



Tehran – January 23, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Ambassador Alizade, Azerbaijan's Permanent Representative, to discuss preparations for the 17th ECO Summit, scheduled in Baku on July 3-4, 2025. The meeting focused on finalizing the Summit's agenda, outcome document, and potential side events. They also reviewed arrangements for the High-Level Committee Meeting on ECO Reforms and Regional Cooperation, set for February 3, 2025, with the participation of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers.

New Ambassador of Turkmenistan Presents Credentials

Tehran – January 19, 2025

H.E. Ilyas Gayypov, the newly appointed Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the Economic Cooperation Organization, officially presented his credentials to the Secretary General, Dr. Asad M. Khan.

Dr. Khan welcomed Ambassador Gayypov, congratulating him on his appointment and reaffirming the ECO Secretariat's commitment to close collaboration with Turkmenistan to advance regional cooperation. Ambassador Gayypov conveyed greetings from Turkmenistan's leadership and reiterated the country's strong dedication to enhancing regional ties, particularly in key sectors such as trade, transport, and energy. The meeting also covered upcoming ECO events and agenda items aimed at fostering economic growth, stability, and deeper regional integration.



Coordination Meeting on Combating Desertification and Land Degradation



January 8, 2025

The ECO Secretariat and Türkiye's General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion (Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change) held a virtual coordination meeting to discuss launching a project on capacity building for desertification, land degradation, and erosion monitoring systems in the ECO region.

Türkiye presented the project proposal, aiming to enhance ECO Member States' capacities in monitoring and evaluation systems, with detailed objectives and implementation plans. The initiative was recognized as crucial for reviving regional cooperation on desertification and land degradation.

Dr. Fuad Farzalibeyov, Director for Energy, Minerals, and Environment at the ECO Secretariat, commended Türkiye's efforts and emphasized the importance of the project in addressing global priorities like Land Degradation Neutrality. The ECO Secretariat encouraged bold actions at the upcoming Regional Planning Council (RPC) meeting and the inclusion of this initiative in the ECO Work Programme for 2025.

ECO-ESCAP Consultation Meeting on Circular Economy



January 15, 2025

The ECO Secretariat and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held a virtual consultation meeting to explore advancing the circular economy agenda in the ECO region through collaborative frameworks and stronger inter-regional partnerships. Dr. Fuad Farzalibeyov, Director for Energy, Minerals, and Environment at the ECO Secretariat, highlighted ESCAP's proactive support, including its participation in the Ministerial Meeting on Circular Economy during COP29 in Baku, describing it as a testament to the joint commitment toward circular transition.

Dr. Sudip Ranjan Basu, Chief of ESCAP's Sustainable Business Network, reaffirmed ESCAP's readiness to provide policy and advisory support for the Regional Initiative on Resource Efficiency, Sustainability, and Circular Economy (RESCUE). He emphasized advocacy, innovative partnerships, and private sector engagement as key areas of cooperation. The meeting also discussed conducting a needs assessment for a just transition to a resource-efficient and circular economy, which would serve as groundwork for a potential regional action plan. Both sides agreed to collaborate further on upcoming events and initiatives related to the circular economy.

ECO Attends Ninth Session of APDIM Governing Council



Tehran, January 22, 2025

Dr. Husnu Tekin led the ECO delegation at the ninth session of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the new APDIM chair for 2025.

The session featured a comprehensive report on APDIM's administrative and financial status, activities, and progress in 2024. Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, ESCAP Executive Secretary, emphasized the importance of APDIM and called for greater regional collaboration to enhance its impact. Discussions focused on APDIM's 2025 program and strategies to improve disaster information management. Participants adopted the APDIM report and approved the 2025 calendar of events, reinforcing regional cooperation in disaster management. The ECO delegation reaffirmed its commitment to supporting APDIM's mission and fostering resilience across the region.



Economic Cooperation Organization



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