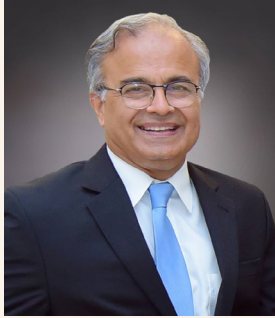




ECO Newsletter

Economic Cooperation Organization

April, 2025- No. 8



Dear Readers,

I am pleased to present the April 2025 edition of the ECO Newsletter.

April was quite a busy month for us. I had the privilege of undertaking bilateral visits to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Turkmenistan, followed by a visit to the Republic of Türkiye for the 6th ECO Tourism Ministers Meeting, where we inaugurated the city of Erzurum as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025 and designated Lahore (Pakistan), Mary (Turkmenistan), and Karakul (Kyrgyzstan) as ECO Tourism Capitals for 2027, 2028 and 2029, respectively.

During my bilateral visits, I had in-depth and very constructive discussions at the leadership level and with key officials. Our conversations focused on strengthening regional connectivity, trade integration, environmental protection, tourism promotion, and energy and agricultural collaboration. I was assured of full support and cooperation by all the interlocutors in advancing our development agenda. Clearly, the momentum for action and implementation is building up. We are optimistic that the forthcoming 17th ECO Summit in Khankendi, Azerbaijan will further accelerate our efforts towards creating an integrated and high-performing ECO region.

In Pakistan, I also availed of the opportunity to visit ECO agencies in Islamabad including ECO Postal Staff College, ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ECO-CCI), and the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO). We believe that the ECO subsidiary bodies are extremely important and they should be made more functional and effective to efficiently foster multifaceted cooperation in the region. Later in Islamabad, I attended the International Conference on Science, Technology, and Innovation: Catalysts for Regional Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the ECO Region (ECONEX 2025) and the First Expert Group Meeting on Internationalization of Higher Education.

In Arkadag, Turkmenistan, we also had the First ECO Sustainable Development Forum, which discussed common sustainable development challenges confronting our region. Lahore hosted the 294th Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) meeting, attended by Member States and the Secretariat and was followed by a two-day orientation tour of the city.

We are determined to make 2025 a milestone year for ECO both in terms of crafting a new vision, undertaking comprehensive reforms and universalizing ECO agreements and frameworks within the membership. We have now dates locked for at least four more ministerial meetings, which is unprecedented and historic. In addition to the forthcoming 17th ECO Summit on July 3-4, 2025, we will convene our Trade Ministers after a hiatus of 14 years, Environment Ministers after 11 years, and Finance Ministers after 4 years. This is certainly encouraging for us. We continue to count on your support and cooperation in furthering our ECO rejuvenation agenda.

Secretary General
Economic Cooperation Organization

Bilateral Visit to Pakistan

Secretary General Calls on Prime Minister of Pakistan



April 9, 2025- Islamabad

During his bilateral visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), H.E. Dr. Asad M. Khan, paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan. The Honourable Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to enhancing regional cooperation through greater trade integration and transport connectivity.

Dr. Khan briefed the Prime Minister on ECO's activities and initiatives including the forthcoming 17th ECO Summit, scheduled for July 3-4, 2025 in Azerbaijan. He also conveyed his determination to further energize ECO to translate regional development aspirations into tangible outcomes. The meeting concluded with a mutual resolve to work closely for the implementation of ECO's vision and objectives, ensuring concrete progress in the identified priority areas.

Secretary General Meets Speaker National Assembly

April 10, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Honourable Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan. Dr. Khan provided an overview of ECO activities and initiatives and acknowledged Pakistan's exceptional contributions in promoting parliamentary cooperation under ECO. Referring to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO), which was proposed by Pakistan in 1993, the Secretary General highlighted the importance of universalizing PAECO membership and the Assembly's significance in eliminating legislative barriers for trade promotion and integration. He thanked Pakistan for hosting the PAECO Secretariat and emphasized the importance of formalizing the arrangement at the earliest. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to effectively operationalise PAECO for deeper integration of the ECO region.



Secretary General Meets Finance Minister

April 8, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, Finance Minister of Pakistan and emphasized the need for setting up seamless payment mechanisms to promote trade and investment expansion in the region. He also invited Pakistan to actively participate in the upcoming ECO finance related meetings including the 6th Finance Ministers Meeting.



The discussion also focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) through its universalized membership, improved credit ratings, increased capital base, and diversified banking relations. Moreover, the operationalization of the ECO Reinsurance Company (ERC) was also discussed. The meeting concluded with reaffirmation of shared commitment to advancing regional cooperation and realizing ECO's objectives.

Secretary General Meets Minister of Commerce

April 8, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce of Pakistan. The meeting focused on strengthening Pakistan's engagement in ECO's trade-related initiatives and fostering regional economic cooperation. Dr. Khan briefed the Minister on ECO's ongoing activities and upcoming high-level events, including the 17th ECO Summit and the long-awaited ECO Trade Ministers Meeting. He encouraged Pakistan's active participation in these events and acknowledged Pakistan's contributions to advancing trade within the ECO framework. Emphasizing the interconnectedness of trade, transport, and tourism, Dr. Khan highlighted the importance of sustainable payment mechanisms to ensure the growth of intra-regional trade.



The discussion also addressed critical issues such as enhancing the effectiveness of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) and operationalising the ECO Reinsurance Company. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening regional trade and economic integration under the ECO framework.



Secretary General Meets Minister of Communications

April 8, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Abdul Aleem Khan, Federal Minister for Communications of Pakistan. The discussion centered on ways to strengthen regional trade and transport linkages in the ECO region. Dr. Khan highlighted the upcoming 13th Transport Ministers Meeting, scheduled for June 2, 2025, in Iran, and encouraged Pakistan's active participation. He stressed the importance of operationalising the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) corridor to boost regional connectivity.



The Honorable Minister expressed Pakistan's readiness to work closely with the ECO Secretariat to achieve shared goals. Both sides agreed on the critical role of transport in driving regional trade and economic growth. The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to enhancing regional cooperation and connectivity.

Secretary General Meets Minister of Food Security

April 9, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research and provided an overview of the upcoming ECO ministerial meetings and encouraged Pakistan's active participation in these events. Highlighting ECO countries as extremely vulnerable to climate change and attendant threats, Dr. Khan emphasized the need for greater collaboration amongst Member States for exchanging knowledge and sharing best practices. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to strengthen cooperation in agriculture and food security to promote sustainability and resilience across the region.



Secretary General Meets Minister of Planning

April 9, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiative, and briefed the Honourable Minister on key ECO activities and acknowledged Pakistan's active role in advancing regional cooperation for sustainable development. He invited the Planning Ministry to share insights on developing and identifying viable projects under the ECO framework. Dr. Khan also mentioned that the ECO Vision 2025 is nearing expiry and the inputs from the Planning Ministry would certainly be crucial for crafting the new vision document.



The Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the ECO process and stated that he would represent Pakistan at the forthcoming Sustainable Development Forum in Arkadag, Turkmenistan, in May 2025. The meeting concluded with the mutual resolve to continue working towards the collective betterment of the region.

Secretary General Meets Minister of Climate Change

April 9, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Musadik Malik, Minister of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. The discussion focused on key ECO activities and initiatives as well as the vulnerabilities of the region to climate change and its related challenges. Both sides also discussed operationalising and energizing ECO agencies dealing environmental issues. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to enhance collaboration on environmental and climate change issues to promote sustainable development and resilience across the region.



Secretary General Meets Governor State Bank

April 9, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with Mr. Jameel Ahmad, Governor State Bank of Pakistan. The meeting discussed devising efficient payment mechanisms to facilitate seamless trade flows within the ECO region as well as the steps to operationalise and energize ECO agencies specializing in development financing and trade facilitation. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to advancing economic cooperation and promoting regional prosperity.





Secretary General Meets Foreign Secretary

April 8, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with Ambassador Ms. Amna Baloch, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. Ambassador Baloch reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the goals and objectives of ECO and to promote regional connectivity under the ECO framework. Dr. Khan briefed the Foreign Secretary on the upcoming ECO events, including the 17th ECO Summit, scheduled for July 3-4, 2025, in Azerbaijan and a number of sectoral Ministerial meetings before the Summit. He emphasized the importance of Pakistan's active participation in these events and initiatives.



The meeting also discussed issues such as constraints on financing flows in the region, the operationalization of the ECO Reinsurance Company, and enhancing the financing capacity of the ECO Trade and Development Bank. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and advancing ECO's goals through collaborative efforts.

Secretary General Visits ECO Postal Staff College

April 7, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan, paid a visit to the ECO Postal Staff College, where he met with Mr. Akbar Ali Dero, the Executive Director of the College. The visit was part of the ECO Secretariat's ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships with its affiliated institutions and enhance regional capacity-building initiatives.

The meeting discussed enhancing collaboration between the ECO Secretariat and the ECO Postal Staff College and explored avenues to bolster the College's role as a center of excellence for training and professional development in the field of postal services across the ECO region.



Secretary General Visits Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation

April 8, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with Mr. Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director Pakistan Tourism Development Cooperation (PTDC). Dr. Khan emphasized the interconnectedness of trade, transport, and tourism. Calling ECO a unique blend of countries with overlapping geography, cultures, and traditions, he called for strengthening people-to-people connections through easing visa regimes, increasing flights frequency, and marketing regional tourism destinations. He also mentioned the recently launched ECO Tourism Website and YouTube Channel.

The Managing Director briefed on PTDC's efforts to establish minimum tourism standards and foster collaboration with ECO Member States. He underscored the importance of strengthening collaboration among tourism educational institutions. The meeting also discussed the upcoming ECO Tourism Ministerial Meeting in Erzurum, where the city will be inaugurated as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025. Both sides expressed their commitment to advancing tourism as a key driver of sustainable development and regional integration.



Secretary General Visits ECOCCI

April 3, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan visited the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI). The meeting included Azerbaijan authorities to discuss preparations for the 'ECO Business Summit'. The FPCCI, which holds the Presidency of the ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ECOCCI), received assurances from Dr. Khan for support in expanding intra-regional trade and connectivity.

Dr. Khan encouraged ECOCCI to actively advance the ECO agenda for sustainable regional economic growth and invited them to organize the 'ECO Business Summit' alongside the 17th ECO Summit. Dr. Khan also emphasized the importance of private sector engagement in key initiatives such as trade liberalization, trade facilitation, and trade promotion.



Secretary General Visits PAECO

April 7, 2025

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a productive meeting with Mr. Tahir Hussain, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Pakistan and the Parliamentary Assembly of ECO (PAECO). Dr. Khan reaffirmed the Organization's unwavering commitment to supporting PAECO's initiatives and strengthening regional parliamentary cooperation. He emphasized the importance of PAECO's role in promoting mutual understanding, policy coordination, and legislative collaboration among member states to achieve shared goals of regional development and prosperity. Discussions focused on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat of PAECO in Pakistan. The upcoming 4th PAECO General Conference, scheduled to take place in Iran, was also discussed.



Pakistan Hosts 294th CPR Meeting

Lahore – April 13, 2025

The 294th Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) was held at the Punjab Civil Secretariat in Lahore, Pakistan. The gathering marked a significant milestone as the first CPR meeting to take place in Lahore and the second hosted outside the ECO Secretariat in Tehran.

The Additional Chief Secretary of Punjab, Mr. Ahmed Raza Sarwar, warmly welcomed the delegates to the historic and culturally rich city of Lahore. The Secretary of the Tourism, Archaeology and Museums Department, Mr. Farid Ahmad Tarar, also addressed the participants, highlighting Lahore's profound historical legacy and presenting its candidacy as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027. Dr. Asad M. Khan, along with other participants, extended profound appreciations to the Government of Punjab for its warm hospitality and the valuable opportunity to experience the rich cultural heritage of Lahore in person.



The meeting brought together distinguished Permanent Representatives and delegates from ECO Member States to deliberate on a number of key issues, including the preparations for the forthcoming 17th ECO Summit in Azerbaijan, review of the Plan of Work for implementing the Mashhad Communiqué, formulation of ECO Vision 2035, the High-Level Committee (HLC) report and criteria for selecting the ECO Tourism Capital. The context of hosting the CPR meeting in Lahore is part of Pakistan's broader initiative to launch its campaign for declaring Lahore as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, an effort aimed at showcasing the city's cultural and historical prominence to the ECO community.

During their stay, the delegates called on the Chief Minister of Punjab, H.E. Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Raiwind. In her welcoming remarks, the Chief Minister thanked the delegates for visiting the historic city of Lahore and highlighted its deep-rooted cultural and historical importance, not only for Pakistan but for the entire region. She also advocated for Lahore as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, emphasizing its rich heritage, vibrant culture and potential as a regional tourism hub.

The delegation also paid a courtesy call on the Governor of Punjab, H.E. Mr. Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, at the Governor House. The Governor extended a warm welcome to the visiting dignitaries and expressed appreciation for ECO's continued efforts to strengthen regional cooperation.

Besides, the delegation had the opportunity to explore Lahore in all its dimensions, with a program that included visits to iconic heritage landmarks such as the Tomb of Anarkali, Badshahi Mosque, Lahore Fort and Mazar-e-Iqbal, where they enjoyed vibrant cultural performances. A special highlight was a guided tour of Lahore's historic Old City, offering delegates an interactive experience of the city's architectural splendor and living heritage. Moreover, they attended the Mela Charaghan festival at Shalamar Gardens, where they witnessed colorful traditions and lively performances that exhibited the festive spirit of Punjab.

Secretary General Attends ECONEX 2025

April 17-18, 2025- Islamabad

Dr. Asad M. Khan participated in the International Conference on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI): Catalysts for Regional Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the ECO Region (ECONEX 2025), held in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 17–18, 2025. The conference was jointly organized by the ECO Science Foundation, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, and the ECO Secretariat.

The two-day event provided a high-level platform for the exchange of ideas, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting cross-border collaboration aimed at driving economic growth and sustainable development within the ECO region. It brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including policymakers, scientists, industry leaders, and academics, to explore STI-driven solutions to shared regional challenges.

In his opening address, the Secretary General emphasized the transformative potential of science and technology in addressing critical issues facing the region, such as climate change, energy security, and economic disparities. He noted, "This forum serves as an invaluable platform to foster dialogue, bridge technological gaps, and emphasize the importance of youth education in our region."

Dr. Khan also delivered remarks during the panel discussion titled "Enhancing Regional Trade and Connectivity in the ECO Region." The Secretary General stressed that enhancing regional trade and connectivity is essential for achieving sustainable development in the ECO region. Citing that intra-ECO trade accounts for only 8.75% of the region's total trade, he highlighted the urgent need to overcome persistent barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, high trade costs, and fragmented regulations.





Internationalization of Higher Education in ECO Region

April 15–16, 2025- Islamabad,



The Economic Cooperation Organization, in collaboration with the ECO Educational Institute, held the 1st Expert Group Meeting on the Internationalization of Higher Education in Islamabad, hosted by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission. Representatives from ECO Member States, including Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye, and Turkmenistan, attended.

The meeting reviewed the current status of higher education and shared best practices for its internationalization. Participants from the British Council and the European Union Commission contributed insights and showcased relevant projects.

A key focus was the Draft Action Plan for Internationalizing Higher Education, with discussions on enhancements to meet the diverse needs of ECO Member States. In closing, ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan emphasized education's role in sustainable development and the need for multi-stakeholder dialogue, reaffirming ECO's commitment to supporting educational initiatives aligned with the new ECO Vision Document for 2025.



Bilateral Visit to Turkmenistan

Secretary General Calls on President of Turkmenistan

Ashgabat – April 28, 2025



During his bilateral visit to Turkmenistan, the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization H.E. Dr. Asad M. Khan called on H.E. Serdar Berdimuhamedov, Honorable President of Turkmenistan, on the sidelines of the 1st ECO Forum on Sustainable Development. He highlighted Turkmenistan's contributions to ECO and briefed about the forthcoming 17th ECO Summit scheduled for July 3-4, 2025 in Azerbaijan, while also welcoming Turkmenistan's hosting of the 3rd UN Conference on Landlocked Developing

Countries in August 2025. The discussions also covered the International Conference dedicated to the "International Year of Peace and Trust" and the 30th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Neutrality.

Dr. Khan commended Turkmenistan's strategic geographic position as a vital link in regional transport and trade corridors, enhancing connectivity between Asia and Europe. He encouraged continued engagement in agricultural and industrial initiatives within the ECO framework, inviting Turkmenistan to join efforts aimed at promoting food security and industrial advancement.

Meeting with Turkmen Foreign Minister

April 28, 2025- Arkadag

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Rashid Meredov, Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He expressed appreciation for Turkmenistan's pivotal role in hosting the Sustainable Development Forum and its efforts to strengthen regional cooperation for economic development. The discussions also covered important upcoming ECO events.



Dr. Khan acknowledged Turkmenistan's strategic geographic position, which enhances regional connectivity and trade. He commended Turkmenistan's initiatives in tourism and disaster risk reduction, and congratulated the country on its achievements in sustainable urban infrastructure development.

Meeting with Deputy Chairman Energy

April 29, 2025- Arkadag

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Batyr Amanov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, responsible for energy issues. The meeting highlighted the successful organization of the First Sustainable Development Goals Forum and the significance of the recent High-Level Meeting of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers. This meeting focused on reforms and enhanced cooperation within the ECO, emphasizing that 2025 could be a pivotal year for advancing regional collaboration through upcoming ECO Ministerial Meetings. The discussion also underscored Turkmenistan's role in advancing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. Dr. Khan reaffirmed the ECO's support for this strategic initiative, recognizing its potential to enhance energy security and strengthen economic ties among Member States.





Meeting with Deputy Chairman Science, Education & Health

April 29, 2025- Arkadag

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with Mrs. Bayramgul Orazdurdyyeva, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan in charge of Science, Education and Health. The discussions explored opportunities for collaboration in sustainable development initiatives. Dr. Khan commended Turkmenistan's efforts in promoting innovative educational practices and health programs that empower youth and enhance public welfare. He emphasized the importance of investing in these sectors to build a resilient and knowledgeable workforce capable of addressing the challenges of the future. Dr. Khan reaffirmed the ECO's commitment to supporting Turkmenistan's initiatives in sustainable development and regional cooperation.



Meeting with Deputy Chairman Environment & Agriculture

April 29, 2025- Arkadag

Dr. Asad M. Khan met Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman on Environment and Agriculture on the sidelines of the First Sustainable Development Forum organized in Arkadag City.

The discussions underscored the pressing environmental challenges facing the ECO region, particularly the impacts of climate change, water scarcity, and desertification. The Secretary General emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to transform these challenges into opportunities. They explored avenues for joint initiatives that align national environmental goals with ECO Member States' efforts, aiming to promote sustainability and resilience across the region.



The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to strengthen cooperation in agriculture and food security, acknowledging Turkmenistan's past contributions and encouraging its active participation in upcoming ECO Ministerial Meetings. The Secretary General invited Turkmenistan to lead initiatives that address transboundary challenges and to utilize the High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation to showcase its leadership on critical issues such as desertification.

Meeting with Deputy Chairman Trade, Textile & Chamber of Commerce

April 28, 2025- Arkadag

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Nokerguly Atagulyyev, Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers. Dr. Khan shared key trade statistics and welcomed Turkmenistan's proposal for an ECO feasibility study on Shared Border Zones with Iran. He informed Mr. Atagulyyev about the upcoming ECO Ministerial Meetings across various sectors and invited Turkmenistan to actively participate and contribute. Dr. Khan also emphasized the importance of signing and ratifying several agreements, including the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI), to enhance trade relations and economic cooperation.



Meeting with Director General Transport & Communications

April 29, 2025- Arkadag

Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mammethan Chakyyev, the Director General of the Agency for Transport and Communications under the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan. Dr. Khan acknowledged Turkmenistan's significant contributions to regional connectivity and welcomed Mr. Chakyyev's confirmation to participate in the upcoming 13th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport. He emphasized the need for the private sector engagement in the forthcoming meeting scheduled for June 2025 and expressed interest in organizing a side event during the 3rd UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Awaza, Turkmenistan, later this year.



Concluding the discussions, Dr. Khan stressed the importance of Turkmenistan's geographic location for enhancing connectivity within the ECO region. He called for active participation in ECO projects and technical meetings, highlighting the need to initiate work on a new ECO Regional Strategy for Information Society Development as the current strategy approaches its expiration.

First ECO Forum on Sustainable Development

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Dr. Asad M. Khan participated in the 1st ECO Forum on Sustainable Development, held on April 28–29, 2025, in the smart city of Arkadag, Turkmenistan. The landmark Forum, jointly organized by ECO and the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, focused on strengthening regional cooperation and advancing efforts toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



The Forum brought together ministers, senior officials from ECO member states, representatives from international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Key themes included climate action, gender equality, decent work, health, and the vital role of family institutions in sustainable development.

During his opening statement, Dr. Khan highlighted the significance of the Forum as a strategic platform for aligning regional policies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the need for enhanced coherence, innovative solutions, and multilateral partnerships. He underscored the role of the newly formed High-Level Sustainable Development Working Group (HLSDWG) and the soon-to-be-released ECO SDG Performance Index Report in guiding regional efforts.

Dr. Khan reaffirmed ECO's commitment to supporting its member states through capacity building, policy dialogue, and regional initiatives that foster inclusive and resilient growth. He called for institutionalizing the Forum as an annual mechanism for reviewing progress and addressing emerging regional challenges. The event concluded with a renewed commitment from participants to accelerate SDG implementation through stronger regional collaboration and integrated development strategies.

Seniors Official Meeting on Sustainable Development

April 27, 2025- Arkadag

Senior officials from ECO Member States convened in Arkadag, Turkmenistan, to strengthen cooperation on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Silapberdi Nurberdiyev emphasized the need for aligned policies, regional partnerships, and innovative solutions to address challenges such as health, gender equality, climate action, and economic growth.



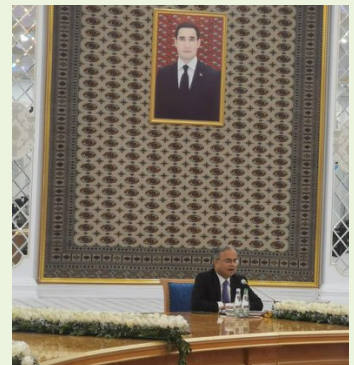
The meeting prepared the final draft of the Outcome Document for the 1st ECO Forum on Sustainable Development, which will guide collective efforts through 2030. ECO expressed gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan for its hospitality and reaffirmed its commitment to a sustainable and inclusive future.

Panel Discussion on ECO Vision 2026-2035

April 29, 2025- Arkadag

On the sidelines of the First ECO Sustainable Development Forum, Dr. Asad M. Khan spoke at the Panel titled "ECO Vision 2026–2035". Dr. Khan emphasized the critical need to empower key segments of society, including youth, businesses, and women, as central drivers of progress and sustainable development.

He highlighted that the ECO Vision 2026–2035 must not only address the challenges of today but also anticipate the needs of tomorrow. According to Dr. Khan, the vision should aim to foster innovation, enhance regional cooperation, and create opportunities for all stakeholders across member states.



Meeting with Iran's Vice President

April 28, 2025- Arkadag

On the sidelines of the First ECO Sustainable Development Forum, Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Hamid Pourmohammadi, Vice President and Head of the Planning and Budget Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the sidelines of the 1st ECO Forum on Sustainable Development. Dr. Khan commended Iran's ongoing efforts in sustainable development, particularly in the areas of transport and connectivity. The discussions focused on strategies for improving transport corridors and strengthening regional cooperation to address the challenges faced by land-locked countries, thereby promoting seamless movement of goods and services across borders.



Dr. Khan expressed appreciation for the Government of Iran's commitment to hosting the upcoming 13th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport in June 2025, highlighting the importance of this event in promoting regional cooperation and enhancing transport connectivity among member states. He encouraged Iran to continue its leadership role in promoting connectivity and sustainable practices within the region.



ECO Tourism Ministers Meeting

April 26, 2025- Erzurum

The 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism took place in Erzurum, the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025, featuring tourism leaders from nine ECO Member States to discuss regional cooperation and development strategies. The ECO Secretariat, along with representatives from ECO Observers, the Organization of Turkic States, and the Turkish Cypriot State, also attended.



ECO Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan inaugurated the meeting by emphasizing tourism's crucial role in regional integration and highlighting ECO's ongoing initiatives. H.E. Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, Türkiye's Minister of Culture and Tourism, outlined the country's progress and strategic plans for tourism advancement. The meeting approved Lahore, Pakistan, as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, Mary, Turkmenistan, for 2028, and Karakol for 2029. Discussions focused on tourism cooperation under the ECO framework and formulating tourism-related components of ECO's new strategic vision for the next decade.

A key milestone was the launch of the 1st Edition of the ECO Tourism Investment Guide, designed to attract investment and promote tourism opportunities within the region. The meeting concluded with the adoption of the "Erzurum Declaration," outlining commitments and future directions for regional tourism cooperation.

Erzurum-ECO Tourism Capital 2025

April 26, 2025- Erzurum

Erzurum was inaugurated as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025 in a ceremony attended by dignitaries including Türkiye's Vice President, Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, and ECO Secretary General, Ambassador Asad M. Khan.



The ceremony featured the presentation of the ECO Tourism Capital 2025 certificate to Governor Mustafa Çiftçi, accompanied by Mayor Mehmet Sekmen and Coordinator Muharrem Çiğlik. Cultural performances celebrated Erzurum's heritage, including the "Dance of Epics."

Erzurum has hosted events like the Winter Games and World Snowboard Cup, with upcoming attractions such as the Drama Festival and Gastronomy Fair. As the European Capital of Winter Sports for 2025, Erzurum is cemented as a premier winter tourism destination.

High-Level Experts Group Meeting on Tourism

April 25, 2025- Erzurum

The 8th Meeting of the High-Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Tourism of the ECO convened in Erzurum, gathering senior tourism officials and experts from nine ECO Member States. This meeting served as a preparatory forum for the upcoming 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism on April 26, 2025.



Key discussions focused on reviewing the implementation of decisions from the 5th Ministerial Meeting in Ardabil, Iran, and assessing progress on tourism mandates under the ECO Vision 2025. The group deliberated on sustainable tourism criteria for accommodation facilities and reviewed the first edition of the ECO Tourism Investment Guide. The meeting designated Lahore, Pakistan as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, Mary, Turkmenistan for 2028, and Karakol for 2029. Delegates exchanged ideas for drafting the Erzurum Declaration.

The outcomes of the meeting are expected to significantly contribute to the 6th Ministerial Meeting, reinforcing the commitment of ECO Member States to regional tourism development and cooperation.

Secretary General Meets Minister of Culture Turkmenistan

April 25, 2025-Erzurum

On the sidelines of the Tourism Ministers Meeting in Erzurum, Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Atageldi Shamuradov, Minister of Culture of Turkmenistan, to discuss enhancing regional tourism cooperation. Dr. Khan acknowledged Turkmenistan's efforts in hosting international events and its active participation in ECO tourism initiatives.

The Minister reiterated Turkmenistan's commitment to regional tourism development, particularly with neighboring countries, and shared recent tourism statistics and destinations. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing a shared commitment to strengthening cooperation in the tourism sector, recognizing its potential to drive economic growth and cultural understanding within the ECO region.





Secretary General Meets Chairman Tourism Committee of Uzbekistan

April 25, 2025- Erzurum

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Mr. Umid Shadiev, Chairman of the Tourism Committee of Uzbekistan, to discuss enhancing tourism cooperation within the ECO framework. The meeting focused on Uzbekistan’s progress in expanding its tourism sector and its commitment to regional collaboration.



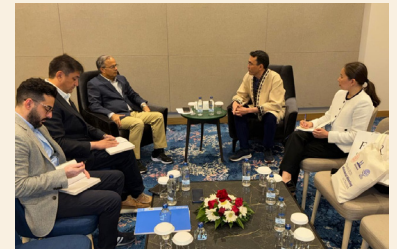
Key points included the importance of new direct flights between Lahore and Tashkent for improved connectivity. The discussion also focused on empowering tourism stakeholders, boosting private sector participation, and fostering educational exchanges through initiatives like the ECO Tour Operators’ Network and ECO-TEN.

Mr. Shadiev reaffirmed Uzbekistan's dedication to the ECO tourism agenda and readiness to collaborate on initiatives promoting the region's shared heritage. Both parties committed to ongoing coordination to fully realize the potential of regional tourism through innovative and sustainable strategies.

Secretary General Meets Vice-Minister of Tourism & Sports Kazakhstan

April 25, 2025- Erzurum

Dr. Asad M. Khan met H.E. Yerzhan Yerkinbaev, Vice-Minister of Tourism and Sports of Kazakhstan, to explore opportunities for enhancing regional tourism cooperation. Dr. Khan highlighted key ECO initiatives, including the establishment of an ECO Advisory Committee and the ECO Tourism Educational Network, aimed at enhancing skills and knowledge within the tourism sector across Member States.



The Honourable Vice Minister reaffirmed Kazakhstan’s commitment to advancing tourism collaboration in the region and proposed hosting the ECO Tourism Forum in Aktau in September to unite stakeholders and discuss strategies for boosting tourism. He also suggested nominating Aktau as the ECO Tourism Capital. The meeting concluded with both parties expressing strong commitment to further cooperation, recognizing tourism's potential to drive economic growth and foster cultural exchange within the ECO region.

Secretary General Attends Palandöken Economic Forum

April 26, 2025- Erzurum

Dr. Asad M. Khan participated in the Palandöken Economic Forum's Opening Session and a special session titled “Culture and Tourism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence” in Erzurum, the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025. The session explored innovative initiatives like digital museums and immersive technologies to connect the region’s past with its present and future.



Dr. Khan emphasized ECO’s commitment to enhancing regional cooperation. He highlighted the cultural richness and shared heritage of ECO Member States. He noted the region’s tourism growth and attributed this success to improved connectivity, upgraded infrastructure, and sustainability efforts. Dr. Khan stressed the importance of digitalization and urged tourism stakeholders to adopt innovative tools to enhance visitor experiences.

8th International Conference Risk Management in Energy – 2025

April 24, 2025

The 8th International Conference “Risk Management in Energy – 2025,” organized virtually by the Institute for Energy and Finance Foundation of Russia, gathered stakeholders from governments, international organizations, businesses, and academia.

Dr. Asad M. Khan spoke on “Tectonic Shifts in the Global Energy Market,” focusing on ECO’s vision for sustainable energy transition and the role of regional organizations. He emphasized unlocking cross-border connectivity for renewables to enhance energy security and reduce emissions, while addressing regulatory and economic barriers. He highlighted ongoing ECO projects like the Regional Electricity Market and Clean Energy Centre, stressing the need for investment and accessible financing to advance the regional energy transition.





Online Meeting Advances Progress for ECO Business Summit

April 3, 2025

An online meeting was held to review the progress of preparations for the upcoming 'ECO Business Summit,' which will be hosted by Azerbaijan on July 3, 2025, alongside the 17th ECO Summit. The meeting was chaired by ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan and included representatives from Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Exports and Investment Promotion Federation (AZPROMO), National Chamber of Azerbaijan, President of the ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and the ECO Secretariat.



Participants discussed administrative, logistical, and substantive details of the event. The ECO Business Summit aims to bring together ten to fifteen top companies from each ECO country to enhance B2B and B2G linkages, fostering substantial trade through the signing of contracts among companies and businesses.

Secretary General Meets Mexican Ambassador

April 23, 2025- Tehran

Dr. Asad M. Khan welcomed H.E. Guillermo Alejandro Puente Ordorica, Ambassador of Mexico to the Islamic Republic of Iran, to the ECO Secretariat. Dr. Khan provided an overview of the ECO's work, its key initiatives and objectives aimed at fostering regional cooperation and sustainable development.



The conversation focused on exploring potential connections between the ECO and Mexico, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in areas of mutual interest. Both sides expressed their commitment to identifying opportunities for partnership and sharing expertise to advance common goals.

Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Accommodation Facilities

April 8, 2025- Tehran

The 6th Meeting of the ECO Working Group on Tourism Standardization (WGTS) was held virtually, with representatives from ECO Member States finalizing the ECO Sustainable Tourism Common Criteria for Accommodation Facilities. Officials from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan participated in the online event.

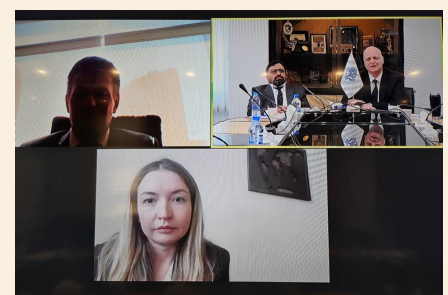


Discussions focused on the criteria's scope, eligibility requirements, and evaluation procedures for this regional tourism standardization initiative. Experts emphasized voluntary standards and the need for a reliable verification mechanism. The document is slated for consideration and adoption at the 8th High-Level Expert Group Meeting on Tourism, preceding the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism on April 25, 2025, in Erzurum, Türkiye.

ECO-EEC Technical Dialogue on Trade

April 21, 2025

The ECO Secretariat held the 1st Virtual Technical Dialogue with the Trade Policy Department of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) in Moscow. The discussion focused on exploring technical cooperation in trade and economic integration, including synergies between the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and the EAEU Trade Area.



Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to ongoing dialogue and agreed to identify practical steps for deeper institutional engagement on trade issues.

Antalya Diplomacy Forum 2025

April 10-13, 2025- Antalya

ECO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Silapberdi Nurberdiyev participated in the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF2025), focusing on systemic issues in multilateral diplomacy and fostering dialogue for global stability. The forum aimed to inspire collaboration among leaders to redefine diplomatic principles and enhance regional cooperation.

Ambassador Nurberdiyev attended sessions on multilateral diplomacy and regional cooperation. He held discussions with key officials from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Türkiye, emphasizing the importance of transport and connectivity. He highlighted upcoming ECO events, including the 1st ECO Forum on Sustainable Development Goals and Ministerial Meetings on Transport and Trade.



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