

1. Project Category:	Energy / Renewables and energy efficiency
2. Project Code:	EME1/I/Pr/2019
3. Project Title:	Establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO)
4. Project Objective(s):	Key overall objective of the project is to contribute towards increased access to modern, affordable, reliable and sustainable energy services, energy security and mitigation of negative externalities of the energy system (e.g. local pollution and GHG emissions) by creating an enabling environment for renewable energy and energy efficiency markets and investments.
5. Project Budget (Euro):	200000EUR for the Preparatory Phase
6. Project Funding Source:	<p>The pledged funding in the Preparatory Phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 50000EUR by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the Preparatory Phase (already released) and 250000USD in the first operational phase (pledged verbally and will be available upon operationalization). The fund-raising by UNIDO through international development partners is ongoing. – 50000USD from the ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF) in the Preparatory Phase. – Financial contributions by the host country of the Centre and Member States are required after operationalization.
7. Coordinating Country/Organization:	ECO Secretariat in collaboration with UNIDO
8. International/Regional Partner(s):	UNIDO, possibly IRENA, IsDB, international environmental instruments (GEF, GCF, etc.)
9. Duration of Project (Months):	The project envisages three phases: preparatory, first operational and second operational phases. The Preparatory Phase is currently underway and will

	proceed to the First Operational Phase with the inauguration of CECECO.
10. Project Starting Time (M/Y):	July 2019
11. Project Progress Ratio (%):	The Preparatory Phase: approximately 98%
12. Expected Project Completion Time (M/Y):	The Preparatory Phase is nearing completion and expected to be finalized in the end of 2024
13. Project Budget Released (%):	Due to the COVID19 outbreak the Regional Validation Meeting was held virtually and thus the budget allocated for the meeting from ECO FGPF is still available.
14. <u>Background:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The idea of establishment of CECECO was pioneered by the ECO Secretariat as the outcome of ECO-UNIDO consultations held in Vienna and Tehran. – On 22 June 2017, ECO Secretariat submitted its official request and the Indicative Concept Paper on establishment of CECECO to UNIDO for consideration. In July 2017, UNIDO responded positively to collaborating with ECO on the subject initiative. – In September 2017, the first draft of the Project Document “Preparatory Phase for the establishment of a potential ECO Clean Energy Centre” was jointly elaborated by UNIDO and ECO Secretariat and agreed upon as an indicative paper. The financial commitments by UNIDO, ECO and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) were made in 2018. The 233rd CPR Meeting, held on 11 September 2018 decided to launch the Preparatory Phase of this Project and approved the allocation of 50000USD from the ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF) as a partial financing of this phase. – “ECO Vision 2025” and its Implementation Framework stipulate the establishment of an ECO Clean Energy Centre up to 2025 by the ECO Secretariat/Member States. – “Terms of Reference (ToR) for the provision of services to assess the added value, feasibility and financial sustainability of an ECO Clean Energy Centre” was jointly prepared and agreed upon in January 2019. UNIDO announced a bid in February 2019 through its Procurement Portal for the provision of international consultancy services. Joint UNIDO-ECO Evaluation Team 	

undertook the examination and evaluation of the international bidders applied for the subject consultancy. ECONOLER – the Canada-based company was selected as an international consultant for the subject assignment. The international consultant submitted project deliverables, notably the Inception Report, Baseline and Needs Assessment Report, Feasibility Study Report and Project Document for the first operational phase.

- Furthermore, the 75th UN GA Resolution A/RES/75/324 (9 September 2021) and 77th UN GA Resolution A/RES/77/330 (25 August 2023) welcomed the idea of the development of a joint program by UN and ECO for sustainable energy and, as its outcome, the establishment of CECECO and called upon the relevant UN agencies and international financial institutions to consider extending their financial and technical support for the development and implementation stages of this program.
- Technical assessment conducted by UNIDO with respect to the candidates for hosting the Centre has given to Azerbaijan the highest point as a nominee. The Republic of Azerbaijan was selected as the host country of the Centre at the 25th Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting (27 November 2021, Ashgabat).
- The Charter of the ECO Clean Energy Center was adopted by the 4th ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting on 21 June 2021.
- The Partners' Roundtable Conference on the Start-up and Operationalization of the Clean Energy Centre of ECO region (CECECO) was held on 16 March 2022 virtually by ECO Secretariat in partnership with the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and with UNIDO's support with a view to raise funds for operationalization of the Centre.

15. Current Status:

- The Preparatory Phase of the Project was formally launched in July 2019 and is currently being finalized. It will proceed to the first operational phase with the inauguration of CECECO by the host country, which is expected to be held in the course of 2024.
- The Ad-hoc Committee comprising ECO Secretariat, UNIDO and the host country was set up to contribute to the operationalization process. Furthermore, the Interim Director of CECECO was appointed by the host country in the end of 2023 and this nomination was welcomed by 282nd CPR Meeting.
- The Charter of the ECO Clean Energy Center was signed by the Republic of Azerbaijan (as the host country) in March 2023. During the 27th COM Meeting, held on 10 October 2023 in Shusha (Azerbaijan), the Charter of CECECO was signed by the Republic of Türkiye. In August 2024, Republic of Uzbekistan

signed the Charter. ECO Secretariat has received the Note Verbale dated 2 January 2024 from the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran on the intention of the Government of Pakistan to sign the Charter of CECECO. The coordination is underway to find a slot for signing the Charter by I.R. Pakistan.

- In the course of 2024, three Coordination Meetings among ECO, UNIDO and the host country – Azerbaijan on establishment of CECECO were organized on a virtual mode, respectively on 17 January, 15 February and 26 August 2024.
- In January 2024, ECO Secretariat proposed the Member States to review the possibilities for the uptake of five project proposals, which were built on success stories across the world and presented by UNIDO for potential replication in the ECO Region and subsequent implementation by the Centre upon approval.
- Only three Member States have so far conveyed their views and comments on the subject replication projects, namely Azerbaijan, Iran and Türkiye. The remaining Member States are awaited to do so. Türkiye shared its general positive response on all 5 project proposals in March 2024 and highlighted that it may take any coordination role assigned by UNIDO. Different Turkish authorities made comments particularly on the agri-voltaic, eco-tourism and deep decarbonisation projects. In April 2024, Azerbaijan prioritized the promotion of solar thermal technologies market (SOLTRAIN) and eco-tourism projects. Furthermore, in May 2024, Iran set SOLTRAIN and BLOOM Clean-Tech as its priority projects, while Turkmenistan only informed of the designation of the relevant authorities for participation in the events related to the establishment of CECECO. In sum, all reactions and feedback were instrumental in order to identify the priority projects. The subject projects may become the initial ones, to be potentially implemented by CECECO.
- UNIDO developed draft budget forecast and informed the Secretariat of their engagements with potential development partners that may financially support the Centre.
- The Republic of Azerbaijan in its capacity as the President and host of the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) is planning to organize in partnership with ECO and UNIDO a soft launch of CECECO on the sidelines of COP29 on 15 November 2024 in Baku. The preparations are currently underway.

16. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:

- The subject Centre may be formally operationalized as soon as three Member States will sign and ratify the Charter of CECECO.

- All ECO Member States are expected to be actively involved in the operationalization process, most notably in terms of signing and ratification of the Charter of CECECO, consideration of allocation of voluntary funds, rendering political and technical support for successful launching of the operational phase. The First Operational Phase envisages launching of regional strategic programmes.
- All ECO Member States (except Azerbaijan, Iran and Türkiye) are expected to expedite providing their feedback on five project proposals presented by UNIDO for replication in the ECO Region and subsequent implementation by the CECECO upon approval. The Secretariat may thus identify the priority ones that could be in the scopes of interest of the Member States.
- Fund-raising is instrumental by key stakeholders, namely ECO, UNIDO, the host country, other Member States and international donors.
- ECO Secretariat will continue its engagement with UNIDO and other potential partners for successful completion of the Preparatory Phase of the Project and proceeding to the First Operational Phase.

17. Expected Outcomes of the Project of establishment of CECECO:

- Regional sustainable energy promotion agency created and efficiently managed;
- Enabling policy, legal and incentive frameworks are created and under implementation;
- Effective sustainable energy qualification, innovation, certification and accreditation frameworks for sustainable energy are created and implemented;
- Effective knowledge and data management, as well as awareness raising and advocacy;
- Investments in sustainable energy infrastructure and manufacturing and servicing industries mobilized.

1. Project Category:	Energy / Electricity trade and power connectivity
2. Project Code:	EME2/E/REM/2017
3. Project Title:	Feasibility Study on establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM)
4. Project Objective(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To study prerequisites and existing conditions in the ECO Region for establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market. – To define optimal solutions for promoting regional electricity trade via improving policy and regulatory environment, undertaking relevant arrangements, harmonizing and merging the markets and building institutional capacities. – To find synergies and complementarities among the fragmented bilateral and multilateral electricity grids existing/expected in the ECO Region and mobilize them under the ECO-REM platform.
5. Project Budget (US\$):	– Initial estimated cost is 350000USD
6. Project Funding Source:	– Seed financing by the interested Member States, ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF), UNESCAP, financial institutions and donors.
7. Coordinating Country/Organization:	– ECO Secretariat / Coordinating country is sought to be further identified
8. International/Regional Partner:	The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the International Energy Charter
9. Duration of Project (Months):	12 months

10. Project Starting Time (M/Y):	2024-2025
11. Project Progress Ratio (%):	The ESCAP's Project "Energy connectivity for sustainable development", which is set to be the groundwork for the Feasibility Study of ECO-REM is nearing completion (as of October 2024)
12. Expected Project Completion Time (M/Y):	End of 2025
13. Project Budget Released (%):	The ESCAP finances its Project "Energy connectivity for sustainable development". The resource mobilization for the Feasibility Study of ECO-REM will be taken up driven by the outcomes of the subject project.
14. <u>Background:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM) was proposed by I.R. Iran in the course of the 2nd High Level Experts Group Meeting on Energy (September 2012, Ankara). The 23rd RPC Meeting (6-8 May 2013, Tehran) emphasized the importance of establishment of ECO-REM and requested the Member States to organize relevant events with a view to realize that idea. – The 1st Experts Group Meeting on establishment of ECO-REM, hosted by Iran, was held on 5-6 November 2013 in ECO Secretariat. Apart from the ECO Member States, the representatives of Nord Pool Spot, ECO-CCI, IsDB and ECO-TDB also participated at the subject Meeting. The major outcome of the Meeting was the recommendation of implementation of ECO-REM as a pilot project initially with participation of I.R. Iran and Turkey and later with other interested ECO Member States for the maximum benefits of ECO Region. – The draft "Terms of Reference for hiring international and local consultants for preparation of this Feasibility Study of ECO-REM" was prepared by ECO Secretariat and circulated among the Member States with several reminders for getting views and comments. However, the initiative has long been in standstill. – As an outcome of consultations between ECO and Energy Charter Secretariat in 2016-2017, the Latter expressed its readiness to support launching the subject Project through establishment of a consortium for joint coordination of this Project based on the previous experiences of the Energy Charter. 	

- ECO Secretariat in cooperation with the Energy Charter Secretariat co-organized technical workshop to introduce the best international practices in electricity market sector on 14 October 2020.
- So far, three Iran-Turkey bilateral meetings on ECO-REM had been held. The 3rd Iran-Turkey Bilateral Meeting on ECO-REM was held on 31 May 2021 and the Republic of Azerbaijan was also invited with the view to contribute to the project as a country, which has power trade and exchange with both countries. The Meeting decided that the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Project may be reviewed and updated based on the recent developments, if necessary.
- The 4th ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting, which was held on 24 June 2021, has adopted the roadmap on realization of the ECO-REM Project assigning concrete steps to achieve the goal. Meanwhile, the Declaration of the Ministerial Meeting as its outcome document emphasizes the need for expanded efforts towards the regional electricity market.

– **15. Current Status:**

- ECO Secretariat has been making efforts for convening the next – 2nd Experts Group Meeting on establishment of ECO-REM. The Republic of Tajikistan expressed its readiness to host this meeting, which was sought to approve the draft ToR for hiring international and local consultants for preparation of a Feasibility Study on establishment of ECO-REM, to define a roadmap for further action and accelerate the implementation of the project.
- In 2023, the Secretariat started a dialogue with UNESCAP to align ECO-REM with ESCAP’s “Regional Roadmap on Power System Connectivity: Promoting Cross-border Electricity Connectivity for Sustainable Development”. In December 2023, ECO Secretariat circulated among Member States the tentative schedule of activities, to be undertaken in 2024 with the technical and financial support of UNESCAP. The launching event – virtual meeting titled “Programme on Energy Connectivity in Central Asia and the Caucasus” was held on 24 January 2024.
- The aforementioned virtual kickoff meeting marked the launch of the ESCAP’s Project “Energy connectivity for sustainable development”. The subject project covers all 10 ECO Member States with the ultimate goal to deliver a set of targeted, actionable recommendations for policy and regulatory reforms that would enable the establishment of multilateral, multi-directional power trading at sub-regional levels where there is existing cross-border transmission infrastructure.

- The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) organized the “Regional Stakeholder Consultations on Energy Connectivity and Sustainable Energy” on 12-13 June 2024 in Astana, Kazakhstan. The Consultation aimed to seek expert opinion for the implementation of the UNESCAP – UNECE Programme on Energy Connectivity in Central Asia and the Caucasus launched in January 2024. The meeting discussed further actions for the implementation of the ECO-REM project.
- The Secretariat circulated among Member States on 2 July 2024 the draft “Regional Roadmap on Power System Connectivity – ECO Regional Electricity Market: promoting cross-border electricity connectivity for sustainable development”, developed by the consultants as the AFOREMENTIONED UNESCAP Project’s outcome document. The views and comments were received from Azerbaijan and Iran. The feedback of other Member States is awaited.
- The Secretariat also expressed readiness to organize the 4th Iran-Türkiye Bilateral Meeting on establishment of the ECO Regional Electricity Market seeking for the preferable dates. The response from the related Member States is awaited.
- The Republic of Tajikistan expressed its readiness to host the 2nd Experts Group Meeting on establishment of ECO-REM in September 2024, but this event was rescheduled. The new dates are being negotiated.

16. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:

- The Member States are expected to pursue proactive partnership within the Project on establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market and render all necessary support for its successful development. Most notably, at the current stage the Member States may expedite providing their views and comments on the draft “Regional Roadmap on Power System Connectivity – ECO Regional Electricity Market: promoting cross-border electricity connectivity for sustainable development” and proactively engage in finalization of the UNESCAP Project “Energy connectivity for sustainable development”.
- Driven by the outcomes and recommendations of the draft Regional Roadmap on Power System Connectivity, developed by the consultants of the UNESCAP Project, the Member States and the Secretariat need to re-consider implementation of the Feasibility Study of ECO-REM and revisit its draft ToR. Subject to concurrence of the Member States, the funding of the ToR may be undertaken through the ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF) and

equal seed financing by the Member States. The Member States may further re-consider promoting bilateral dimension of the project between Iran and Türkiye.

- The 2nd Experts Group Meeting on establishment of ECO-REM may also be organized with a view to engage greater number of Member States for ownership of the project along with financial and in-kind contribution, if needed.

17. Expected Outcomes of the Project

- The electricity trade among the interested ECO Member States will transform into the multilateral platform through integrating the fragmented bilateral and multilateral projects and initiatives existing/expected in the ECO Region;
- The ECO Region will harness its optimal regional electricity potential;
- The long-term regional electricity exchange and region-wide cooperation will be enhanced;
- ECO-REM will further potentially be expanded towards the integrated non-ECO electricity markets;
- ECO-REM will contribute to the long-term regional energy sustainability through multiplier effects.

1. Project Category	Minerals / Mapping
2. Project Title	Preparation of Eco-Environmental Quality Index (EQI) Map (1:5M) of the ECO Region (ECO-EQI)
3. Project Objective(s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific regional challenges related to natural and man-made disasters confronted by the ECO Member States necessitate addressing environmental issues. Most of them encounter numerous long-term negative consequences of the lack of country-wide environmental vulnerability assessment maps and environmental regulation for national planning on their economics and health. The subject Project thus aims at evaluation and analysis of environmental conditions in the regional scale. It is designed to evaluate ecological qualities of environment over the ECO Region through collaborative efforts of the Member States. 2. Environmental quality index data contain information that directly leads to making ecological and environmental decisions in mining, industries, agriculture, forestry, watershed management, biodiversity and human health issues, waste burial and land use management. These data could be a powerful tool for evaluating the environmental challenges and providing appropriate solutions. The ecological-environmental quality assessment is useful in connecting regional economic to social sustainable development.

4. Project Budget:	300000USD
5. Project Funding Source:	The project design envisages that 250000USD is due to be covered by the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) and 50000USD may be allocated from the ECO Feasibility and General Purpose Fund (FGPF)
6. Coordinating Country/Organization:	Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) / ECO Secretariat
7. International/Regional Partner:	May be assigned by the coordinating entities if needed
8. Duration of Project (Months):	12 months
9. Project Starting Time (M/Y):	Upon allocation of the required budget
10. Project Progress Ratio(%):	Not yet launched
11. Expected Project Completion Time (M/Y):	Upon launching
12. Project Budget Released (%):	Not yet allocated
14. <u>Background:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The subject project proposal was first initiated by GSI following the 6th ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting (MEGM), held on 17-18 October 2016 in Tabriz (I.R. Iran). As per recommendation of this Meeting, the relevant authorities of I.R. Iran provided the Secretariat with the Concept Papers on (i) Preparing Eco-Environmental Quality Index (EQI) Map (1:5M) of the ECO Region (ECO-EQI); (ii) Geodynamic and present-day Crustal Stress (ECO-GeoDyS) Map of the ECO Region; (iii) Preparation of Mineral Deposit Types and Metallogenic Map of the ECO Region; and (iv) Spiroclast Map of mobile belt between Gondwana and Eurasia, which were accordingly circulated among the Member States for their views and comments. – The 28th RPC Meeting (11-14 December 2017, Islamabad, Pakistan) requested the Member States (except Tajikistan) to expedite providing the Secretariat with their views/comments on the Concept Paper of project proposal on ECO-EQI. – The 7th ECO MEGM, held on 5-7 August 2018 in Sanandaj (I.R. Iran), noted that in response to aforementioned relevant Concept Paper, Afghanistan, while 	

noting the importance of the project, has provided comments and suggestions on ECO-EQI, and Tajikistan has supported the subject project. The 7th Meeting also reflected that Pakistan, while supporting the project proposal, made views/comments and notable suggestions for its pragmatic implementation.

- Following the circulation of the Concept Paper, the Secretariat regularly requested the Member States through its Notes Verbales and during 28th and 29th RPC Meetings, as well as 7th ECO Minerals Experts Group Meeting to expedite providing with their views and comments on the referred paper.
- As of today, four Member States, namely, Afghanistan, Iran (initiator), Pakistan and Tajikistan have so far supported launching of the subject project.
- In reply to the enquiry of the MFA of I.R. Iran, ECO Secretariat in its NV dated 18 August 2019 commented that the relevant authorities of the Iran may wish to implement the ECO-EQI Project with the limited number of the Member States, in pursuance of the “Functional Methodology of ECO”, stipulating that the project shall be identified with ECO if at least four Member States participate in it. The Secretariat reckoned that the designing of the EQI Map/thematic maps as an outcome of the project requires the participation and collaboration of a greater number of the Member States. In this regard, the Secretariat expected from the relevant authorities of the I.R. Iran to advise their approach on the subject matter.
- During the 30th, 31st, 32nd RPC meetings, the Member States resolved to start the procedures and render their utmost support to launching and efficient implementation of this Project as it targets on evaluation of ecological qualities of environment across the ECO Region through collaborative efforts of the Member States.

15. Current Status:

- The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Project was prepared and circulated among the Member States by the Secretariat’s NV dated 18 April 2021.
- On 26 April 2022, ECO Secretariat in partnership with I.R. Iran co-organized a validation meeting to involve greater number of Member States and approve the validity of its ToR. The participated Member States supported the Project. The Meeting report was adopted on 20 May 2022 by silence procedure.
- The initiator country hosted the 8th MEGM in Isfahan on 13-17 November 2022, which took up the Project. The 9th MEGM, to be held in Islamabad is expected to complete discussions on launching the Project.

- The consultation with the I.R. Pakistan is underway with respect to the organization of the 9th MEGM tentatively on 9-12 December 2024 (formal NV is expected).

16. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:

- All Member States' active involvement is required for preparation of the sophisticated regional map in terms of sharing necessary data and information during project implementation process. The limited number of countries could be insufficient for its effective implementation.
- With the understanding of the Member States' firm support, once the initiator country is ready to allocate its share for implementation of the project, it may wish to appeal, in coordination with ECO Secretariat, one of the CPR meetings for consideration of allocation of 50000USD from the ECO FGPF. In this scenario, upon allocation of the required budget by GSI and ECO Secretariat, the preparation of the contract will be undertaken by ECO Secretariat and the project manager – GSI.

17. Expected Outcomes of the Project:

- Prepare national scale environmental risk assessment maps for strategic national planning;
- Develop a standard method to assess ecological-environmental quality in regional scale;
- Identify and prioritize vulnerable areas leveraging cost effective methods, such as remote sensing and GIS for detailed studies;
- Identify natural and anthropogenic factors affecting the vulnerability of ecological areas and develop solutions to reduce the impact of harmful factors;
- Periodic monitoring of ecological areas over time through updating of EQI maps;
- Identification of appropriate areas for development of population centres and agriculture lands through codification of land use strategies;
- Providing basic data for improving mining activities, forestry and farming compatible with environmental standards;
- Provide basic information for regional ecological area conservation through codification of protective laws;
- Improvement of human habitats via development of environmental conservation policies on a regional scale;

- Employing quantitative assessment methods instead of traditional qualitative ones for regional planning;
- Empowerment of Member States in protecting the human habitat, natural resources, biodiversity, forests, pastures, soil and water resources;
- Integrating the scattered data in different organizations to design a regional database;
- Facilitate the access to information needed by decision-makers and researchers through establishing a regional data bank.

1. Project Category:	Environment / Revision of framework documents
2. Project Code:	---
3. Project Title:	Assessment on Revision of Framework Plan of Action on Environment Cooperation and Global Warming (2016-2020), Work Plan on Biodiversity (2016-2020) and Development of Action Plan/Roadmap on ECO Land Care Program
4. Project Objective(s):	<p>The project aims to deliver the policy documents and actionable roadmaps that would serve as a guiding framework on environmental cooperation within ECO until 2030. The subject documents are expected to be endorsed by the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment and then approved by the ECO high-level decision-making bodies.</p> <p>The objectives of the project are to conduct the ECO region-scoped assessment study resulting in (1) a “Plan of Action on Environmental Cooperation 2023-2030” and (2) a “Roadmap for implementation of ECO Land Care Program 2023-2030”, through reviewing and updating the “Plan of Action on Environmental Cooperation and Global Warming” and “Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region”.</p>
5. Project Budget (Euro):	9000USD

6. Project Funding Source:	ECO Special Support Fund (SSF)
7. Coordinating Country/Organization:	ECO Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ECO-IEST) in collaboration with the ECO Secretariat
8. International/Regional Partner(s):	None
9. Duration of Project (Months):	Expected to be completed upon approval by the 6 th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment
10. Project Starting Time (M/Y):	March 2022
11. Project Progress Ratio (%):	approximately 95%
12. Expected Project Completion Time (M/Y):	During the 6 th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment
13. Project Budget Released (%):	100% of the project budget has been released and paid as a consultancy fee to the consultant given the progress made, payment schedule, and the project timeline.
14. <u>Background:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment (Istanbul, 18 November 2014) emphasized the need for a revised Plan of Action (PoA) for the period of 2021-2030 and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a detailed needs-based assessment of countries addressing Land Degradation, Dust Haze and Sand Storm in ECO Region in this respect. – ECO Secretariat developed the Feasibility Study on Desertification and Land Degradation. That, in turn, served to the preparation of the draft Project Proposal on the same topics. The Member States shared their feedback on the said document. – In July 2016, the Project Consultation Workshop was held in Tehran; further on, land degradation and conservation issues of the ECO countries were identified in search of assistance from the proposed Project. – Draft Project Proposal was elevated to the status of the ECO LandCare Program. 	

- In December 2021, another Workshop was held in Antalya (Turkey) to review the ECO LandCare Program and ways to implement it.
- The Republic of Turkey was a Coordinating Country for follow-up and implementation of “Work Plan on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2016-2020)”.

15. Current Status:

- Following the circulation of questionnaires, provision of the inception report and several virtual and in-person meetings between the consultant and the Secretariat, the consultant provided the ECO Secretariat with a draft of “ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment” and its annexes – work programmes on climate change and biodiversity for the period of 2023-2030.
- As regards the ECO LandCare Initiative, it is noteworthy that in response to the Member States' request during the Antalya workshop in 2021, the ECO-IEST developed a brief document to support its inception and determine the most efficient means of implementation of the first phase of the ECO LandCare Initiative (ECO-LCI).
- The above-mentioned drafts were reviewed and modified by the Secretariat in coordination with the consultant and circulated to the Member States for feedback.
- Only the Republic of Türkiye sent its feedback to the ECO Secretariat dissenting the subject brief document to support the LCI's inception.
- Taking into account that no other substantive feedback was received from the Member States, the documents were considered and discussed by the 7th ECO Working Group Meeting on the Environment held online on 20 November 2023. Since the representatives from the Member States did not express any objection to the endorsement of the ECO Cooperation Framework by the decision-making bodies of ECO, this document and its two annexes were forwarded for consideration by the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Environment of the ECO Member States, convened in Dubai (UAE) on 9 December 2023. The ECO Member States following this Informal Ministerial Meeting on the sidelines of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) released a Joint Statement which, *inter alia*, addressed the matter as follows:

“ Note with appreciation the development of the new “ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2023-2030)” and its two Annexes, namely “Work Program on Climate Change in ECO Region (2023-2030)” and “Work Program on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2023-2030)” as a long-term regional strategy, which streamlines key priorities and action areas in the ECO Region

for environmental cooperation in view of the rapidly evolving global environmental and climate agenda; therefore recommend the subject Cooperation Framework for adoption by the decision-making bodies of ECO; also recommend to hold detailed consultation and coordination with a view to agree upon a common ground document for guiding the regional activities on such topical issues for ECO Region as desertification, land degradation, sand storm and dust haze.”

16. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:

- Since the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Environment of the ECO Member States recommended the subject Cooperation Framework for adoption by the decision-making bodies of ECO, the 6th regular Ministerial Meeting on Environment may endorse and submit it to the COM. All Member States are requested to be actively involved in the finalization process of this Framework and its annexes on climate change and biodiversity (2024-2030) during this sectoral ministerial meeting.
- As regards the ECO LandCare Programme, taking into account the lack of consensus among the Member States on the result so far, more consultation and coordination among them are required to find a way out of this standstill and agree upon a common ground document for guiding the regional activities on the significant issue of land degradation.
- The ECO Secretariat has been following up with the Republic of Uzbekistan the hosting of 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Samarkand in 2024 and getting the exact dates and modality of convening this event. The response is awaited.

17. Expected Outcomes of the Project:

- Providing the ECO high-level decision-making bodies with a policy support framework and a long-term regional roadmap on the environment, which streamlines the relevant key priority areas to be focused in the ECO region;
- Facilitation of an enabling environment in the ECO region for environmental action and cooperation.