

# **11<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport**

**2 February 2022 (virtual)**

## **Ankara Declaration**

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**We the Ministers/Heads of delegations of the ECO Member States**, gathering on February 2, 2022 to join this ministerial meeting on transport and while:

**Realizing** the important role of transport sector including multimodal and intermodal transportation, especially in the aftermath of Corona Pandemic, to support the sustainable socio-economic progress and development in the ECO region;

**Being** cognizant of the urgency to ensure accelerated implementation of the long-term priorities of ECO for development of transport and communication infrastructure to promote ECO's intra-regional and inter-regional connectivity;

**Commending** the operationalization of Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Road and Railway Corridor by the successful cargo dispatch from Pakistan to Turkey through Iran;

**Congratulating** the signing of the “Memorandum of Understanding between Railway Administrations of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Implementation of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) Railway Freight Corridor” on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit in Ashgabat in November 2021;

**Recognizing** the importance of ECO's activities to digitalize transport, customs and border crossing procedures through implementing e-TIR/e-CMR and other IT tools and mechanisms with a view to creating digital transport corridors among the interested Member States;

**Highlighting** the global impact of the COVID Pandemic on transport sector and; **Encouraging** the cooperation within the framework of the “*ECO Practical Guidelines On Cross Border Facilitation Measures Under Conditions of COVID-19*” as well as **reaffirming** our strong determination to remove all physical and non-physical barriers on transit transport to minimize the negative effects of the pandemic on the regional supply chains and wellbeing of our people;

**Underscoring** the significance and necessity of a fund-raising conference to be organized by the ECO-TDB to attract investment in the connectivity projects in the ECO Region;

**Reiterating** the important role that the ECO Trade and Development Bank can play in facilitating and financing the ECO regional connectivity projects;

**Welcoming** the establishment of the “Consultative Group of ECO TIR Issuing and Guaranteeing Associations” to contribute to the enrichment of the discussions of TTCC;

**Realizing** the important role of regional maritime cooperation in maintaining the supply chain, particularly for landlocked countries (LLCs);

**Stressing** the need to promote cooperation in civil aviations for enhancing regional connectivity and economic integration;

**Appreciating** the constructive role of regional unions and international partner organizations as well as banks in materializing the objectives of our organization;

**Reiterating** the strong commitments to achieve the overall goals and objectives of the ECO in the field of transportation;

**Have decided to:**

1. **Invite** Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to accede to the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and its full implementation by all the Member States for the economic development and welfare of the ECO Region;
2. **Emphasize** on an early organization of the fund raising event by the Economic Cooperation Organization-Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) as envisaged in the midterm review of the ECO Vision 2025 to seek finances for supporting the regional connectivity projects in the areas of rail and road networks;
3. **Encourage** the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) to finance the connectivity projects of the ECO and also contribute in facilitation of payments of the projects;
4. **Task** the Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC) to take into consideration the new transport corridors proposed by the Member States in order to expand the regional transport networks;
5. **Acknowledge**, with appreciation, the activation of the ITI Road Corridor in October 2021 as a major achievement in regional connectivity and **mandate** the relevant authorities to remove the impediments and barriers for regularization of the Corridor;

6. **Commend** the resumption of the ITI Train and call upon the stakeholders to further utilize the cargo train service for enhancing regional trade and, in this connection, **express** interest to explore maximum possibilities for the extension of the said corridor to Europe and China;
7. **Support** the ECO Visa Scheme and call upon all Member States to include board members and managing directors of the international transport companies of the ECO Member States in the said scheme and instruct the Secretariat to modify the scheme and share it with the Member States;
8. **Encourage** the Member States for establishing 'Green lanes', subject to risk management, in their border crossing points along the main ECO transport routes to facilitate the movement of general cargo particularly food stuff, medicines and essential humanitarian and rescue products;
9. **Urge** the Member States to exert all their efforts to digitalize the relevant legal transport documents in order to ensure the smooth flow of goods in transit and **mandate** the ECO Secretariat to actively conduct projects and workshops on eTIR and eCMR Protocols and other international transit agreements aiming at efficient transition of Customs of Member States towards digitalization;
10. **Mandate** the ECO Secretariat to consider establishing a Geographic Information System (GIS) section under Transport & Communication Directorate (T&C) for mapping of regional connectivity networks in the fields of transport (road, rail, air and maritime) and other regional connectivity initiatives of the Organization;
11. **Emphasize** on commercialization of the ITI, KTI, Iran-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan , Pakistan-Central Asia, Istanbul-Almaty/Bandar Abbas - Almaty railway and road corridors and acknowledge their capacity to serve as key transit corridors in the region and **take** note of the interest expressed by some of the Member States to accede to these networks;
12. **Stress** on the importance and the need for construction and rehabilitation of missing links between Rasht-Astara and, Quetta – Taftan, trans-shipment facility in Taftan Railway Station, establishment of TIR Parks at Border Crossing Points (BCPs), expansion of transit capacity of Gurbulakh\Bazargan BCP, Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Corridor and **mandate** the Secretariat to conduct technical meetings in this regard;
13. **Emphasize** the importance of promoting such international transport and transit corridors as Afghanistan-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey (Lapis Lazuli),

Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran, Tajikistan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey with the aim to increase cargo transportation and enhance transport connectivity;

14. **Underscore** the importance of providing the ECO Land Locked Countries with uninterrupted access to transport infrastructure, within the framework of national legislation and international agreements to which ECO Member States are party to, especially to sea ports and, in this connection, **urge** for an early start of the of the study project on ECO Gates;
15. **Support** promotion of maritime cooperation particularly in establishing Ro-Ro Lines in the Caspian Sea, provision of access to sea ports for the LLCs and organizing technical training courses on maritime issues as well as establishment of ECO Maritime Network;
16. **Express interest** to increase collaboration for developing regional tourism by enhancing land, rail, sea and air connectivity to tourism destinations in the region as well as facilitation of visa procedures;
17. **Encourage** the Member States to consider establishing regular and chartered flights to facilitate air connectivity, travel and tourism and also offer preferential airport services to each other;
18. **Commend** expansion of civil aviation cooperation, particularly, by establishing an air hub in Central Asia, lifting different barriers, establishing chartered flights and offering training courses and **task** the Secretariat to establish a network of accredited airlines and travel agencies of ECO;
19. **Acknowledge** the contribution and constructive role of the private sector in promotion of transit and trade in our region and **decide** to establish “ECO Transport Excellence Award” in recognition and appreciation of the best performing transport companies, associations and other stakeholders in road, railways, maritime and civil aviation and mandate the ECO Secretariat to prepare the relevant modalities in this regard.
20. **Assign** the ECO Secretariat to involve “the Consultative Group of ECO TIR Issuing and Guaranteeing Associations” in the meetings of the TTCC;
21. **Encourage** organization of joint projects, programs, training courses and workshops between ECO Secretariat and IsDB, UNESCAP, UNECE, IRU, IMO, OTIF, OSJD, ICAO and other international organizations and, in this framework,

**Call** upon the Secretariat to institutionalize its relations with the interested international organizations;

22. **Express** sincere gratitude and appreciation to the substantive contributions and inputs from ECO Member States and International Organizations to secure practical outcome of the Ministerial Meeting on Transport.
23. **Appreciate** the constructive role of the ECO Secretary General and his team in materializing the objectives and mandates of the Organization, particularly in the transport sector, and fully support any such programs, projects and future initiatives for enhancing regional connectivity and economic growth of the Region;
24. **Thank** the Republic of Turkey for organizing this important meeting and welcome the offer of the Republic of Uzbekistan to organize the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Transport in 2023.

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