

Second ECO Ministerial Meeting on ICT

5 December 2017
Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

Baku Declaration

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We, the Ministers/Authorities responsible for information and communications technologies of the ECO Member States, met in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan on 5th December 2017 on the occasion of the Second ECO Ministerial Meeting on Information and Communications Technology:

Having discussed the ways and means for enhancement of regional cooperation in the field of ICT;

Recognizing the fact that information and communication technologies are critical enablers of economic development and investment, with consequential benefits for employment and social welfare;

Reaffirming the strong determination of ECO Member States to accelerate economic and social progress, development and stability in the region;

Recognizing that connectivity is a central enabling agent in building the Information Society and that achieving ECO Vision 2025 on ICT goals and proposed Plan of Action which will be subject for revision by the ECO Member States;

Acknowledging that Infrastructures is central in achieving the goal of sustainable connectivity for all and enabling access to remote and marginalized areas at national and regional levels and thus stress our resolution to improve and promote ICT infrastructure as enabler to the above-mentioned ends;

Mindful of the "Connect 2020 Agenda" Vision as a new global framework for collaboration to build an inclusive information society by 2020 and enable and accelerate social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development for everyone;

Recognizing the imperative of favourable national and regional regulatory and legislative environment for enhanced ICT cooperation in the ECO Region;

Recognizing the development of telecommunication infrastructure in enhancing access to telecommunications/ICTs can bridge digital divide;

Highlighting the importance of the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway project aimed at strengthening a sustainable cooperation by creation of information (internet) infrastructure for establishment of regional digital information society, as well as serving the objective of diversification and modernization of telecommunication transits between Europe and Asia;

Cognisant of the main trends in the ICT industry, notably, transition to the Next Generation Networks (NGN) i.e. LTE and 5G where a single network through service providers offers every type of communications services for consumers and access to affordable broadband to promote equivalent

affordable broadband access to the Internet for all people regardless of where they live or their living standards;

Conscious of the challenges in combating the use of information and communication technologies for criminal purposes and emphasizing the need to reinforce technical assistance, at the request of ECO Member States, for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of such use in accordance with national and international law;

Recognizing the importance of ECO's initiatives, efforts and projects in the fields of transport and communications for the mutual benefit of the Member States;

Acknowledging the importance of involvement of all stakeholders, including the private sector, in developing and implementing national and regional ICT strategies;

Reiterating our strong commitment and resolve to achieve ECO goals and objectives in the field of ICT in line with the "ECO Vision 2025";

Acknowledging that as information society and digital economy increasingly develops, the dire need for reliable cyber security is becoming unprecedentedly relevant and imperative. The cyber security can be promoted through ECO region cooperation involving all stakeholders and expertise. These efforts should be supported by increased international cooperation. Accordingly, ECO Member States proposed ITU to provide technical assistance to ECO to that end. Within a regionally and globally supported culture of cyber-security, it will be practically possible to enhance security and to ensure the protection of data and privacy, while enhancing access and e-trade;

Agreed on the following:

1. **Welcome** ECO's follow up measures to fulfil the mandate given by ECO Ministers of ICT in their 1st Ministerial Meeting (Tehran, November 2012) and the studies conducted in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU);
2. **Give priority** to the development of infrastructure and ICT capacity building so as to enable universal access to telecommunications/ICTs for all countries and peoples.
3. **Commend** ITU for its uninterrupted support and sponsorship of the feasibility Studies on ECO infrastructure and ICT applications resulting in a rich and informative date basis, Plan of Action and guidance on the way forward contributing to socio-economic development of the ECO region;

4. **Welcome** preparation of the “2025 ECO Regional Strategy for Information Society Development” and the Action Plan and agree to work closely in this regard.
5. **Call** for creation of conditions oriented to reducing the costs of regional infrastructure roll-out by establishing favourable conditions of right-of-way and physical infrastructure sharing.
6. **Cooperate** in development of ICT based on internationally interoperable technical standards and technological innovation, as well as systems in exchanging knowledge and experience at regional and sub-regional level.
7. **Stress** the need for development of a modern internal infrastructure and promotion of infrastructure projects to improve fixed and mobile broadband connectivity via deploying infrastructure across the countries, especially with the focus in rural areas.
8. **Acknowledge** that establishment of effective regulatory framework and institutional system of ICT regulation as well as ensuring independent and effective functioning of the national regulatory authorities is an integral part towards successful management of the sector.
9. **Inform** the ECO Member States about the changes and reforms undertaken at the national level that leads to the change of state policy in the field of ICT.
10. **Recognize** the increasingly significant role of the private sector in the development of ICT infrastructure, design, manufacturing and maintenance of equipment and services.
11. **Shall endeavour** to do our utmost to detect, prevent and respond to cyber-crime and misuse of ICTs through promoting effective mutual assistance efforts; strengthening institutional support at the regional level for preventing, detecting and recovering from such incidents; prosecution of misuse and encouraging education and raising awareness.
12. **Highlight** the need for enhancing cooperation on education, research, and transfer of knowledge in the field of ICT through cooperation among ICT universities and ICT research centres as well as implementation of joint research projects.
13. **Coordinate** and develop cooperation in the framework of relevant international organizations.
14. **Welcome** the decision on establishment of an appropriate mechanism to enable the Member States to regularly meet and address the issues related to proposed Regional Strategy and the Action Plan.

15. **Request** the ECO Secretary General to assure effective implementation of the Baku Declaration as well as decisions of the Ministerial Meeting reflected in the Report and submit regular progress report to the Member States.
16. **Express** our profound thanks to H.E. Mr. Ramin Guluzade, the Honourable Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan for leading deliberations of the Meeting to a successful conclusion. We also express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the warm hospitality and the excellent organization of the Meeting.

This declaration has been adopted in Baku on December 5, 2017.