

**10<sup>th</sup> ECO Transport Ministerial Meeting**  
**15 December 2020 (virtual)**

# **ECO Transport Ministerial Declaration 2020**

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**We the Ministers/Heads of delegations of the ECO Member States**, gathering virtually on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to join this ministerial meeting on transport and while:

**Comprehending** the situation emerged in the aftermath of COVID-19 that continues to pose serious threat to the ECO region's smooth economic growth, and if not dealt with actively and concretely taken preventive measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on the region's transport sector, may further aggravate the economic wellbeing in the ECO Member States;

**Realizing** the importance of an expanded and strengthened coordination in line with the principles and objectives set forth in "ECO Vision 2025" that focus on the socio-economic development of the region, considering the transport sector as one of drivers of the region's economic growth;

**Noting** the progress collectively made in the past by ECO Member States for development of the regional transport and transit, and **appreciating** the constructive role of regional unions and international partner organizations, especially to facilitate the intra-region's passage of essentially required commodities of humans' utility, including medicine and food supply chains during the initial and peak time of post-COVID-19 crisis;

**Reaffirming** the obligation to provide the ECO landlocked countries with access to transport infrastructure especially to sea outlets,

**Recalling** the obligation of the Member States to provide smooth, physical and non-physical barrier-free transit transport via ECO region's border crossing points (BCPs);

**Have decided to:**

1. **Calls upon** the Member States to fully implement the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), and fulfill their commitments as per the provisions of TTFA
2. **Request** Turkmenistan, as a signatory State to the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), to expedite the internal ratification processes of the Agreement and to deposit the instrument of ratification with the Secretariat as early as possible.
3. **Encourage** the Republic of Uzbekistan to sign and ratify the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) at earliest convenience;
4. **Appreciate** the ECO Secretariat for preparation and introduction of the ECO Practical Guidelines On Cross Border Facilitation Measures under conditions of

COVID-19 and **request** the Member States to implement the Guidelines within their territories;

5. **Establish** a regional consultation mechanism/group for enhancement of technical cooperation on Transit Transport issues during COVID-19 that would comprise of designated representative(s) of relevant authorities of the Member States to elaborate on coordinated complementary actions for keeping the cross borders open for preventing depletion of stocks and minimizing any market disruptions.
6. **Request** the Member States to exert all their efforts to digitalize the relevant legal transport documents in all transport modes in order to facilitate exchange of data between related transport authorities of the Member States and ensure the smooth flow of goods in border points.
7. **Strengthen** collective efforts, measures or regulations to make facilitative movement of goods through ECO borders, particularly medicines and food supplies.
8. **Appreciate** ECO Member States for their constructive role during COVID-19 pandemic by keeping their borders open and facilitated transport and trade in the region.
9. **Appreciate** the ECO Secretariat and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) for finalizing the Study Reports on Development of Islamabad- -Tehran- Istanbul (ITI) and the Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Corridors and **Request** the Member States to implement the provisions of the concerned Action Plan.
10. **Congratulate** the en-route Member States on the successful Test Runs of the loaded trucks under TIR in KTAI Road Corridor and also along Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan during July-August-September 2020 and **request** the en-route countries to implement the recommendations of the report of the Test Run.
11. **Assign** the ECO Secretariat to work with IRU to establish a consultative group of ECO TIR Issuing and Guaranteeing associations aimed at providing inputs to the ECO relevant bodies on issues and challenges related to transport and transit in particular implementation of TIR system in ECO region.
12. **Appreciate** the Member States that have accepted the general terms of the proposed KTAI & ITI "Visa Pilot Scheme for Drivers" and Urge the remaining en-route Member States to expedite conveying to the Secretariat their conformation on the Scheme and further Encourage the other Member States to join the Scheme.
13. **Welcome** the proposals of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the expansion of ECO transport corridors to include the "Pakistan-Afghanistan-Central Asia", Iran-

Afghanistan-Central Asia" and "Iran-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan" road and railway transport corridors.

14. **Welcome** the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the inclusion of "Mazar-e-Sharif - Herat - Tehran - Istanbul" railway corridor to the ECO transport corridors.
15. **Request** Transit Transport Coordination Council (TTCC), to discuss the relevant technicalities for developing the above-mentioned Corridors (Item 13 & 14) and report to the upcoming Transport Ministerial Meeting.
16. **Recognize** the importance of the initiatives that are developed within and outside the framework of ECO which are contributing to inter-regional connectivity and cooperation, including inter alia, Lapis-Lazuli Trade and Transit Corridor.
17. **Emphasize** the need to finalize the joint ECO-ESCAP-IsDB study project for commercialization of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) railway Corridor and conclude the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the relevant Corridor Common Management Mechanism (CMM) by the end of 2020.
18. **Highlight** the importance of the resumption of the regular operations of the ITI Container Train at the earliest possible and in this regard **appreciate** the Islamic Republic of Iran for starting construction of standard railway line from Zahedan to Mirjaveh and **Instruct** the ECO Secretariat to recruit a consultant to prepare a bankable project document for new study project on need-based financial and technical assessment for installing the necessary transshipment instruments and tools in Taftan railway station.
19. **Call upon** the Member States concerned to expedite completion of the missing links along the existing ECO rail and road corridors in their territories, and in this context, **Request** the countries to provide the Secretariat with needs-based financial assessment enabling the Secretariat, to approach the international financial institutions and relevant development partners for seeking financial support to implement the projects. In this regard appreciate Islamic Republic of Iran for completion of a rail section of Khaf - Sangan - Shamtigh (Iran border) - Rozanak station (Afghanistan territory) which was inaugurated on 10 December 2020 as a part of KTAI railway rout.
20. **Instruct** the ECO Secretariat to hire a consultant for preparation of a bankable project proposal document to explore the ways and means to link the existing regional sea ports in the ECO region with the landlocked and transit countries' dry ports, based on the "ECO Gate" concept proposal.

21. **Open up** new opportunities for expansion of direct and possible shortest connectivity/flights between major air hubs/industrial/touristic centers of the Member States via protecting commercial interests and offering new horizons for cooperation of the national carriers.
  22. **Support** the ongoing cooperation between the ECO and the other international organizations, specialized agencies, financial institutions and banks particularly IsDB, IRU, UN, UNECE and call for further expansion of relations with the relevant regional and international bodies.
  23. **Express** sincere gratitude and appreciation to the substantive contributions and inputs from ECO Member States to secure practical outcome of the virtual Meeting on Transport.
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