

Agenda No. 1

Adoption of Draft Agenda of the 302nd CPR Meeting



Economic Cooperation Organization

ECO

ECO/CPR/302nd/2025/1
December 3, 2025

302nd Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Draft Agenda and Annotated Draft Agenda

December 17, 2025
ECO Secretariat, Tehran

Draft Agenda

1. Adoption of Draft Agenda of the 302nd CPR Meeting;
2. Adoption of Draft Report of the 301st CPR Meeting;
3. Follow-up of the Outcomes of 17th Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan
4. Follow-up of the outcomes of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held online on November 28, 2025;
5. Follow-up of the outcomes of First Meeting of High-Level Committee (HLC) of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers;
6. Administrative and budgetary matters:
 - Recommendations of the Selection Panel.
7. Any other business;
8. Date of the next CPR Meeting.

Annotated Draft Agenda

Agenda Item No. 1

Adoption of the Agenda

1. The Secretariat proposes the following Draft Agenda for adoption:

- Adoption of Draft Agenda of the 302nd CPR Meeting;
- Adoption of Draft Report of the 301st CPR Meeting;
- Follow-up of the Outcomes of 17th Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan
- Follow-up of the outcomes of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held online on November 28, 2025;
- Follow-up of the outcomes of First Meeting of High-Level Committee (HLC) of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers;
- Administrative and budgetary matters:
 - Recommendations of the Selection Panel.
- Any other business;
- Date of the next CPR Meeting.

2. The Council may consider the above Draft Agenda for adoption.

Agenda Item No. 2

Adoption of Draft Report of the 301st CPR Meeting

3. The Draft Report of the 301st CPR Meeting held on November 17, 2025 in ECO Secretariat was circulated amongst the Member States vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFU/2025/1803 dated November 20, 2025.

4. The Council may consider the adoption of the Draft Report of 301st CPR Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

Follow-up of the Outcomes of 17th Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan

5. The 301st CPR Meeting held on November 17, 2025 reviewed the status of Plan of Work on the follow-up of the 17th ECO Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan. The CPR agreed to set November 23, 2025 as the final deadline for Member States' inputs, after which the Secretariat was required to consolidate and circulate the document.

6. However, the Embassy of Azerbaijan, through Note Verbale No. 5-117/25 dated November 23, 2025, informed that additional inputs would be provided for incorporation into the Summit's Action Plan.

7. In light of this, the Council may like to further consider the matter.

Agenda Item No. 4

Follow-up of the outcomes of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held online on November 28, 2025

8. The 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was successfully held online on November 28, 2025 under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

9. The Report of the Meeting was circulated amongst member states on December 2, 2025. The COM made several important decisions, including extension of the deadline for current ECO Vision, and sequencing of the COM and Summit Meetings under a two-year ECO Chairmanship of a single country.

10. Given the interventions and remarks made by distinguished members of the COM, a Chair's summary is expected from the Republic of Kazakhstan, being the ECO Chair in 2025. Upon receipt, the Secretariat will make a follow-up action plan thereon, and update the Council accordingly.

Agenda Item No. 5

Follow-up of the outcomes of First Meeting of High-Level Committee (HLC) of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers

11. The Council in its 301st CPR Meeting noted that consensus on the pending paragraph had not been reached, requesting Türkiye and Tajikistan to continue their bilateral consultations, with the facilitation to be provided by ECO Secretariat, in order to finalize mutually agreeable language, for finalization of the HLC report by 302nd Meeting of CPR.

12. Therefore, the Council may consider the matter, asking concluding positions of Tajikistan and Türkiye, to finalize the HLC report which is pending since February this year.

Agenda Item No. 6

Administrative and budgetary matters:

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

13. The recommendations of the Selection Panel, if any, would be submitted to the Council for making possible decisions.

Agenda Item No. 7

Any other business

14. Under this Agenda Item, the Council may discuss any other relevant issues, if raised.

Agenda Item No. 8

Date of the next CPR Meeting

15. The Council may decide the date of its next (303rd) Meeting in consultation with the Member States and the ECO Secretariat.

Agenda No. 2

Adoption of Draft Report of the 301st CPR Meeting;



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No: CFU /2025/1803

Priority: Urgent

Date: 20/11/2025

Attachment: Yes

The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran, and has the honour to enclose herewith the Draft Report of the 301st Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), held on November 17, 2025, for consideration.

The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran, the assurances of its highest consideration.



All ECO Member States - Tehran



Economic Cooperation Organization

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301st Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

Draft Report

November 17, 2025
ECO Secretariat – Tehran

Draft Report

The 301st Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) held on November 17, 2025 was presided over by the Republic of **Kazakhstan**. The meeting was attended by distinguished Permanent Representatives/Representatives from ECO Member States including **Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**. The ECO Secretary General and relevant Secretariat's personnel also attended the meeting. List of Participants attached as **Annexure-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

Adoption of the Agenda

2. The following agenda was adopted by the Council for discussion and deliberations:

- Adoption of Draft Agenda of the 301st CPR Meeting;
- Adoption of Draft Report of the 300th CPR Meeting;
- Follow-up of the outcomes of the 17th ECO Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan;
- Preparation for the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in Kazakhstan;
- Follow-up of the outcomes of 28th Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM):
 - Formulation of the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035;
 - Sequencing of the ECO Summit and COM Meetings under one ECO Chairmanship.
- Follow-up of the outcomes of First Meeting of High-Level Committee (HLC) of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers;
- Recommendations to the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade;
- Endorsement of the ECO Five-Year Roadmap on Minerals Cooperation for 2026-2030;
- Administrative and budgetary matters:
 - Transfer and reallocation of funds between different Chapters of the ECO budget for 2025 without increasing in the size of total budget;
 - Recommendations of the Selection Panel.
- Any other business;
- Date of the next CPR Meeting

Agenda Item No. 2

Adoption of Draft Report of the 300th CPR Meeting

3. The Council adopted the Draft Report of the 300th CPR Meeting, circulated vide Secretariat's Note Verbale No. CFU/2025/1631 dated October 26, 2025, along with the amendments proposed by **Türkiye**, as circulated on November 5, 2025, and the amendment proposed by Kazakhstan's Representative, during the meeting, to revise paragraph 12 of the said report to reflect the names of the countries that emphasized that the COM, as the highest decision-making body of the Organization, should continue to be held in person.

Agenda Item No. 3

Follow-up of the Outcomes of the 17th ECO Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan

4. The **Chairman** recalled that the 300th CPR Meeting deferred the matter pending inputs from all Member States, and had tasked the Secretariat to revise the plan of work accordingly. He invited delegations to share any final comments and noted the need to determine a clear timeline for completing the document.

5. The **Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, JPC & EAPA)** explained that the plan of work is an internal and flexible working document of the Secretariat, which traditionally has not required formal adoption by the Member States. He explained that proposals from Member States are incorporated as received, and the updated version is circulated for information rather than endorsement.

6. The Permanent Representative of **Azerbaijan** clarified that previous practice had involved formal adoption of the plan of work and emphasized the need for the CPR to finalize and approve the document after incorporating all Member States' inputs so that it may serve as a clear mandate for implementation by the Secretariat. He noted that instructions from Heads of State required a finalized and adopted plan rather than an open-ended working paper, enabling its submission to the COM.

7. The **ECO Secretary General** illuminated that, while different terms, such as "adopt," "endorse," or "authorize", may have been used in various contexts, the essential requirement was to avoid keeping the document open-ended. He stressed the need to set a firm deadline for the submission of any remaining comments, after which the Secretariat would consolidate the draft and return it to the Council for approval in line with established practice.

8. The **Chairman**, in closing, stressed that a deadline was necessary to ensure timely completion of the process. He proposed November 30, 2025 as the date for submitting any outstanding comments, with a possible extension of deadline to December 10, 2025, if necessary. Following different views, he suggested an earlier deadline of November 23, 2025 to allow the Secretariat adequate time to circulate a finalized draft and ensure that it could be presented to the COM.

9. Accordingly, the **Council** agreed to set November 23, 2025 as the deadline for the submission of final inputs, noting that the Secretariat would thereafter circulate a consolidated version of the plan of work for the Council's consideration and approval prior to its presentation to the COM.

Agenda Item No. 4

Preparations for the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in Kazakhstan

10. The **Chair** invited comments on the preparations for the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) to be chaired by Kazakhstan in an online format on November 28, 2025. He noted that the Council had already approved the relevant proposal and requested updates from delegations.

11. The Representative of **Kazakhstan** stated that work on the draft communiqué was ongoing and that inputs from Member States were still being incorporated. He

informed that invitations from the host authorities were awaited and would be conveyed to the Secretariat upon receipt. He added that a technical coordination meeting between Kazakhstan and the Secretariat had taken place and that Kazakhstan would provide the online links for both the Senior Officials and Council of Ministers Meetings.

12. The Representative of **Pakistan** sought clarification on whether the shift from an in-person to a virtual format would affect the agenda or its sequence, and asked when the annotated agenda would be circulated, noting the limited time left before the meeting.

13. The **Chairman** clarified that no documents were planned for signature. He also informed that invitations, including those concerning the participation of the Secretary General of CICA, were expected shortly and would be circulated once received, subject to the Council's agreement.

14. The **ECO Secretary General** emphasized the urgency of issuing the invitations given the short timeline and the need to confirm the level of participation. He recalled that, in accordance with the 299th CPR decision, ECO observers were already cleared for participation. He also sought confirmation regarding the time allocation for observers' statements, which the Chairman clarified as **four minutes**.

15. The Representative of **Pakistan** raised a follow-up question regarding whether the shift to an online format would allow for an ECO-Plus configuration. The **Chairman** clarified that participation would remain limited to Member States, observers and the Secretary General of CICA.

16. The Permanent Representative of **Uzbekistan** asked for guidance on whether delegations should join the virtual meeting from their embassies or from the ECO Secretariat. The **ECO Secretary General** supported the view that delegations may participate from the Secretariat premises, noting the practicality of doing so. The **Chairman** welcomed this suggestion and acknowledged the logistical support to be arranged, with Kazakhstan confirming its readiness to assist.

17. In conclusion, the **Council** took note of the updates provided by Kazakhstan on the preparations for the 29th COM, emphasized the need for the timely circulation of invitations and the annotated agenda, confirmed the participation arrangements for observers and special guests, and agreed that Member States could join the virtual meeting from the Secretariat premises should they wish.

Agenda Item No. 5

Follow-up of the Outcomes of 28th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers

- Formulation of the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035

18. The **Council** reviewed the status of the ongoing formulation of the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2035.

19. The **Deputy Secretary General (Transport & Communication and HRSD)** recalled that the 300th CPR Meeting in Zanjan had extended the deadline for Member

States to submit inputs on the previously circulated draft until November 15, 2025, which already elapsed. He assured that, in light of the views/comments received, the Secretariat would circulate an updated version of the draft Strategic Goals document.

20. The **Council** also took note of the discussions held at the 2nd PrepCom Meeting, where two options were considered, including: (i) to finalize and adopt the new draft Strategic Goals at the 29th COM as the next ten-year ECO roadmap; and (ii) to extend the validity of the existing ECO Vision 2025 expiring on December 31, 2025, until the new Strategic Goals are finalized.

21. After deliberations, and in view of the emerging consensus among Member States, the **Council** agreed that the deadline for finalizing the Draft Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2035 should be extended until the end of June 2026, or until the finalization of the document, whichever is earlier. The **Council** further agreed that the matter would be included in the agenda of the 29th Meeting of the Council of Ministers, to be held online on November 28, 2025, for consideration and final approval.

- Sequencing of the ECO Summit and COM Meetings under one ECO Chairmanship

22. The **Council** recalled that there was already an in-principle agreement to introduce a two-year ECO Chairmanship, with which the COM and Summit would be sequenced and held under a single-country leadership. The only outstanding issue was the Kyrgyz Republic's objection, conveyed through a Note Verbale, in which it conveyed its preference for maintaining the existing framework.

23. The **Chair** took note of the comment by the Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic, who informed the Council that their new Ambassador would soon arrive in Tehran, providing an opportunity for the Secretary General to engage him directly on the matter. The **ECO Secretary General** underlined the urgency of achieving clarity, stressing that the issue needed to be settled before the upcoming SOM and COM meeting. He stated that Pakistan's deliberations on assuming the next Chairmanship depended on resolving whether it would be for one or two years. He confirmed his readiness to raise the issue at a higher level in Bishkek and pursue it bilaterally to seek flexibility from the Kyrgyz side.

24. The Representative of **Pakistan** emphasized that Islamabad required clear information on the duration of the Chairmanship and the sequencing of COM and Summit meetings before it could formally convey its position to assume ECO Chairmanship in 2026. The Permanent Representative of **Uzbekistan** suggested that all Member States should clearly state their positions. In response, **Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan** reaffirmed their support for the two-year Chairmanship, encouraging the Kyrgyz Republic to reconsider its position in light of the broad support expressed.

25. The **ECO Secretary General** noted that hearing all formal positions would assist him in his consultations with Bishkek. He also highlighted that some interim sequencing questions, such as consecutive summits only in 2026 and 2027, could be addressed bilaterally between the countries concerned once the overall framework was agreed. The **Legal Advisor** added that an eventual shift to a two-year Chairmanship

would require only amendments to the Rules of Procedure, to be approved by the Council of Ministers.

26. The **Council** concluded that all Member States except the Kyrgyz Republic supported the two-year Chairmanship and requested the Secretariat to make urgent bilateral consultations with the Kyrgyz side with a view to securing consensus, enabling a final decision to be taken by COM on November 28, 2025.

Agenda Item No. 6

Follow-up of the Outcomes of First Meeting of High-Level Committee (HLC) of the ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers

27. The **Chair** recalled that adoption of the Report of the First Meeting of the High-Level Committee (HLC) of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers had remained pending since February this year, inviting delegations to consider the latest version.

28. The Representative of **Türkiye** stated that, while consultations had taken place with Tajikistan, his delegation had not received any new instructions from its capital and therefore continued to uphold the original formulation it had proposed. He emphasized that Türkiye attached high importance to enhancing the efficiency of ECO, particularly with regard to observer-related procedures, and accordingly requested Tajikistan to reconsider Türkiye's proposal in a constructive manner.

29. The **ECO Secretariat** confirmed that a Note Verbale had been received from Türkiye, indicating that it was maintaining its original comments and amendments to the HLC Report.

30. The **ECO Secretary General** recalled that only one paragraph was under negotiation between Türkiye and Tajikistan. He explained that the HLC Report bears only a recommendatory nature with no binding effect, and any institutional or procedural changes proposed therein would still require formal approval by the CPR and the COM.

31. The Representative of **Tajikistan** briefed the Council that, in accordance with the mandate of the 300th CPR Meeting in Zanjan, a bilateral consultation had been held on November 2, at the Tajik Embassy with participation from the Secretariat and Türkiye delegates. Both sides exchanged views on the disputed paragraph, and Tajikistan understood that Türkiye would share a revised formulation for review with its capital. However, Tajikistan reported that Türkiye continued supporting the formulation discussed earlier in Zanjan.

32. The Representative of **Türkiye** confirmed that this remained their position, adding that Ankara had instructed it to retain the original text submitted earlier. He emphasized that this proposal, particularly concerning the procedure on observers, was important for improving ECO's efficiency, reducing unnecessary bureaucratic steps and strengthening decision-making processes. He, therefore, called on Tajikistan to reconsider the proposal constructively so that the HLC Report could be adopted soon. The **Council** noted that consensus on the pending paragraph had not been reached, requesting Türkiye and Tajikistan to continue their bilateral consultations, with the facilitation to be provided by ECO Secretariat, in order to finalize mutually agreeable

language. The matter will be resubmitted to the Council for adoption once consensus between the two Member States is achieved.

Agenda Item No. 7

Recommendations to the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade

33. The **Council** took into account the Secretariat's briefing on the recommendations proposed for submission to the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade. These included measures related to rules of origin, removal of technical barriers to trade, ecological harmonization and quality infrastructure, customs cooperation, trade-defense instruments, sectoral research studies, tariff scheduling, intellectual property matters and enhanced private sector and SME engagement. It was noted that, in line with the Council's previous guidance, the Secretariat proposed activating the ECOTA Implementation Fund and recommending to the Ministerial Meeting a strengthened ECOTA implementation plan, focused on increased voluntary financial contributions, capacity-building programs such as "training-of-trainers," technical work under the revised ECOTA roadmap, and quality-infrastructure and trade-facilitation activities aimed at reducing costs and improving cross-border clearance times.

34. During deliberations, **Türkiye side** requested that its technical comments, shared earlier with the Secretariat, be taken into account. **Kazakhstan side** recalled that it was not a signatory to ECOTA and requested that any formulation reflect that recommendations are addressed within the framework of signatory countries. The **Secretariat** acknowledged both inputs and confirmed that they would be incorporated into the report. The **Deputy Secretary General (Trade & Investment)** highlighted that no new mandatory budgetary commitments were being proposed and suggested revised wording calling upon Member States to voluntarily support the ECOTA Implementation Fund, consistent with past practice. **Iranian side** suggested that further technical space be given for the matter to be examined at the forthcoming High-Level Expert Meeting in Istanbul before final recommendations are tabled at the Ministerial Meeting. The **ECO Secretary General** supported this approach, adding that the Secretariat would take the consolidated language to the High-Level Expert Meeting. He also urged Member States to confirm their participation as soon as possible, noting the significance of this Ministerial Meeting being convened after an eleven-year gap. **Kazakhstan side** expressed appreciation to **Türkiye** for hosting the meeting and underscored the importance of trade within the ECO framework.

35. Foregoing in view, the **Council** agreed that the Secretariat would incorporate the comments of **Türkiye** and **Kazakhstan**, and present the consolidated text to the forthcoming High-Level Expert Meeting for further technical consideration. It was further agreed that the recommendations, revised accordingly and clearly limited to ECOTA signatory countries, with no new mandatory financial commitments, would be conveyed to the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade for its consideration. The Council also urged Member States to confirm their participation in the High-Level Expert Meeting and the Ministerial Meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Agenda Item No. 8

Endorsement of the ECO Five-Year Roadmap on Minerals Cooperation for 2026-30

36. The **Council** considered the ECO Five-Year Roadmap on Minerals Cooperation for 2026–2030. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of the minerals sector given the region’s significant mineral demand and its role as a key driver of economic growth. In this context, the Secretariat prepared the first comprehensive framework document for regional cooperation in the minerals field. It was recalled that the Secretariat convened an online Task Force Meeting in September, with participation from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Tajikistan. The Task Force positively reviewed the draft roadmap and recommended submitting it to ECO decision-making bodies for adoption so that implementation could begin in January 2026. The Secretariat subsequently circulated a revised version for final consideration by Member States.

37. The **Secretariat** noted that ECO currently lacks a structured cooperation platform in the minerals sector, and therefore sought the Council’s consent to submit the document to the forthcoming Council of Ministers (COM) for endorsement. **Türkiye’s representative** informed that it had transmitted comments from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and requested their reflection in the document. The **Secretariat** confirmed receipt of **Türkiye**’s comments and assured that they would be incorporated into the final draft. No further comments or objections were raised.

38. The **ECO Secretary General** further emphasized the need for active engagement by all Member States, noting that several capitals had yet to provide comments. He underscored that the Secretariat did not favour reliance on silence procedures for adopting substantive framework documents and urged Member States to submit their observations promptly to ensure collective ownership of the roadmap.

39. The **Council** requested the Secretariat to incorporate the comments submitted by **Türkiye** into the draft ECO Five-Year Roadmap on Minerals Cooperation for 2026–2030, and deferred the matter for consideration at its next session. The Council also took note of the Secretary General’s request that Member States which have not yet submitted their comments do so promptly, in order to ensure full ownership of the document and avoid reliance on silence procedures for its approval.

Agenda Item No. 9

Administrative and Budgetary Matters

- Discussions on ECO Budget for 2026

40. The **Deputy Secretary General (Administration)** recalled that the Secretariat had initially circulated a first draft of the ECO Budget for 2026, which envisaged an increase of around USD 70,000. While that version was supported by all Member States except Kazakhstan, the Secretariat, in order to accommodate Kazakhstan’s observations, revised the proposal and issued a second version. In the updated draft, the increase was reduced to USD 43,851, representing approximately 0.97% over the previous year. He underlined that no changes were proposed to the salary scale or DSA, and that the limited increase stemmed primarily from: (i) around USD 14,800 to upgrade one Turkmenistan-assigned post from P1 to P3; (ii) USD 10,000 for essential publication of

ECO transport maps; and (iii) USD 30,000 for the Special Support Fund to cover air tickets of Member State participants. He clarified that these three items exceed the net increase and largely return to the Member States themselves. He further noted that the Secretariat has temporarily relied on the General Reserve Fund (GRF) to meet obligations such as home leave and end-of-service benefits, but emphasized that these liabilities will ultimately need to be paid and therefore the GRF cannot sustainably replace regular budget resources. He also briefed the Council on two staff-related proposals: (a) authorizing the Secretary General to upgrade up to two Category A staff members by one grade as an incentive measure; and (b) converting three long-serving temporary guards into permanent caretaker/guard posts in Category-III, A1, in line with auditors' observations, with no net increase in the 2026 budget.

41. The **ECO Secretary General** emphasized that approving the budget is not only a procedural step but also a strategic decision. He recalled that Kazakhstan had expressed a preference to keep the budget at the previous year's level, but underlined that the Secretariat had already reduced its initial proposal from a 1.5% increase to less than 1% (around 0.97%), without seeking any salary or DSA increases despite inflation. He noted that 96–97% of expenditures are administrative, effectively returning to Member States via salaries and service costs, and that the Secretariat has delivered a full programme of meetings with high-level participation and no postponements due to lack of quorum. He noted that freezing the nominal budget year after year amounts to a real cut once inflation is considered and cautioned against systematically using the GRF as an operating fund, as this could eventually bring the Organization to a standstill. On staffing, he recalled that Category-III staff had previously faced a 30% salary cut and argued that regularizing the three guard posts and allowing limited grade advancement for deserving A-category staff were necessary for fairness and motivation. He invited all Member States, particularly Kazakhstan, to reconsider the proposal in this light, reaffirmed the Secretariat's commitment to frugality and transparency and welcomed scrutiny of ECO's expenditures.

42. The **Chairman** invited comments on the 2026 budget and, noting that only Kazakhstan had expressed reservations, asked for an update on 2025 contributions and on how the Secretariat was financing its operations when several contributions remained pending. He stressed that contributions are critical for ECO's functioning and questioned the logic of increasing the budget while relying on the GRF. He also sought clarification on whether transforming three guard positions into Category A3 posts would create new permanent posts and increase future costs. Later, in his national capacity, he recalled that Kazakhstan's general position is not to increase the ECO budget. He indicated that Kazakhstan would pursue bilateral consultations with the Secretary General on the budget matter.

43. The **Deputy Secretary General (Administration)** reported that for the year 2025, contributions from Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye and Turkmenistan had not yet been received, though the year was not yet concluded and the Secretariat expected those payments. He noted that some countries had faced technical difficulties transferring funds through the host-country financial system but expressed confidence that the outstanding contributions would arrive.

44. The Representative of **Türkiye** confirmed that Türkiye's 2025 contribution is about to be transferred to the Secretariat. The Representative of **Iran** stated that Iran's

situation was well known, noting that the funds for ECO had already been allocated and that, once central bank procedures were completed, the contribution for 2025 would be delivered to the Secretariat. The Representative of **Pakistan** confirmed that payment of their contribution was in the process and that this would be transmitted to the Secretariat in the near future.

45. The **Deputy Secretary General (TC & HRSD)**, responding to a query, noted that Turkmenistan typically pays its contribution at the beginning of the following year, for example in January, consistent with usual practice.

46. On the staff structure, the **Deputy Secretary General (Administration)** clarified that the three guard posts have existed for about three years on temporary contracts and are already fully budgeted; the proposal merely converts them into regular caretaker/guard posts with social security coverage, without creating new positions. On the authorization to upgrade two Category A staff, the **Secretary General** explained that this would not increase the number of posts, but would allow limited progression for long-serving, high-performing staff who have reached their grade ceiling, with each case to be justified and brought to the Council for approval.

47. The **Chair** observed that, while Kazakhstan maintained its reservation regarding the proposed increase in the 2026 budget, all other Member States expressed their support for the draft budget and the related staffing proposals. He noted that Kazakhstan and the Secretary General would therefore continue bilateral consultations to address the outstanding concern.

48. On the ECO Budget 2026 and staff-related proposals, the **Council** took note of the Secretariat's explanations and of the broad support expressed by all delegations except Kazakhstan for the proposed less-than-1% budget increase, as well as for the regularization of three caretaker/guard posts and the limited authorization to upgrade up to two Category A staff without additional budgetary impact. The Council also took note of Kazakhstan's general position against increasing the budget and its concerns regarding recurrent budget growth and the use of the General Reserve Fund. It was noted that the Secretary General and Kazakhstan side would continue their bilateral consultations with a view to addressing the outstanding concerns.

- Transfer and reallocation of funds between different Chapters of the ECO budget for 2025 without increasing the size of total budget

49. The **Deputy Secretary General (Administration)** briefed the Council on an internal budgetary adjustment: in line with Article 9.2 of the Financial Regulations, the Secretary General may transfer funds between budget chapters up to 10% of the receiving head; however, to address an estimated deficit of USD 3,500 in the Transport chapter, the Secretariat requested the Council's approval to transfer USD 3,500 from the ECO Award chapter to the Transport chapter, without changing the total approved budget envelope.

50. The **Council** approved the Secretariat's request to transfer USD 3,500 from the ECO Award chapter to the Transport chapter in order to cover the identified deficit, noting that this adjustment does not alter the overall budget ceiling for the year.

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel

51. The Council approved the recommendations of the Selection Panel for appointment of **Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi** Sabzevari (Iranian national) as Director for Transport and Communications (Category-I, D-2), **Mr. Ilkhomjon Abdraimov** (Uzbek national) as Director for Tourism (Category-I, D-2), **Ms. Ghaibullozoda Lola Ibrohim** (Tajik national) as Head of Section for Coordination (Category-I, D1) and Follow-up, and **Ms. Sameeah Alvi** (Pakistani national) as Head of Section for International Relations (D-1).

52. The Council congratulated all selected candidates and expressed confidence that their expertise will contribute effectively to strengthening the work of the Secretariat.

Agenda Item No. 10

Any Other Business

53. The **Deputy Secretary General (Administration)** informed the Council that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran had invited the Secretary General to participate in the Conference of Governors of the Caspian Sea Coastal Provinces, scheduled for November 18-19, 2025. In this regard, the Secretariat proposed that DSG Ambassador Jandos Asanov be authorized to represent the ECO Secretariat at the event, accompanied by Mr. Hamid Falah (), for the three-day programme.

54. The **Council** considered the proposal and approved the authorization of DSG Ambassador Jandos Asanov to attend the Conference on behalf of the ECO Secretariat, accompanied by Mr. Hamid Falah Driver.

55. The Representative of **Iran** informed that Iran would host two forthcoming ECO events: (i) the 7th Meeting of the Heads of Reference Maritime Organizations on December 8-9, 2025, and (ii) the 8th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture on February 16-17, 2026. He noted that invitations had already been issued to all Member States except Afghanistan and clarified that, in accordance with ECO rules and procedures, Iran would also extend invitations to Afghanistan for both events. Emphasizing the importance of broad and high-level participation, he requested Member States to communicate their respective delegations at the earliest opportunity.

56.

57. The **Council** welcomed and supported Iran's initiative requested the Member States to ensure their highest level participation and both the events.

58. The **ECO Secretary General** recalled the earlier CPR decision that any member state wishing to invite Afghanistan to ECO activities may do so bilaterally, and that modalities of participation would likewise be settled bilaterally. He informed the Council that he would be meeting the Ambassador of Afghanistan in Tehran and would subsequently brief the Council on the question of Afghanistan's participation in CPR proceedings.

59. The **ECO Secretary General** also briefed the Council on his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, undertaken primarily for consultations with the Islamic Development Bank. He reported meetings with the Vice Presidents for Finance and Operations, the CEO of IDFC and the Bank's technical team, all of whom expressed readiness to revive cooperation under the ECO-IsDB MOU of 1993 and to conduct an assessment of past collaboration. He added that coordination had begun with Azerbaijan to organize the ECO Finance Minister's Meeting on the margins of

the next IsDB Board Session in Baku. He also informed about his meetings with the representatives of OIC, GCC, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Digital Cooperation Organization, noting an overall willingness to expand engagement with ECO, including selective participation in relevant sectoral meetings. He highlighted Saudi interest in enhanced connectivity with ECO countries, and also noted DCO's ongoing digital readiness assessments for several ECO members.

60. The **Council** appreciated the Secretary General's detailed briefing and welcomed the positive signals from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf institutions. Delegations supported the idea of preparing concrete, finance-ready project proposals for submission to Saudi and GCC partners and expressed the view that ECO should capitalize on the renewed interest to strengthen cooperation. The suggestion to invite senior Saudi officials, including the Agriculture Minister, as special guests to forthcoming ECO ministerial meetings was also welcomed.

61. The **Council** expressed its deep appreciation for **Ambassador Dr. Alavi** for his long-standing, constructive, and creative contributions to CPR deliberations. Delegations noted his extensive diplomatic experience and described his transfer from CPR to the Secretariat as a valuable strengthening of ECO capacity. Delegates referred to his balanced and compromising approach and emphasized that his joining the Secretariat reflects Iran's commitment to the advancement of ECO.

62. The **Council** also conveyed warm appreciation to the outgoing Head of Section for Coordination and Follow-up, **Mr. Sukhrob Mirzayev**, on the completion of his tenure. Delegations commended his professionalism, procedural expertise and consistent support to CPR work, expressing the expectation that he would continue to excel in senior diplomatic assignments in the future.

63. The **Council** further acknowledged the contributions of the outgoing Desk Officer, **Mr. Shahid Hussain**, noting his legal background and high professional standards. Delegations thanked him for his dedicated service to the Secretariat and conveyed their best wishes for his forthcoming responsibilities.

64. The **Council** additionally extended appreciation to **Mr. Nazim Beiskeev**, Attaché at the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic, whose final departure from Tehran was learned during the meeting. Delegations valued his professionalism, positive engagement and cordial working style, and wished him success in his future postings at home.

65. The **Council** collectively conveyed its gratitude and good wishes to all outgoing members of staff who successfully completed their tenures, noting their valuable contributions to ECO processes and expressing hopes for their continued success in future endeavors.

Agenda Item No. 11

Date of the Next CPR Meeting

66. The Council agreed to hold its next (302nd) Session on December 17, 2025 (10:00 a.m) at the ECO Secretariat.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

The Republic of Azerbaijan:

- H.E. Mr. Ali Alizada, Permanent Representative
- Mr. Asgar Asgarov, Counsellor

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, **Permanent Representative**
- Mr. Behzad Azarsa, Head of Department, Multilateral & International Economic Cooperation
- Mr. Musa Khosravi Moghadam, ECO Expert, Multilateral & International Economic Cooperation
- Mr. Soheil Kheiri, Senior Expert, Multilateral & International Economic Cooperation

The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- H.E. Mr. Ontalap Onalbayev, **Permanent Representative**
- Mr. Kazbek Bokebayev, Counselor

The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic:

- Mr. Ermek Eraliev, Chargé d' Affaires
- Mr. Nazim Beishekeev, Attaché

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Ahmed Shami, Deputy Head of Mission

The Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- Mr. Bahodur Nazir, Counsellor
- Mr. Alisher Azamzoda, First Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye:

- Mr. Murat Sogangoz, Counselor
- Mr. Ahmed Bicer, Third Secretary

The Embassy of Turkmenistan:

- H.E. Mr. Ilyas Gayyopov, **Permanent Representative**
- Mr. Batyr Charmanov, First Secretary

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- H.E. Mr. Fariddin Nasriev, **Permanent Representative**
- Mr. Elbek Yuldashev, Second Secretary

The ECO Secretariat:

- H.E. Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, Secretary General
- Amb. Jandos Asanov, Deputy Secretary General
- Amb. Silapberdi Nurberdiyev, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Cagatay Emrah Ongut, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Mr. Behzad Saberi Ansari, Deputy Secretary General
- Mr. Sukhrob Mirzoaliev, Head of CFU
- Mr. Hojjat Moghavem, Legal Adviser
- Mr. Muhammad Ahmed Raza, Senior Desk Officer
- Mr. Shahid Hussain, Desk Officer

Agenda No. 3

Follow-up of the Outcomes of 17th Summit and ECO Week in Azerbaijan



Economic Cooperation Organization

ECO

No: CFU /2025/1803

Priority: Urgent

Date: 20/11/2025

Attachment: Yes

The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran, and has the honour to enclose herewith the Draft Report of the 301st Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), held on November 17, 2025, for consideration.

The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran, the assurances of its highest consideration.



All ECO Member States - Tehran



№ 5-117/25

Tehran

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Iran presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization and has the honor to inform that the additional items/inputs will be submitted for inclusion to the Working Plan on the results of the 17th ECO Summit and the ECO Week by the Azerbaijani side soon.

The Secretariat is requested to take into consideration the above mentioned issue for further coordination.

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization the assurances of its highest consideration.

November 23, 2025

Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization
Tehran



Agenda No. 4

**Follow-up of the outcomes of the 29th Meeting of the ECO
Council of Ministers (COM) held online on November 28, 2025**



No: CFU /2025/1862

Priority: Most Urgent

Date: 2/12/2025

Attachment: Yes

The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran, and has the honour to enclose, together with its annexures, the Report of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held online on November 28, 2025, under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran, the assurances of its highest consideration.



All ECO Member States - Tehran



29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)

Report

**November 28, 2025
(Online)**

Report

The 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held in an online format on November 28, 2025. The Honourable Foreign Ministers /Heads of Delegations of the ECO Member States, including the Republic of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan (Chair), Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan participated in the meeting. The Delegations from ECO Observers, including Turkish Cypriot State and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) also attended the meeting. The ECO Secretariat was represented by Secretary General and his team. Moreover, the Head of ECO Science Foundation took part in the meeting. List of Participants is attached as **Annex-I**.

Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

2. The Senior Officials Meeting (SoM) was held online on November 24, 2025, to review and finalize the draft Agenda, Report and Joint Communiqué for consideration and adoption by the esteemed Council of Ministers (COM).

3. The ECO Secretary General, **H.E. Dr. Asad M. Khan**, delivered a comprehensive reflection on the Organization's progress throughout 2025, highlighting the revitalization of ministerial processes, significant advancements across priority sectors, and the launch of new initiatives designed to enhance regional connectivity, sustainability and institutional capacity. His statement is attached as **Annex-II**.

4. **H.E. Mr. Beibit Kulatayev**, Director General of the Department for Near and Middle East and Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, extended greetings to the senior delegates and conveyed his appreciation to the ECO Secretary General and his team for their constructive support and efficient coordination in facilitating the successful convening of this online meeting. He further underscored the principal achievements and major activities undertaken during Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in 2025.

29TH COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING (COM)

Inauguration

5. As the current ECO Chairman, the Honourable Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, **H.E. Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev**, formally opened the meeting and extended warm greetings to the participating delegations. In his statement, he reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to the ECO and outlined the country's key regional priorities under the theme of "Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development." His statement is placed as **Annex-III**.

6. The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, **H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar**, designated to assume ECO Chairman for 2026, also delivered a statement outlining Pakistan's forthcoming priorities for the Organization. His statement is placed as **Annex-III**.

7. The Honourable Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, **H.E. Mr. Abbas Araghchi**, also delivered a statement in his capacity as the COM Chairman for 2023. His statement is placed as **Annex-III**.

8. The ECO Secretary General, **H.E. Dr. Asad M. Khan**, expressed his sincere appreciation to H.E. Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev for chairing the 28th COM Meeting. He noted that 2025 revitalized ECO's institutional activity, with renewed ministerial engagement, key sectoral progress and expanded international partnerships. His statement is placed as **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 1 Adoption of the Agenda

9. As proposed by the Senior Officials Meeting, the **Council** reviewed and adopted the following Agenda for discussion and deliberations:

1. Adoption of the Agenda.
2. Statements by:
 - Ministers/Heads of Delegation of Member States;
 - ECO Observers (*if any*);
 - CICA Secretary General.
3. Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General on activities of the Organization;
4. Review, and Approval of:
 - Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings;
 - Reports of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings;
 - Reports of Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions.
5. Adjustment of Unpaid Contributions of Kazakhstan;
6. Deliberations on Draft Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035;
 - Current status of deliberations on Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation-2035
 - Extension of ECO Vision-2025 until the end of June 2026;
7. Sequencing of COM and Summit under Two-Year ECO Chairmanship;
8. Administrative and Financial Matters of ECO Secretariat:
 - Audit Report for 2023 and 2024;
 - ECO Budget for 2026;
 - Turkmenistan's proposal to upgrade their Program Officer position from grade "P-1" to "P-3";
 - Appointment of Mr. Yerzhan Mukash (Kazakh national) to the post of Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, JPC & EAPA).

9. Any other business.
10. Date and venue of the next COM meeting.
11. Adoption of Report of the 29th Meeting of Council of Ministers.
12. Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No.2

Statements by:

- **Ministers/Heads of Delegation**

10. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation from ECO Member States emphasized the need to strengthen regional cooperation amid emerging global challenges and acknowledged the essential role of ECO's specialized agencies and institutions in advancing the Organization's multifaceted agenda. They also briefed the Council on their national programs and policy priorities within the ECO framework. Their statements are placed at **Annex-III**.

- **ECO Observers**

11. The Representative of the Turkish Cypriot State also delivered statement in their capacities as ECO Observer, reaffirming their shared commitment to closer collaboration in support of ECO's objectives and priorities. His statement is placed at **Annex-III**.

- **International Partners**

12. The Head of the CICA Delegation delivered a statement underscoring the importance of strengthening their partnership with ECO. His statement is placed at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No.3

Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General on activities of the Organization

13. The **Council** noted with appreciation the report presented by the ECO Secretary General, detailing the Organization's progress since the 28th COM Meeting and highlighting major sectoral developments, accomplishments and continuing efforts across ECO's principal areas of cooperation.

Follow -up of the decisions of 28th COM Meeting

14. In view of the shifting regional and global dynamics, the **Council** underlined that stronger joint action between Member States and the Secretariat is indispensable for navigating emerging challenges and sustaining the region's development momentum. It noted that only a well-coordinated approach can effectively prevent the impact of these pressures on ECO's collective progress.

15. The **Council** also reiterated the need to ensure that ECO's undertakings remain firmly rooted in the Organization's strategic priorities. It emphasized that consistent and timely implementation of COM decisions is essential for driving forward ECO's economic agenda and achieving tangible results across the region.

ECO Agreements/Treaties concluded among Member States

16. While assessing the current status of ECO's legal instruments, the **Council** encouraged closer coordination among both signatory and non-signatory Member States. It urged them to accelerate their respective internal processes for the signing and ratification of outstanding agreements, noting that timely action in this regard would reinforce the Organization's legal architecture and contribute to deeper regional cohesion.

Implementation of ECO Projects and Programmes

17. The **Council** took note of the advances achieved in the implementation of ECO projects and looked forward to the timely completion of both current and planned initiatives. It underscored the need for these efforts to remain firmly anchored in the Organization's sectoral economic priorities, consistent with the guidance provided through the Council's decisions and recommendations.

ECO Relations with International Partners

18. The **Council** welcomed the Organization's continued efforts to deepen engagement with regional and international partners, noting the value of proactive participation in multilateral platforms for advancing ECO's interests. It emphasized the importance of sustaining these efforts to further elevate the Organization's profile and expand its external outreach.

19. The **Council** also underscored the importance of closer cooperation between ECO and relevant UN agencies on issues of shared significance. In this context, it encouraged the Secretariat to maintain and strengthen this collaborative approach to effectively advance ECO's objectives and regional economic agenda across global forums.

Agenda Item No.4

Review and Approval of:

- Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings
- Reports of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings
- Reports of Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions
 - i) Reports of (291st to 301st) Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR);

- ii) Reports of Ministerial Meetings on **6th Tourism** (Türkiye – April 2025), **13th Transport** (Iran – June 2025), **4th Interior** (Iran – October 2025); **5th Commerce & Foreign Trade** (Türkiye – November 2025)
- iii) 6th Meeting of the ECO Prosecutors/ Attorneys General (Uzbekistan – September 2025)
- iv) Annual Reports of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated bodies.

20. The **Council** adopted all the above reports submitted for its consideration.

21. The **Council** also acknowledged the essential role of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions, and Affiliated Bodies in advancing the Organization's cooperation agenda and encouraged them to continue pursuing initiatives that support collective and sustainable regional progress.

Agenda Item No.5

Adjustment of Unpaid Contributions of Kazakhstan

22. The **Council** noted that, in line with the decision of its 24th Session in Antalya, the adjustment of Kazakhstan's unpaid contribution to the ECO Budget was required to be addressed during the implementation period of the revised scale of assessment.

23. Recognizing the successful implementation of this mechanism, marked by the increase of Kazakhstan's contribution from 16% to 18% and the country's consistent and timely payments throughout the period, the **Council** expressed its appreciation to Kazakhstan and agreed that its outstanding contributions for 2014–2018 be considered "**Settled**" as of December 31, 2025.

Agenda Item No.6

Deliberations on Draft Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035

- Current status of deliberations on Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035

24. The **Council** recalled that the formulation of the Draft Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation–2035 was mandated by its 28th Session held in Mashhad on December 3, 2024. The Council appreciated the ongoing work on the preparation of this important strategic document, commended the efforts of the Member States and the ECO Secretariat, and took note that the draft remains under review and requires additional time for its comprehensive finalization.

- Extension of ECO Vision-2025 until the end of June 2026;

25. Accordingly, the **Council** agreed to extend the validity of the existing ECO Vision 2025 until the end of June 2026, or finalization of the new Draft Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation–2035, whichever is earlier.

Agenda Item No.7

Sequencing of COM and Summit under Two-Year ECO Chairmanship;

26. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Member States and the ECO Secretariat in reaching consensus on the introduction of a two-year ECO Chairmanship under which the COM and Summit will be sequenced and held under a single-country chairmanship.

27. Accordingly, the Council, in principle, approved the new arrangement of a two-year ECO Chairmanship, and also agreed to the proposed deletion of Paragraph 22 of the Chapter V of the ECO Rules of Procedure, and amendment to Paragraph 23 of Chapter V of the ECO Rules of Procedure, as follows:

Paragraph 22

~~At the beginning of every ECO calendar year, policy making organs (COM, RPC, CPR) shall form the Bureau of Chairperson by nominating the Chairperson and electing a Vice Chairperson and a Rapporteur from among the heads of delegations of participating Member States in accordance with Paras 23 and 24 below. The Secretary General or his/her representative shall assist the Bureau. If the Chairperson is to be absent from a meeting, the Vice Chairperson shall preside over the meeting. 23.~~

Amended Paragraph 23

~~The Chairpersonship of the ECO shall rotate in alphabetical order among the Member States every two-year, # ~~the beginning of~~ ~~at the start of a~~ calendar year. In the first year of the two-year Chairmanship, the Council of Ministers (COM) meeting shall be convened either in the Chairing country or at the ECO Secretariat, while in the second year; both the COM meeting and the Summit shall be convened back-to-back in the Chairing country.~~

~~The Member State holding the Chairpersonship shall host the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers in the year concerned.~~

28. Moreover, the Council agreed that the implementation of the above decision shall take effect from the date on which the first interested member state assumes the two-year Chairmanship, or otherwise from the next alphabetical cycle of Chairmanship starting from January 2031, **whichever is earlier**. Until that time, the existing chairmanship rotation cycle shall continue based on the existing provisions of the ECO Rules of Procedure.

Agenda Item No.8

Administrative and Financial Matters of ECO Secretariat

- Audit Report for 2023 and 2024;

29. The **Council** considered and adopted the ECO Audit Report for the years 2023-24.

- ECO Budget for 2026;

30. The Council considered and approved the ECO Budget for 2026.

- Turkmenistan's proposal to upgrade their Program Officer position from grade "P-1" to "P-3";

31. The **Council** considered Turkmenistan's request to upgrade its Program Officer position from grade P-1 to P-3. The Council took note that Turkmenistan, with a 4% contribution share, currently holds one D-2 and one P-1 post, while comparable Member States hold one D-2 and one P-3 post.

32. Recognizing the principle of parity and fairness among Member States, and noting that the proposed upgrade would have an annual financial implication of approximately USD 15,000, the **Council** agreed to the upgradation of Turkmenistan's Program Officer post from P-1 to P-3 with effect from January 1, 2026.

33. In this regard, the **Council** tasked the ECO Secretariat to make the necessary administrative and budgetary adjustments, and to reflect this decision in the ECO organizational structure, accordingly.

- Appointment of Mr. Yerzhan Mukash (Kazakh national) to the post of Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, JPC & EAPA).

34. The **Council** considered and approved the appointment of Mr. Yerzhan Mukash (**Kazakh national**) against the post of Deputy Secretary General for Tourism, Judicial & Parliamentary Coordination, and ECO Advocacy Program (**Category-I, D3**) for a full term of three years to be effective from his date of joining the Secretariat.

Agenda Item No.9

Any other business

35. No issue was raised under any other business.

Agenda Item No.10

Date and Venue of the next meeting

36. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to assume the next ECO Chairmanship and organize the 30th COM Meeting in Islamabad in the third quarter of 2026. The exact dates of the event will be finalized through diplomatic channels.

Agenda Item No.11

Adoption of Report of the 29th COM Meeting

37. The **Council** adopted the Report of the Meeting chaired by the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Agenda Item No.12

Closing of the Meeting and Vote of Thanks

38. The **Council** extended its sincere gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, for effectively and professionally chairing the meeting.

39. The **Council** further acknowledged the valuable participation of the Heads and Members of Delegations and their constructive contributions to the proceedings.

40. The **Council** also expressed its appreciation to the ECO Secretary General and his team for their dedicated support, timely preparations and efficient coordination with Member States, which ensured the smooth conduct and successful conclusion of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM).

**List of Heads of Delegation of Member States
of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)**
(*ECO Secretariat, November 28, 2025)-Virtually*

S#	MS/Name	Position	Remarks
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan			
1.	H.E. Mr. Amir Khan Muttaqi	Foreign Minister	
Republic of Azerbaijan			
2.	H.E. Mr. Araz Azimov	Deputy Foreign Minister	
Islamic Republic of Iran			
3.	H.E. Mr. Seyed Abbas Araghchi	Minister of Foreign Affairs	ECO Chair - 2024
Republic of Kazakhstan			
4.	H.E. Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev	Minister of Foreign Affairs	ECO Chair - 2025
Kyrgyz Republic			
5.	H.E. Mr. Jeenbek Kulubayev	Foreign Minister	
Islamic Republic of Pakistan			
6.	H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar	Deputy Prime Minister - Foreign Minister	ECO Chair - 2026
Republic of Tajikistan			
7.	H.E. Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin	Foreign Minister	
Republic of Türkiye			
8.	H.E. Ms. Berris Ekinci	Deputy Foreign Minister	
Turkmenistan			
9.	H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov	Deputy Foreign Minister	
Republic of Uzbekistan			
10.	H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Saidov	Foreign Minister	

**List of Participants from ECO Observers, Specialized Agencies,
Partners and ECO Secretariat during 29th Meeting of COM
(ECO-Secretariat, November 28, 2025)**

S. #	Name /Position	Remarks
Turkish Cypriot State		
1.	H.E. Mr. Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu, Honourable Finance and Acting Foreign Minister, Turkish Cypriot State	
Secretariat of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)		
2.	Mr. Merey Mukazhan, Deputy Secretary General, Organization of Turkic States (OTS)	
Secretary General (CICA)		
3.	H.E. Mr. Kairat Sarybay Secretary General of (CICA)	
ECO Secretariat		
4.	Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan Secretary General of ECO	
5.	Ambassador Jandos Asanov, Deputy Secretary General for Tourism Directorate; Project Management Section; Judicial and Parliamentary Coordination and ECO Advocacy Programme of ECO.	
6.	Ambassador Silapberdi Nurberdiyev, Deputy Secretary General for Transport & Communication, and HRSD	
7.	Mr. Cagatay Emrah Ongut Deputy Secretary General for (Administration, Energy, Minerals and Environment, Information Technology; and International Relations of ECO)	
8.	Dr. Behzad SABERI ANSARI Deputy Secretary General for (Trade & Investment, Agriculture & Industries (AI) and Transport & Communications of ECO)	

**Statement by ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan
at the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)
(Online - November 24, 2025)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Good Morning,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warm greetings to all senior officials gathered online to facilitate the preparations of 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers. I would also like to thank you all for your kind presence today.

Allow me further to express my sincere appreciation to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its ECO Chairmanship in 2025 under the theme “Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development.”

This meeting provides an opportunity to review the progress made during 2025, finalize the agenda, report and communiqué for consideration and adoption by the esteemed Council of Ministers that will also convene online on November 28.

Excellencies,

This year has been marked by vitalized institutional activity and an impressive revival of regular ministerial and expert-level meetings across various sectors. The Organization successfully convened the 17th ECO Summit in Khankendi under the theme “New ECO Vision for a Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Future.” The Summit also introduced the first-ever ECO Week, engaging youth, women, academia, and business community, as well as the whole family of ECO institutions in a range of activities and multi-stakeholders events. The outcomes of these deliberations are being integrated into the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035, which will guide our collective work over the next decade.

Mr. Chairman,

A comprehensive report on our activities this past year has already been circulated for your consideration. I would, however, like to highlight a few key activities and initiatives in this brief presentation.

This year, we achieved significant progress across all priority sectors. In the area of

trade, the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade, being held this week in Istanbul after a gap of more than a decade, is a landmark event. The Ministers are expected to take a number of important decisions on the future of trade integration in the ECO region.

In transport, the 13th ECO Ministerial Meeting, held in Tehran in June, adopted the Tehran Declaration, which outlined a forward-looking agenda for regional connectivity. The proposal to create an ECO Special Fund for Transport Development and to convene an Investment Conference on Transport Projects demonstrates our growing ambition to link the region through smart and sustainable transport corridors. Member States also reaffirmed commitment to the full implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) and expansion of projects along key corridors such as ITI and KTI. Several forward-looking projects such as Digital Modelling and Maintenance of Railways, as well as Data Exchange between Railway and Customs Authorities will provide the digital backbone to our future transport systems. Moreover, Kazakhstan's welcome decision to host the 14th Transport Ministerial in 2026, alongside an Investment Conference with potential support from IsDb and AIIB, and finalization and implementation of Plan of Action with IRU, will further reinforce this momentum.

As digitalization has emerged as a transformative force with great potential to significantly enhance logistics, modernize border operations, and improve overall connectivity, we have also sharpened our focus on Information and Communication Technologies. As per the mandate given by the previous COM, through the Mashhad Communiqué, we are tasked with strengthening our ICT-related capacities, including creating a special ICT unit in the Secretariat, which we plan to implement within the framework of the Secretariat's reform.

Stronger regional cooperation in ICT, including knowledge and experience sharing, is central to our goal of creating seamless transport networks. With this in mind, we recently held a meeting with the leadership of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO). Moreover, we continue to strengthen our collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The Secretariat is also cooperating with Pakistan in preparing a draft of a new five-year ICT strategy (2026-2030), in its capacity as host of the 4th Ministerial Meeting on ICT early next year.

In energy and environment, ECO achieved tangible progress. The ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO) in Baku, jointly implemented with UNIDO, entered its operational phase following the entry into force of its Charter. The first meeting of its Board of Governors appointed the Executive Director and adopted the Rules of Procedure, opening a new chapter in regional clean energy cooperation. The ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM) advanced through peer reviews and Task Force consultations, is paving the way for harmonized power markets. The ECO Five-Year

Roadmap on Minerals Cooperation (2026–2030) is close to finalization, while the RESCUE Initiative on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy gained visibility through global platforms such as the World Circular Economy Forum. Preparations are also underway for the 6th Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Uzbekistan in 2026.

In agriculture and industry, progress has continued in both institutional and technical areas with preparations in hand for the 8th ECO Agriculture Ministerial Meeting on February 17-18, 2026 in Tehran. This year in March, ECO also signed a MoU with the International Organization for Food Security (IOFS). The ECO Regional Programme for Food Security and its Coordination Centre have expanded activities to support data sharing and capacity building. The ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) organized a series of online sessions highlighting investment opportunities and launched a plant breeding program in Ankara, while the Permanent Veterinary Commission (ECO-VECO) awaits the entry into force of its Statute. The ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (ECO-RISCAM) has held nine technical meetings and now awaits full ratification. Cooperation with IOFS, FAO, UNIDO and WIPO continues to enhance agricultural innovation, industrial productivity, and quality infrastructure across Member States.

Excellencies,

Tourism has remained one of the most dynamic sectors. The total number of visitors to ECO Member States surpassed 100 million in 2024 which is a record number. The 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Erzurum, the ECO Tourism Capital 2025, launched the first ECO Tourism Investment Guide and selected the next ECO Tourism Capitals – Lahore (2027), Mary (2028), and Karakol (2029). The First ECO Silk Road Task Force in Sheki, the Second ECO Tour Operators Forum co-hosted by Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot State and the 4th ECO Tourism and Transport Task Force highlighted strong public-private collaboration. The finalization of the ECO Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the proposed ECO Tourism Connectivity Master Plan reflect growing integration in the tourism and transport domains.

Under Human Resources and Sustainable Development, the Secretariat organized the first ECO Forum on Sustainable Development in Arkadag, as well as the inaugural ECO Youth and Women's Forums in Aghdam and Lachin, bringing together stakeholders from across the region. Progress has continued in education and health through collaboration with the ECO Educational Institute and WHO. The Action Plan on Internationalization of Higher Education is under development, the signing of the ECO-WHO MoU is in its final stages, and preparations underway to launch first ever ECO Scholarship Programme in collaboration with LUMS Pakistan. Progress in disaster risk reduction followed the 9th Ministerial Meeting in Dushanbe, including technical exercises and the Winter Drill in Erzurum, leading to the update of the ECO

Regional Framework on DRR. Pakistan will host the 10th Ministerial Meeting on DRR in 2026 which will further strengthen our DRR agenda.

Excellencies,

The Organization has also strengthened cooperation in law, justice and internal security. The 4th ECO Interior Ministers' Meeting, convened with ministerial attendance from across the region after a gap of 15 years, in Tehran in October adopted the Tehran Declaration, emphasizing collective action against terrorism, organized crime and emerging cyber threats and close law enforcement and crime prevention cooperation. The 6th Meeting of Attorneys and Prosecutors General in Tashkent in September adopted the Tashkent Declaration, advancing regional judicial cooperation and anti-corruption frameworks. These events agreed to operationalise the ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management and finalize framework for ECO Anti-Corruption Agencies and Ombudsmen. Pakistan's offer to host the 5th Interior Ministers' Meeting in 2026 will ensure continuity of these initiatives.

On the institutional front, the Secretariat has intensified its project-based operations. The 22nd Project Monitoring Group (PMG-22) reviewed 39 regional projects – eight completed, sixteen under implementation, and fifteen under review across transport, trade, energy, environment, agriculture and tourism. New initiatives in logistics and connectivity were approved, while the Secretariat adopted guiding principles of grant-eligibility and bankability to attract co-financing. To this end, we have maintained close and regular coordination with ECO TDB to advocate the expansion of its membership and capital base. We have deepened engagement with the Islamic Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to mobilize additional resources for projects in the ECO region individually or jointly.

As part of strengthening ECO's global outreach, I have engaged with our regional and international partners to ensure that Organization remains aligned with emerging development priorities. My participation in the SCO Summit in China enabled more substantive exchanges with SCO, CIS, EAEU, ASEAN and the AIIB, reaffirming our collective interest in enhanced connectivity and coordinated regional initiatives.

This month's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including my meetings with the officials of the Saudi Government, the Islamic Development Bank, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Digital Cooperation Organization, provided an opportunity to further advance ECO's efforts to build practical and results-oriented cooperation.

Excellencies,

Before closing, I would like to highlight a few matters that continue to require our collective attention. While the Organization has made notable progress, the ECO Finance Ministers Meeting has not been convened since 2021, which has slowed the pace of cooperation in economic and financial spheres. **We do hope that we will be able to work with Azerbaijan to organize the ECO Finance Ministers Meeting on the margins of ISDB Board Meeting in Baku next year.** The institutional reform agenda also remains unfinished, as the adoption of the HLC report is still pending.

From a financial perspective, the Secretariat has continued work under austerity conditions, though this has created certain operational limitations. Staff salaries have remained unchanged for four years, and the Daily Subsistence Allowance, last revised in 2008, no longer reflects present cost levels. This year, our average increase of 1.5 per cent further reduced to 0.97 per cent, is significantly lower than the other sister organizations in the region with overlapping membership. Also, timely payment of assessed contributions is essential for ensuring that the Secretariat can maintain its efficiency and continue to deliver on its responsibilities.

Our inability to have Informal COM in New York on the sidelines of the General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly and now having COM in virtual format, have deprived our leaders the opportunity of more intimate engagements this year. We do hope that we will make up for this loss in future by adhering to the well-established practice of COM meetings in an offline format.

We are also grateful to the Kyrgyz Republic for joining the consensus for a two-year joint summit and COM chairmanship. We are also **hopeful that** the Islamic Republic of Pakistan **agree** to steer the Organization as the next chair **for a period of two years.**

Looking ahead, the coming year will focus on consolidating these achievements, deepening institutional reforms and finalizing the formulation of Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2035. The scheduled Ministerial Meetings on Environment (Uzbekistan), Industry (Tajikistan), Agriculture (Iran), Tourism (Azerbaijan) and DRR (Pakistan) will maintain our momentum into 2026.

I thank you all for your dedication and valuable contributions today and wish a successful conclusion of this important meeting.

Thank you.

Annexure-III

Statements by Heads of Delegations

29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers **in Alphabetical Order**

November 28, 2025 (Online)

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Amir Khan Muttaqi
Honourable Foreign Minister of Afghanistan**

Your Excellency Mr. Yermek KOSHERBAYEV, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the brotherly country of Kazakhstan,

Your Excellency Mr. Asad Majeed Khan, Secretary-General of the ECO,
Distinguished Foreign Ministers,

Esteemed representatives of the ECO member states, and honored participants of today's meeting,

Assalamu Alaikum WR WB!

It is a distinct honor for me – as Minister of Foreign Affairs – to participate in the 29th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) – since the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

I therefore consider it of immense significance to sincerely thank the brotherly Republic of Kazakhstan for its gracious invitation and the ECO Secretariat for its excellent coordination and arrangements that have enabled my presence at this important regional gathering.

I am fully confident that the distinguished representatives of the member states, guided by the agreed agenda, will achieve valuable and far-reaching outcomes that will, on the one hand, further strengthen the Organization's activities and, on the other, deepen relations among member states and create an effective framework for expanding mutually beneficial regional cooperation.

Distinguished colleagues,

As we are all aware, the world is moving from a unipolar order toward a new multipolar reality, and nations are witnessing the emergence of new centers of influence at both regional and global levels. It is inevitable that, during this transitional period, countries may face a degree of relative instability and change. The reshaping of the global order may benefit some nations while posing challenges to others.

What can, to a significant extent, protect countries from the adverse effects of these changes is the strengthening of collective cooperation, the formation of constructive alliances, and comprehensive coordination among regional and neighboring countries – particularly under the umbrella of important regional organizations such as ECO.

Creating common ground for cooperation among regional countries, pursuing shared interests, and preventing potential harm cannot be effectively achieved by any single nation in isolation. Strong regional organizations, especially the Economic Cooperation

Organization, with its noble objectives and principles, offer the most effective platform for member states to successfully navigate potential crises.

Dear friends,

After enduring decades of imposed occupation, proxy conflicts, and devastating internal wars, Afghanistan today enjoys a strong, centralized, responsive, and truly national government. Over the past four years, the Islamic Emirate has recorded notable achievements in governance and state-building.

Since resuming authority, the Islamic Emirate has succeeded in establishing nationwide security, eliminating circles of parallel power, seriously combating administrative and moral corruption, completely eradicating the cultivation, production, and trafficking of narcotics—a longstanding concern for neighboring and regional countries—and effectively managing natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes while minimizing their impact to the extent possible. The forced deportation of millions of Afghan refugees by some neighboring countries has represented an additional political challenge, which, by the grace of Allah, has thus far been managed responsibly and fundamentally.

During this period, diplomatic, economic, and trade relations with numerous countries have expanded, and the process of practical engagement and recognition of the Islamic Emirate in the region is steadily progressing, with diplomats from many countries actively present in Afghanistan.

Despite economic sanctions, banking restrictions, the freezing of Afghanistan's assets, and even the closure of trade and transit routes by a neighboring country, the Islamic Emirate—with limited resources—has not only prevented an economic collapse but has also laid the foundations for economic recovery and growth, resulting in an improved purchasing power for our citizens. According to a World Bank report, despite the closure of trade and transit routes with Pakistan, Afghanistan's exports to regional countries increased by 13 percent compared to October 2024.

Distinguished participants,

Regrettably, our neighboring country, Pakistan, has repeatedly violated Afghanistan's air and land territory on various pretexts that lack justification under international law, treaties, or the principles of good neighborliness. It has conducted airstrikes and rocket attacks on residential areas and civilian populations. Main transit routes have been closed since October 12, 2025 of this year, severely affecting travelers and traders of both countries, while refugees have been forcibly expelled during the harsh winter season.

Despite an agreement reached in Türkiye last month—following clashes along the border—to observe and maintain a ceasefire, Pakistani forces once again violated the

ceasefire on the night of November 25, 2025 with airstrikes on residential areas in Khost, Kunar, and Paktika provinces, resulting in the tragic loss of dozens of civilian lives.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan strongly condemns these hostile actions and the mistreatment of Afghan citizens, traders, and refugees. We call for the resolution of differences between the two countries through dialogue, negotiations, and mutual understanding based on facts, logic, and international principles—which we consider the only viable path forward. We express our gratitude to those regional countries that have offered mediation to help reduce tensions.

At the same time, the Islamic Emirate reserves its legitimate right—fully attested by history—to defend Afghanistan's territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and the fundamental rights of its citizens against any external aggression.

Dear friends,

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan pursues a balanced foreign policy centered on economic cooperation, guided by Islamic Sharia principles, national and cultural values, and mutual respect. We seek positive and constructive engagement with all countries and institutions, particularly with the ECO. Tangible evidences from the past four years clearly demonstrate our firm commitment to these principles and policies, which continue to evolve in a positive direction.

Afghanistan was among the first countries in the region to join ECO, recognizing the Organization's noble objectives, principles, and regional importance. With its strategic geographic position and rich natural resources, Afghanistan is well-placed to play a significant and valuable role in enhancing regional connectivity, improving economic conditions, and contributing to peace and stability in the region.

One of ECO's core objectives is the removal of persistent trade barriers among member states. Yet, as a landlocked country, Afghanistan has not only been unable to fully benefit from these opportunities but has repeatedly faced new obstacles to its trade and transit.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the unfavorable economic condition of Afghanistan, despite clear provisions in the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA)—signed by Afghanistan's then-transitional government—granting tariff reductions on Afghan imports for 15 consecutive years, these commitments have unfortunately not been honored, and additional impediments have often been imposed during harvest season.

Dear friends,

To conclude, allow me to present the following points on behalf of Afghanistan:

Afghanistan stands ready to continue and expand its cooperation with the ECO across various fields.

Member states may benefit from Afghanistan's diverse economic and trade capacities and opportunities within the ECO framework.

Afghanistan is prepared to host the 30th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers in Kabul with utmost hospitality and efficiency.

We hope that the Economic Cooperation Organization will engage positively with Afghanistan as a permanent member and invite representatives of the Islamic Emirate to meetings at all levels, thereby enabling direct and constructive dialogue on matters of mutual interest, concern, and aspiration.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Araz Azimov
Honourable Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan**

Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today at our annual meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers, held under the chairmanship of brotherly Republic of Kazakhstan.

Let me begin by expressing our deep appreciation to the host country and to the ECO Secretariat for the smooth arrangements of this meeting.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I warmly congratulate all our Member States on today's occasion of ECO Day. Our Organization has the scale and potential to be a true engine of growth and stability across wider region of which our countries are part. ECO is the first regional organization where Azerbaijan became a member in 1991.

I would also like to commend the Republic of Kazakhstan for its successful Chairmanship of ECO and all Member States for their constructive contribution to regional cooperation, particularly at the 17th ECO Summit held in Khankendi in July this year.

The Summit, together with the ECO Youth, Women's and Business Forums in Aghdam, Lachin and Shusha, demonstrated both the dynamism of our region and the profound transformation taking place in Azerbaijan's liberated territories. It also set a clear level of ambition that our leaders expect, the Foreign Ministers, to reflect in our decisions.

The Khankendi Communiqué, shaped on the Chair's summary of the Summit, provides a strategic vision and guidance for our work. It highlights economic sustainability,

climate resilience, deeper intra-regional trade, stronger connectivity and clean-energy cooperation as core pillars of ECO's future vision.

Building on that, our task today is to turn these political orientations into concrete projects and partnerships, while fully respecting the intergovernmental nature of our Organization and the views of all Member States.

At the same time, recent developments confirm that ECO is not only a community of neighbouring states but an emerging single geo-economic space. At the 7th Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, our President underlined that Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan today act together as a consolidated geopolitical and geo-economic region whose weight in the world is steadily growing.

Azerbaijan's investments in connectivity are a major part of this picture. In the last three years alone, cargo volumes along the Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor through Azerbaijan have increased by around ninety per cent, while transit times have significantly decreased. The modernization of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the expansion of the Alat International Sea Port, the development of a network of international airports and the construction works to connect western part of Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan are turning Azerbaijan into a key transport hub between East and West, North and South.

The Digital Silk Way fibre-optic project and plans for an electricity cable under the Caspian Sea add a digital and green dimension to this connectivity.

These efforts are directly aligned with ECO's priorities. Seven of our ten Member States are landlocked, and all depend on predictable, diversified and resilient supply chains.

If we work together, ECO can become a true "region of corridors", where efficient transport, trade facilitation, digitalization and regulatory convergence turn geography into a shared competitive advantage.

Another defining trend for ECO is the green transition. Many of our Member States are highly vulnerable to climate impacts and are simultaneously pursuing complex energy and economic transitions.

Azerbaijan is determined to ensure that the COP29 legacy translates into regional benefits. The ECO-UNIDO Clean Energy Centre in Baku, whose Charter entered into force this year, has begun operations as a hub to accelerate the sustainable energy transition in our region. We invite all Member States to actively participate in its programmes and to bring forward regional projects that can be supported through the climate-finance instruments shaped in Baku.

In parallel, the ECO Research Centre in Baku is being developed as the Organization's economic think-tank. In an era of rapid geopolitical and technological change, ECO

needs its own analytical capacity anchored in our realities and priorities. Azerbaijan stands ready to support both institutions as practical contributions to ECO's institutional development.

Our regional agenda is further reinforced by Azerbaijan's broader multilateral engagements, which will bring additional visibility and opportunities to the ECO family in the coming period. In May 2026, Baku will host the 13th World Urban Forum, the United Nations' premier platform on sustainable urbanization, which will focus on housing as a driver of inclusive and resilient development. In April 2026, our capital will host the 82nd session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. These two global events will place our wider region at the center of discussions on future cities, connectivity, digital transformation and sustainable development. Azerbaijan would welcome a strong ECO presence at both occasions.

Looking ahead, the evolution from ECO Vision 2025 towards a new long-term strategic document will be critical. It is now our responsibility to ensure that ECO has the instruments, institutions and partnerships to implement it.

Mr. Chairman,

ECO was founded on the conviction that our peoples bound by history, culture and geography are more secure and more prosperous when we act together.

Azerbaijan will remain a committed, constructive and predictable partner in this endeavor.

We once again congratulate Kazakhstan on its successful ECO Chairmanship and look forward to working closely with all Member States and the Secretariat to turn our shared vision into concrete results for our citizens.

I thank you for your attention.

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Seyed Abbas Araghchi
Honourable Foreign Minister of Iran**

Distinguished Chairman, Minister Yermek Kosherbayev

Let me begin with congratulating you on your chairmanship of this important ECO Council of Ministers meeting. I extend my greetings to all fellow ministers and officials present in the meeting.

As the Chairman of the 28th ECO Council of Ministers Meeting in Mashhad, I hope our 29th Meeting today, despite its online format; can sustain the outstanding role of the ECO Council of Ministers.

The gap since we met in Mashhad in early December 2024 till 30th COM meeting in 2026 is the longest interval ever between our gatherings, as our annual meeting in New York was also canceled this last fall. We need to have, as many as possible, exchange of views and discussions and retreats to ensure our Organization is functioning in its best attitude. This is specifically important as our Heads of State in the ECO Summits have shown growing attention and interests to the ECO and its success. Council of Ministers and the ECO Secretariat are in fact the key guarantors for implementation of instructions issued by our leaders.

As I highlighted in COM meeting in Mashhad, the ECO Region can become one of the most vibrant emerging regions within the Global South if our collective untapped potential and capacities become fully realized. The recent Summits showed that political will for an enhanced ECO exists at the highest level in our countries. The Council of Ministers, as the highest decision-making body within the ECO, shall constantly reinforce this valuable will and re-generate this momentum.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Since 28th COM meeting in Mashhad, important developments happened in our region. Most notably, in June 2025, Israeli Zionist regime and United States committed aggressive, terrorist, and unlawful attacks against Iran, in flagrant violation of all norms and principles of international law and United Nations Charter. Over 12 days of brutal aggression, they targeted civilian people, peaceful nuclear facilities and public infrastructure, causing significant human casualties and material losses. This also affected the daily functioning of the ECO Secretariat.

Our armed forces exercised their legitimate right to self-defense, protecting the decent people of Iran, our national sovereignty and territorial integrity while preventing also the spread of war in the region. I thank the ECO Member States for their responsible positions and support shown during the crisis.

Since last Council meeting in Mashhad, Iran hosted two important ECO ministerial meetings; namely Interior Ministers meeting and Transport Ministers meeting which provided the line ministries with opportunity to discuss and agree on certain course of actions in areas such as transport and transit, logistics, cross-border movement, disaster management, law enforcement and drugs control. There were also some other ministerial and high-level sectoral meetings across the ECO Region with direct bearing and impacts on our regional cooperation. A new promising development took place just this Wednesday in Istanbul where ECO trade ministers adopted a two-year roadmap to re-negotiate ECOTA with a view to putting an end to the long deadlock in trade liberalization in the ECO Region. This can also boost cooperation in trade-related areas in our region. Traders and other stakeholders in the ECO Region certainly need to interact in an ECO Free Trade Area in near future.

After Council meeting in Mashhad, our colleagues in the foreign ministries and the Secretariat started to develop a new ECO 10-year vision document. We believe that ECO needs some paradigm shifts and re-designing of its architecture. We shall not continue the same format and directions for the new vision while disregarding drastic changes and challenges at the global and regional levels.

Our countries shall become more resilient, integrated and powerful against the possible future risks and shocks. The ECO is still the best existing platform for our countries to develop and prosper collectively. The ECO Vision Committee should develop a more fitting, effective and feasible document for the next 10 years. Any vision and goals and objectives shall also make our region more inter-connected physically and technologically.

We congratulate Turkmenistan for successful hosting of "Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries" in August 2025. As a transit country, Iran is prepared to cooperate with the ECO Secretariat and the Member States to implement "Awaza Programme of Action" in our region to the interest of all 7 ECO landlocked countries.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

Iran's full support to the ECO is absolutely unconditional and undeniable. President Pezeshkian's participation in the ECO Summit in Khankandy portrayed this policy in the best way when he attended the Summit in the time of Israeli and US attacks against our country.

Promisingly, in the last 10 years or so, we witnessed an enhanced sense of ownership and engagement inside the ECO Membership. This spirit needs to be regenerated and re-enforced. We are grateful to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan who accepted to fill the chairmanship gap and take over the ECO chairmanship as of 1 January 2026.

In conclusion, let me thank Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan, the ECO Secretary General, for his visionary leadership of the ECO Secretariat. I also seize this opportunity to welcome Minister Mottaghi from Afghanistan to our meeting today.

I thank you for your attention.

Statement by Mr. H.E. Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev
Honourable Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I greet you all and thank you for joining us today.

It is highly symbolic that the 29th ECO COM Meeting is taking place on ECO Day (November 28).

Thirty-three years ago, seven countries (*Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan*) joined the ECO, giving our Organization its current form.

On this occasion, I extend our heartfelt congratulations to all Member States and express best wishes for the continued success and prosperity of our ECO family.

Dear Colleagues,

Kazakhstan's Chairmanship with particular emphasis on the development of the transport sector aligns closely with our national policy.

We commend the peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Greater stability in the South Caucasus enhances the region's role as a key transit hub connecting Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

We believe that the 14th ECO Transport Ministers' Meeting, to be hosted by Kazakhstan in 2026, can address infrastructure challenges within the ECO region.

Expanding our transport-transit capacity is vital for the development of trade within ECO.

In the first 8 months of this year, trade increased by 10 percent to almost 10 billion dollars, while total trade in 2024 amounted to 14 billion dollars.

Yet, there remains significant untapped potential, particularly in the non-raw-materials sector.

We therefore call for joint efforts to develop higher value-added products and diversify trade flows.

Kazakhstan is also committed to creating the most favorable conditions for foreign investors, especially from ECO Member States.

It is very encouraging that our cooperation in the field of investment is steadily growing. Last year, ECO Member States invested 656 million dollars into Kazakhstan's economy, which was by 20 percent higher than in 2023.

The updated Investment policy framework of Kazakhstan, effective until 2029, plays a key role in realizing the full potential of ECO region.

As we advance economic connectivity and investment cooperation, we must also ensure that growth in our region remains sustainable and environmentally responsible.

ECO must move beyond declarations and integrate ecological issues into the core of its economies.

In April 2026, Astana will host the UN Regional Ecological Summit, which we see as a platform to align national and regional priorities.

We call on all ECO Member States to actively participate in the upcoming Climate Summit.

Digitalization plays a crucial role in enhancing our cooperation. Kazakhstan has laid a solid foundation:

- ❖ over 1,200 public services are delivered via the E-Gov portal, M-Gov mobile app, and GovTech platforms;
- ❖ Cryptocity, a modern hub for fintech, blockchain, and AI technologies, has been launched;
- ❖ Alem.ai, the Artificial Intelligence Center, is inaugurated in Astana;
- ❖ Kazakhstan's supercomputer can provide a key platform for fostering regional cooperation in artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

We should fully harness the potential of digitalization for the benefit of our peoples.

Tourism remains a powerful driver of inclusive growth, cultural exchange, and regional connectivity.

In Kazakhstan, over three years ecotourism arrivals rose by 40 percent, reaching 2.8 million (in 2024).

We believe closer regional cooperation in tourism can benefit all Member States.

In this regard, we reiterate our proposal to designate Aktau as the ECO Tourism Capital in 2030.

We are confident that Aktau proved itself as an excellent host of the ECO Tourism Forum, which we organized in September this year within our Chairmanship in ECO.

Dear friends,

In 2019 (*Antalya*), the Council approved a mechanism to adjust Kazakhstan's contributions (*for 2014-2018*).

We increased our share from 16 to 18 percent and have been making timely payments.

The Council's support in resolving this issue, allowing us to focus on new prospects, is highly valued.

We appreciate the Council's support for appointment of Mr. Yerzhan Mukash as Deputy Secretary General.

I am confident that his experience will contribute to the development of ECO and strengthen its Secretariat.

We also endorse Turkmenistan's proposal to upgrade their Program Officer position.

Excellencies,

The Palestinian case remains an important aspect of Kazakhstan's foreign policy agenda.

We welcome the outcomes of the Sharm El-Sheikh Peace Summit and the Gaza Ceasefire Agreement.

We reiterate that a two-state solution is the only path to lasting peace in the region.

The decision to join the Abraham Accords, reaffirms our consistent position regarding the Palestinian issue.

Kazakhstan also believes that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan is essential for regional security and economic connectivity.

I would like to highlight the synergy between ECO and CICA, both of which aim

to enhance trust, understanding, and cooperation across Asia. Kazakhstan is ready to act as a bridge between these two platforms.

Dear Colleagues,

As Kazakhstan's Chairmanship concludes, we thank Member States and the ECO Secretariat under leadership of the Secretary General for their support and practical engagement.

The Chairmanship year has reaffirmed that regional cooperation is not an abstract concept, but a practical means to improve our peoples' lives.

Over this period, our collective engagement within the ECO framework has reinforced our shared commitment to stability, growth, and prosperity across the region.

Moving forward, Kazakhstan remains committed to collaborating closely with the ECO Secretariat and all Member States to maintain this momentum and ensure the effective implementation of today's decisions.

Let us continue fostering the spirit of solidarity and partnership that defines the ECO family, working together for a peaceful, connected, and sustainable region.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Zheenbek Kulubaev,
Honourable Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan**

Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me greet all participants of the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers and thank His Excellency Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, for hosting this meeting.

I am confident that today we will comprehensively review all items on our agenda and exchange views on our Organization's current work and future development.

Dear colleagues,

Over the years, the Economic Cooperation Organization has made a notable contribution to the development of trade and economic relations among ECO member

states. Indeed, as a unique organization, it holds enormous potential to serve as an effective tool for the socioeconomic integration of our countries in today's environment.

However, we must acknowledge that its standing within the system of regional and international economic relations does not yet reflect that potential.

We must admit several challenges that hinder the growth of mutual trade among ECO countries, including high transportation costs, differences in member states' approaches to market and producer protection, and the consequences of international sanctions.

Under these circumstances, our ambitions are not been fulfilled as we would like. Hence, we need to adopt new approaches to realize the Organization's existing potential.

Dear colleagues,

We should be proactive in areas of mutual cooperation that can drive our integration. In this context, I would like to make the following points.

First. Development of Rail Transport.

As you know, the international China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project has been launched, and it opens new avenues for cooperation among all ECO countries. To enhance cooperation in transport and transit, and to increase our freight traffic and volumes, we need to coordinate our actions at the state borders.

Second. Energy sector cooperation. Our region has enormous energy potential. Nevertheless, our countries regularly experience seasonal power shortages.

Thus, we need to start working on a unified energy system for ECO countries and a project to create a common energy market based on the CASA-1000 sub regional project.

Given global trends toward green energy, this area must be a top priority.

In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the Charter of the ECO Clean Energy Center. Kyrgyzstan signed this Charter at the COP-29 Conference in Baku and ratified it.

We propose developing specific programs within the Clean Energy Center on hybrid energy systems, the integration of solar and hydropower, and energy-saving technologies for small mountain communities.

This experience can become an integrating platform for promoting renewable energy, technology exchange, development of green project standards, and personnel training.

Third, cooperation in digital and IT fields.

In the context of globalization, the world has entered an era of informatization and innovation. ECO countries possess a strong resource – educated youth and a growing information and communication technologies sector.

The creation of joint network platforms for IT parks in ECO countries will help launch a "Digital ECO," implement programs for artificial intelligence development, promote cybersecurity, and advance e-commerce and digital government services.

The Kyrgyz Republic is open to active cooperation in these areas, both in implementing projects and in knowledge exchanging.

Dear friends,

Our countries have unique tourism resources that not only increase GDP, create jobs, and generate multiplier effects for our economies, but also attract foreign direct investment to our region.

In this regard, the World Nomad Games, to be held in Kyrgyzstan in 2026, will serve as a unique international platform for strengthening humanitarian ties, promoting our shared cultural heritage, cooperating in the fields of ethnotourism and ethniculture.

We invite the member states to actively participate in the upcoming Games by sending their sports delegations.

Dear colleagues,

As you know, our initiatives, with strong support from our mountain-country partners, are currently implemented within the UN through the adoption of the "Five-Year Action Plan for Mountain Development for the period 2023-2027."

The main goals of the "Five Years of Action" are to adapt to and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and to improve the living conditions of people in mountain regions from economic, environmental, and social perspectives.

As part of our mountain initiatives, we will hold the World Mountain Youth Festival in 2026. We invite representatives from your countries to actively participate in the event.

As the concluding stage of the "Five Years of Action," the Second Global Mountain Summit – "Bishkek+25" – will be held in Kyrgyzstan in 2027, 25 years after the First Summit. We invite delegations from ECO member states to participate in this event and co-organize it.

Dear colleagues,

Unfortunately, the difficult situation in the Middle East, particularly the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, persists. Despite the ceasefire achieved in Gaza, the humanitarian consequences for the population there remain severe.

Dear colleagues,

Kyrgyzstan is interested in peaceful, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan and is ready to develop constructive cooperation with interested partners within the ECO.

Under the new Afghan authorities, the security situation and socio-economic conditions in the country have significantly stabilized. The Afghan authorities are taking substantial steps to combat the terrorist threat, reduce opium poppy cultivation, and ban drug production.

We are focused on advancing key aspects of the Afghan development agenda, participating in the implementation of international and regional programs, and engaging in dialogue platforms that contribute to settling the situation and supporting Afghanistan's further progress.

The Kyrgyz Republic regularly provides humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, including medical supplies, medicines, and food products. We recently sent humanitarian aid to residents of Kunar province, which was devastated by the earthquake.

We encourage active work under the ECO platform to support humanitarian projects and the reconstruction of countries affected by conflicts.

Dear colleagues,

We believe, that with the joined efforts of member states, by actively engaging with international institutions and focusing on concrete practical results, ECO can significantly strengthen its positions on the international arena.

I thank the Republic of Kazakhstan for their successful chairmanship in 2025, and congratulate Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan His Excellency Ishaq Dar, on the assumption of the ECO Chairmanship.

I wish Pakistan successful achievement of our common objectives during the chairmanship.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister - Foreign Minister of Pakistan**

H.E. & Dear Brother Yermek Kosherbayev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the current COM Chairman of the ECO,

H.E. & Dear Brother Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the 28th COM Chairman of the ECO,

Hon'ble Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, Secretary General (ECO),

Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies,

Honourable delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam-o-Alaikum,

1. I would like to congratulate my dear brother, Yermek Kosherbayev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on assuming the office of Foreign Minister and for successful hosting of the 29th ECO-COM meeting.

2. We appreciate the role played by Kazakhstan in steering the ECO during its Chairmanship.

3. I also wish to laud the efforts of my dear brother, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the outgoing Chair, as well as the ECO Secretary General for their role in further strengthening the ECO.

Excellencies,

4. This meeting takes place amid rapidly changing global and regional geopolitical developments as well as technological advancements that are impacting regional cooperation. In today's uncertain world, it is more important than ever before to collectively address common challenges, bridge the economic divide, and unlock the potential for shared prosperity.

5. Accordingly, we need to further solidify ECO, enabling it to meet its objectives. The ECO region offers enormous opportunities with a vast contiguous geographical area and abundant natural resources for integration of trade and economic systems.

Mr. Chairman,

6. As a founding member, Pakistan sees ECO as a useful platform to further reinforce ties among the members through multilateral engagements.

7. In pursuit of the ECO Vision 2025, Pakistan remains steadfast in its efforts to advance the goals of regional connectivity through integrated and efficient transport corridors. We believe that the focus of the 29th ECO COM - "Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development", is both timely and consistent with the ECO vision.

Mr. Chairman,

8. Pakistan has placed multimodal Transport corridors at the center of its development strategy. Such corridors are an essential pillar of our national development and a cornerstone of regional integration within the ECO region - encompassing road, rail, maritime, air and other networks.

9. In harmony with our National Transport Policy, we are revitalizing frameworks, harmonizing customs procedures and adopting international transport conventions, including the TIR system, to enable uninterrupted flow of goods and people between Pakistan and fellow ECO member states.

10. Pakistan is aligning its transport systems with those of other ECO member states to ensure seamless regional integration. We are keen to fully operationalize Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Rail Corridor and working with Iran and Türkiye for its early revival.

11. We have also joined the Eurasian Multimodal Corridor, connecting our ports to the Eurasian heartland, and we are also looking forward to the early establishment of Rail Corridors from Uzbekistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan, providing Central Asian region with much-needed transit opportunities and fostering growth and regional stability.

Excellencies,

12. As you are well aware, Regional Transport Ministers' Conference was held in Islamabad in October 2025. Ministers and Senior officials from over two dozen countries and major international organizations, including the ECO Secretariat, gathered to deliberate on the theme "Regional Connectivity: Opportunities for the Region."

13. The Conference enabled us to formulate strategies, identify priority corridors, and strengthen cooperation in road, rail, maritime and digital transport systems. It reinforced Pakistan's role as a bridge connecting South Asia, Central

Asia, the Middle East and China. Connectivity provides us an opportunity to transform our geography into an engine of growth for the entire region.

Distinguished colleagues,

14. I am pleased to share that since 14th August 2024, Pakistan has implemented a liberalized visa regime, introducing a "Visa Prior to Arrival" system for business and tourism purposes for 126 countries. As a result, businessmen, workers, and tourists from our regional partners are easily availing this facility, reflecting our commitment to openness and people-to-people connectivity.

15. Despite the above efforts, we all need to acknowledge that there is significant untapped potential for improving sustainability of transport and transit trade among the ECO regional countries. To fully realize the immense potential of our region, we must deepen cooperation in the following four key areas:

- I. Full implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA);
- II. Development of a coordinated multimodal transport network;
- III. Simplification and harmonization of customs and border procedures through capacity building and technology transfer; and
- IV. Promotion of sustainable and climate-resilient transport systems aligned with our international environmental commitments.

Excellencies,

16. Pakistan is in the process of strengthening its digital connectivity with the deployment of a new Sea submarine cable system. Under this deployment, Pakistan has been allocated a total of 13.2 Tbps bandwidth, enhancing support for cloud services, data centers, fintech, e-commerce, streaming, and the broader digital economy. We are ready to share the benefits of this initiative with fellow ECO member states through the development of a digital corridor.

Excellencies,

17. To realize the dream of regional connectivity, it is imperative to create an environment of peace and security. The ECO vision of regional connectivity requires collective efforts by the member states to address the serious security challenges faced by our region. ECO member states must jointly confront terrorism to establish a strong foundation for economic cooperation in the region. Without effectively overcoming this common threat, our dreams of seamless regional connectivity would remain a challenge.

Excellencies,

18. Terrorism is the biggest obstacle in achieving regional peace, progress and prosperity. Along with terrorism, climate change is also a common challenge to regional connectivity.

19. We must integrate climate resilience into the very fabric of our economic cooperation by investing in green infrastructure, enhancing early warning systems, and promoting regional climate adaptation strategies that serve our common future.

Mr. Chairman,

20. Finally, I would like to thank again all Member States for their support in designating Lahore as the ECO Tourism Capital for the year 2027. I assure you, that Lahore – Pakistan's cultural heart, will wholeheartedly welcome all those who will visit us. I extend a very warm invitation to you all.

21. I look forward to welcoming you all in Pakistan next year for the 30th Meeting of the ECO COM. Let us work together to overcome all the challenges and build a better future of peace, progress and prosperity for our entire region and beyond.

Thank you!

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin
Honourable Foreign Minister of Tajikistan**

Honorable Chair,

Honorable Ministers,

Dear Secretary General and participants,

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its effective chairmanship of the Economic Cooperation Organization and for the successful convening of today's meeting.

Tajikistan attaches great importance to cooperation within the ECO framework. In the current complex and unpredictable international environment, marked by economic uncertainty and climate risks, the role of the ECO as a regional platform is growing.

Our region, possesses immense natural, energy, and human potential.

Intra-regional trade among the Member States has been steadily growing. Nonetheless, its potential continues to be underutilized.

Tajikistan believes that the development of transport infrastructure and digital solutions should become a cornerstone of our cooperation. In line with the initiative of the President of

the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, we advocate for the creation of a modern, “smart,” and environmentally sustainable transport network connecting Central, South, and West Asia.

Energy remains a strategic pillar of regional cooperation. Possessing significant hydropower resources, Tajikistan stands ready to supply clean and renewable green energy to the countries of the region and to participate in the establishment of the *ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM)*. We support the implementation of the *ECO Energy Cooperation Strategy 2030* and emphasize the importance of transitioning towards a low-carbon economy and the adoption of green technologies.

In addition, I would like to highlight that cooperation on water-related issues remains one of the key priorities of Tajikistan at the regional and global levels. At the initiatives of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 14 water- and climate-related resolutions, which aim at fostering global partnership on water issues.

Furthermore, we also emphasize the growing importance of the Dushanbe Water Process, which has evolved into a leading international mechanism for promoting dialogue, strengthening cooperation, and mobilizing action on water and climate issues. Taking this opportunity, Tajikistan invites all ECO Member States to actively participate in the Fourth High Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” to be held in Dushanbe in May 2026. This high-level event will serve as a key preparatory event for the UN Conference on Water in 2026 in the UAE and the UN Water Conference in 2028 in Tajikistan.

Equally important are the issues of food security and resilience to climate change. Tajikistan supports the establishment of a network of regional agro-food hubs, developing green and sustainable supply chains, and introducing environmental standards in agriculture.

One of the top trending spheres shaping our future is digitalization. In accordance with the initiative of the President of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon announced at the *17th ECO Summit in Khankendi*, we propose to enhance regional cooperation in the fields of artificial intelligence, innovation, and cybersecurity. We also support the establishment of the *ECO Centre for Digital Initiatives*. The President’s initiative fully aligns with the Organization’s priorities in developing sustainable ICT (Information and Communication Technology) solutions and strengthening digital skills, especially among young people.

In reflecting on the growing strategic importance of artificial intelligence for our region, it is pertinent to underscore that on July 25, 2025, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a landmark resolution on the role of AI in creating new opportunities

for sustainable development in Central Asia, initiated by the Republic of Tajikistan. A central provision of the resolution is the establishment of a Regional Artificial Intelligence Center in Dushanbe, which will serve as the hub for coordinating AI programs, research activities, data infrastructure, and governance efforts across Central Asia, thereby underscoring its strategic importance.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The “*Strategic Goals of the Economic Cooperation – 2035*” will serve as the key long-term document defining the Organization’s priorities for the coming decade. Tajikistan stands ready to take an active part in drafting and implementing the Strategy, contributing to the creation of a resilient, prosperous, and technologically advanced region.

We are convinced that through the joint efforts of all Member States our Organization will reach a new, higher level of cooperation in order to implement the ECO Vision, aimed at sustainable development and shared prosperity for all peoples of our region.

At the end once again I would like to congratulate Kazakhstan for chairmanship and wish every success to Pakistani friends to whom chairmanship in our organization being passed through.

Thank you.

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Berris Ekinci
Honourable Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkiye**

Distinguished Chairman,
Esteemed Ministers,
Dear Participants,

Let me start by **thanking His Excellency Yermek Kosherbayev** for Kazakhstan’s successful Chairmanship of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and for convening this meeting.

His Excellency Minister Fidan could not attend this meeting due to a pressing engagement. However, he asked me to convey his sincere greetings to you all.

I am glad to address you on this meaningful **ECO Day**, which marks **Thirty-thirth (33th) anniversary of the enlargement** of our organization.

On this occasion, I believe it is essential to recall the founding vision of the ECO, and reflect on its future.

Esteemed Ministers,

The founding vision of the ECO stands for contributing to sustainable economic growth, advancing economic development, increasing trade among member states, and strengthening regional cooperation.

We are all aware that geopolitical tensions, uncertainties and protectionist tendencies have negative impacts on the international system.

Global economic governance and international trade are facing profound challenges. Against this backdrop, **regionalism continues to gain importance**.

Today, thanks to our shared history, cultural affinities and common values, the ECO **has an increasingly important role to play**.

As a full-fledged economic organization, the ECO has all means to attain its founding vision.

However, by expanding into too many areas, the ECO has fallen short of delivering the expected performance in its core mission.

In this regard, and in line with the vision set forth by our Leaders at the Seventeenth (17th) ECO Summit held last July in Khankendi, **it is essential to reinforce the economic and trade-oriented structure of our Organization, enhance our intra-trade volume, and implement the necessary reforms**.

Türkiye is a staunch supporter of ECO's common vision, and will continue to work in unison with the member states to this end.

We also attach utmost importance to **the reform process**, which gained momentum by the High Level Committee Meeting (HLC) held last February.

Therefore, we are looking forward to the HLC report and getting into action without any further delay.

We **welcome the consensus** reached on "**Sequencing of Council of Ministers and Summit under Two-Year ECO Chairmanship**". It is an important step in reform process for increasing the efficiency of our Organization.

It is equally important for us to finalize our new roadmap, namely, "**Strategic Objectives of Economic Cooperation -2035**" as soon as possible.

We must ensure that this document reflects current needs and dynamics, as well as future projections.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his team for their tireless efforts in preparing these documents.

On the other hand, we regret that consensus among the member states could not be reached on the Joint Communiqué.

We would have welcomed a concise text that focuses on our cooperation and underline priority areas within the ECO.

Excellencies,

Turning to our priority areas, I would like to underscore the significance of holding the **Fifth ECO Trade Ministers Meeting** just a few days ago (26 November) in Istanbul after so many years.

This meeting represented a significant milestone for renegotiating ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA).

There is no doubt that **the Istanbul Declaration**, adopted at the meeting, will serve as an important guide in this regard.

Another priority area which deserves our attention is connectivity and energy.

Energy issues can no longer be addressed in isolation from connectivity and multilateral transport infrastructure, as they are inherently interlinked and mutually reinforcing elements of regional stability and economic resilience.

Recent global developments reaffirm the need for robust, integrated transport connectivity across our region.

The ECO stands as a significant platform for strengthening connectivity, enhancing energy security, and advancing partnerships in strategic infrastructure projects.

We attach great importance on further strengthening our cooperation based on the principle of mutual benefit under the auspices of the ECO.

On this occasion, I am particularly glad to announce that the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Türkiye is interested in hosting the 5th ECO Energy Ministerial Meeting.

Third area that I would like to mention is **environmental degradation and climate change**, which has far reaching consequences to our sustainable development efforts.

We should continue to work towards climate-resilient development pathways that reflect our regional needs and priorities.

In this spirit, we look forward to welcoming you all to **COP31 next year in Türkiye**, where we hope to further strengthen our partnerships and commitments towards a more sustainable future.

During our COP Presidency, we will work towards bridging the gap between developed and developing countries.

Excellencies,

Last but not least, a few words on **our extended partnership**:

The work of our observers and related bodies require our special attention and support.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) which has long been subject to unjust restrictions and isolation, has been an observer in our Organization since 2012. Despite the difficulties it has been facing, the TRNC spares no efforts to contribute to ECO's activities.

Therefore, it is high time to **foster a spirit of solidarity with the TRNC**, in line with our shared culture and civilization.

We call on the members to enhance their contacts with the TRNC, and to explore cooperation opportunities in all areas especially in the fields of sports, culture, tourism and education.

In this context, we extend our appreciation to all member states which participated in the **Second ECO Tour Operators Forum, jointly organized by Türkiye and the TRNC last week** (18-22 November 2025).

In conclusion, I once again commend the Kazakh Chairmanship for its leadership and its efforts to advance our shared agenda and wish success to Pakistan for their upcoming Presidency. I am confident that the outcomes of this meeting will further strengthen our cooperation and help us deliver tangible results for the benefit of our region. Thank you.

Statement by H.E. Mr. H.E. Mr. Ahmet Gurbanov
Honourable Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to express gratitude to the Republic of Kazakhstan for organizing today's meeting and for its leadership of ECO in 2025. We particularly note the clear and consistent work of the Secretariat under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Assad M. Khan, which ensured comprehensive preparation of materials for the current meeting.

Turkmenistan consistently advocates for strengthening ECO as an effective, results-oriented regional structure capable of ensuring sustainable economic interaction and interconnectivity among our states. In the context of a complex global economic situation, issues of efficiency, rationality, and prioritization in the Organization's work become particularly relevant. It is necessary to focus on those areas that provide the greatest regional effect, long-term sustainability, and practical benefits for all member states.

In the context of discussing the draft "**Strategic Goals for Economic Cooperation – 2035**," Turkmenistan supports the need for their comprehensive revision and harmonization.

We consider it expedient **to extend the current ECO Vision 2025 concept** for a transitional period. In our view, the new strategic document should be based on a realistic assessment of the Organization's capabilities, focus on applied projects, and provide for enhanced project management, monitoring, and evaluation of results. When developing the new document, we also consider it important to include the main directions laid out in the Ashgabat Consensus for Action as a basis for further coordinated activities of the member states.

Dear Colleagues,

Taking into account the priorities implemented during Kazakhstan's ECO Chairmanship in 2025 – "Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development" – Turkmenistan considers the implementation of the initiative to proclaim the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026–2035) to be extremely important. We see this initiative as an opportunity for ECO states to coordinate joint projects, exchange best practices, and attract international technical assistance. In this regard, Turkmenistan proposes to consider the possibility of preparing a joint ECO plan of action within the framework of this Decade, with a special emphasis on sustainability, digitalization, logistics synchronization, and the simplification of procedures, which fully aligns with the goals implemented during Kazakhstan's Chairmanship.

Taking into account that ECO is currently **developing a new Transport Strategy for 2026-2035**, we consider it important to ensure its conceptual and substantive alignment with Turkmenistan's initiative.

Such an approach will allow for the integration of the key directions of the Decade of Sustainable Transport into the Organization's strategic planning and form a unified approach to the development of regional transport interconnectivity.

I would like to express gratitude to the member states for their constructive approach to considering **Turkmenistan's proposal regarding strengthening national personnel representation in the Secretariat**. We believe that such a decision will contribute to forming a more balanced and comparable participation of member states and will strengthen Turkmenistan's involvement in key areas of the Organization's activities. In this context, we would like to note that Turkmenistan, in the near future, is ready to consider the possibility of nominating qualified national specialists for higher positions within the ECO structure, which, in our view, will contribute to further strengthening the Organization's personnel capacity.

Within the discussions **on enhancing ECO's efficiency**, Turkmenistan deems it necessary to optimize the Organization's activities, focusing it on concrete and measurable results. We consider it important to more actively engage international financial institutions, specialized UN agencies, and other partner structures.

I would like to separately emphasize the significance of **climate resilience and environmental issues**. Turkmenistan requests member states to support the initiative **to establish a UN-affiliated Regional Center for Combating Desertification for Central Asian countries**.

We are confident that this structure will unite scientific approaches, innovative solutions, and practical cooperation in the field of land restoration and combating ecosystem degradation.

Furthermore, Turkmenistan is promoting the initiative to establish a **UN-affiliated Regional Center for Climate Technologies**, which will allow ECO states to utilize global tools for adaptation and innovation. In this regard, we also count on the support of member states in advancing this initiative.

In the area of sustainable industry and green technologies, Turkmenistan considers it important to strengthen cooperation within existing platforms – primarily in the context of the **ECO Forum on Sustainable Development, successfully held on April 28-29, 2025, in the city of Arkadag**. We are convinced that the outcomes of this forum are necessary for building up practical initiatives, exchanging experiences, and developing green financing and sustainable infrastructure.

In the **transport sector**, Turkmenistan consistently facilitates the expansion of regional connectivity, including the development of international corridors, improvement of transit conditions, and simplification of procedures.

We emphasize the important role of **the Ashgabat Process – the "Global United Nations Sustainable Transport Conference,"** which serves as a platform for coordinating national and international transport initiatives.

I would like to separately underscore Turkmenistan's commitment to **developing mutually beneficial trade cooperation and strengthening the participation of small and medium-sized businesses** in the regional economy.

We consider it important to enhance ECO's activities in standardization, digital trade tools, development of e-services and data exchange, as well as in creating conditions for private sector participation in projects. This direction can be effectively implemented based on existing national platforms.

In the **humanitarian sphere**, Turkmenistan supports enhanced interaction on issues related to youth, women, the sustainable family, and education. We are ready to share our own experience and contribute to ECO initiatives in partnership with international funds and agencies.

Dear Meeting Participants,

Concluding my statement, I would like to emphasize that Turkmenistan consistently supports the activities of ECO and is ready to contribute to strengthening its role as an effective and pragmatic regional organization.

We believe that the further development of the Organization should be based on the principles of rational resource use, prioritization of key areas, process optimization, and active engagement of international partners. In this regard, Turkmenistan would like to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the upcoming ECO Chairmanship and wish it every success in fulfilling the tasks facing the Organization.

I wish our meeting successful work and express confidence that the decisions taken today will serve to strengthen economic interconnection, sustainable development, and the well-being of our peoples.

Thank you for your attention.

Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035

In the context of ongoing discussions on the draft **Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035**, we would like to express appreciation to the Secretariat and member states for the work done on the document. Turkmenistan has carefully reviewed the draft and considers it important to note a number of aspects that, in our opinion, need to be reflected more consistently and substantively.

First and foremost, we consider it fundamentally important that the future strategic document fully reflects the tasks set by our Heads of State and Government at recent ECO summits, including issues of sustainable transport, energy security, trade, digital transformation, environmental sustainability, and the humanitarian dimension of

cooperation. This will ensure continuity between high-level political decisions and the Organization's operational activities.

We are convinced that the draft should be based on a realistic assessment of ECO's institutional and financial capabilities, take into account resource limitations, and define a small but practical and highly effective set of priorities. In this regard, we propose to strengthen the sections devoted to:

- applied regional projects that can be implemented on the basis of existing national institutions and partnerships without additional budget increases;
- strengthening project management, including monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on key indicators;
- expanding cooperation with international financial institutions and UN structures, which will allow ECO initiatives to be implemented with minimal burden on the Organization's resources.

We also consider it appropriate that the document includes elements related to the practical implementation of initiatives put forward by member states. In particular, this concerns Turkmenistan's initiatives in the field of sustainable transport, combating desertification, as well as the creation of regional climate and environmental centers, which fully correspond to ECO's strategic priorities and provide measurable regional impact.

Given the active work on preparing the text, we propose to continue its coordination taking into account the above-mentioned principles and ensure close alignment of all future targets and areas of activity with the strategic tasks formulated by our leaders.

UN Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026–2035)

This is a new international initiative, officially proposed by Turkmenistan and supported by UN member states, aimed at consolidating global efforts to develop a sustainable, safe, accessible, and environmentally clean transport system in the world.

This is a 10-year global UN program within which all participating countries will:

- develop efficient and safe transport corridors;
- strengthen transit potential and interconnectedness of countries;
- introduce environmentally clean technologies in transport;
- support digitalization, simplification of procedures, and "smart" logistics;
- promote sustainable solutions for aviation, railways, road, and maritime transport;
- strengthen cooperation between developing and industrialized countries;

- improve transport accessibility for all, including landlocked countries.

Why is this important for Turkmenistan and ECO?

The initiative fully coincides with ECO's regional interests:

- development of international transport corridors;
- digitalization of transit;
- "green" modernization of infrastructure;
- synchronization of logistics and simplification of procedures;
- increasing the role of Central Asia and the Caspian region as a connecting bridge.

Moreover, all programs within the Decade can be financed through the UN and international partners, rather than from ECO's budget. For an organization with limited resources, this is an ideal tool.

Turkmenistan first put forward the idea at the UN level in 2023–2024.

In 2025 – it was supported by a number of states and included in ECO documents (including the draft Joint Communiqué).

At the 29th ECO Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, this initiative is considered one of the key elements of future regional strategies.

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Saidov
Honourable Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan**

**Your Excellency, Minister Yermek Kosherbayev,
Distinguished colleagues,**

I am pleased to extend my warm greetings to all participants of the ECO Council of Ministers meeting.

I would like to echo the words of appreciation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan for organizing today's event.

We commend Kazakhstan's strong and effective Chairmanship of the ECO under the motto "Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development".

Uzbekistan actively supports the priorities set by Kazakhstan and stays committed to their successful implementation.

We are especially pleased to welcome the Afghan delegation today, as Afghanistan remains an integral part of the ECO region.

We are all currently experiencing a period of profound transformation. The international order we have relied on for decades is facing a systemic crisis.

The foundations of global governance are weakening, trust is eroding, and the number of conflicts and zones of acute tension is steadily increasing.

The ongoing armed conflicts and the growing geopolitical competition among major “centers of power” have caused instability and unpredictability, which is particularly alarming.

In such challenging conditions, it is crucial for the ECO Member States to demonstrate solidarity, strategic initiative, and a capacity for constructive cooperation.

Uzbekistan attaches great importance to further strengthening the ECO’s role as an effective regional platform.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the potential of the ECO has not been fully utilized.

Decisions are not being implemented at the required pace to meet the needs of our region, and a number of initiatives are constrained by insufficient resources.

This inevitably reduces the practical impact of our work.

We are convinced that strengthening the Secretariat’s proactive role, backed by clear monitoring mechanism for implementing the initiatives of the Heads of State, can provide the ECO with the dynamism and effectiveness that are expected from us today.

Our focus must remain clear and unwavering!

Without distractions or the dispersion of efforts, our priorities should be expanding trade and investment and strengthening transport and communications connectivity.

We must facilitate industrial cooperation, advance the “green” agenda, and open new opportunities for innovation and digital transformation.

It is essential to adopt, in the near term, the “Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035”.

We propose intensifying the work of the High-Level Committee at the Deputy Minister level, tasking them with finalizing concrete proposals to enhance the functioning of the ECO.

Dear participants,

Now, let me briefly highlight the key directions of our joint work.

The formation of a modern, open, and predictable regional market remains a top priority.

Uzbekistan is interested in the speedy finalization of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, including the digitalization of document flow and the introduction of the “green corridors” system.

To enhance investment attractiveness, we propose launching the “ECO-Invest” Program, aimed at promoting major commercial and innovative projects.

The development of transport connectivity is a cornerstone of integration within the ECO region.

The strategic importance of the China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan railway cannot be overstated. Linked with the Trans-Afghan Corridor, it will provide the shortest access to South Asian markets and the ports of the Indian Ocean.

We pay particular attention to the establishment of the ECO Digital Transport and Customs Authority to harmonize transit procedures and introduce a “single window” mechanism.

I would also like to highlight the recent successful holding of the ECO National Airlines Forum in Tashkent (11 November), which served as a platform for developing coordinated solutions in the field of civil aviation.

Environmental sustainability stands at the heart of our shared agenda.

The early launch of the ECO High-Level Platform on Ecology will serve as a key mechanism for coordination and sharing best practices.

Joint development and implementation of a Transboundary Program to Green Arid Regions will help strengthen the environmental balance and reduce desertification risks in the region.

To advance this agenda, Uzbekistan is ready to host the Sixth Meeting of ECO Ministers on Environment next year in Samarkand.

In 2026, we also plan to convene the World Water Saving Forum in our country, and we look forward to your support and active participation.

4. Tourism development across the ECO region can serve as a powerful driver of economic growth and intercultural dialogue.

We see great potential in developing joint tourist routes under the “Silk Road” brand and in implementing the Roadmap to expand tourism services.

The first meeting of the ECO Advisory Committee on Tourism, held recently in Tashkent (26–27 November), marked an important step in coordinating approaches and advancing joint tourism projects.

Distinguished colleagues,

Uzbekistan reaffirms its adherence to the goals and principles of the Organization and remains committed to advancing initiatives that strengthen practical cooperation.

I am convinced that today’s meeting will contribute to the development of a sustainable and mutually beneficial framework for cooperation across the entire ECO region.

In conclusion, I extend my best wishes to our Pakistani friends as they assume the next chairmanship.

I also warmly congratulate all colleagues on Economic Cooperation Organization Day (28 November), wishing our ECO family continued prosperity and new joint successes.

Thank you for your attention.

**Statement by ECO Secretary General
Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan
At the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)
(Online –November 28, 2025)**

**Excellency Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, and the ECO Chairman;
Honourable Ministers;
Distinguished Heads of Delegation;
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good Morning,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest greetings to all distinguished Ministers and esteemed Heads of Delegation gathered online for this 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers.

Allow me, at the outset, to express my profound gratitude to all Member States for their

valued participation and continued commitment to the ECO's vision of shared regional economic development and prosperity.

I would also like to convey our deep appreciation to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its leadership of the Organization in 2025 under the important theme "Advancing Regional Transport Connectivity and Sustainable Development."

Excellencies,

Our sectoral activities have been detailed in my annual report already provided for Your Excellencies' consideration. I would like to touch upon a few critical issues, candidly, if I may, that we believe require your attention and guidance.

During this year, the ECO has witnessed a remarkable revival of its ministerial and high-level engagement processes, marked by strong participation of all Member States. Prolonged issues of quorum have been effectively addressed, while engagement at both political and technical levels has remained high. This could be attributed to our policy of prioritizing my engagements with the Member States through bilateral visits, particularly the sectoral ministries and its leadership. May I request those Member States, where bilateral visit requests are pending consideration, to convey their availability for my visit at the earliest.

The 17th ECO Summit held in Khankendi under the theme "New ECO Vision for a Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Future," was a major milestone in ECO's history. The Summit introduced the first-ever ECO Week, which brought together a range of stakeholders, including women, youth and business communities to deliberate on the Organization's future priorities. The outcomes of these engagements are being integrated into the forthcoming Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation - 2035, which remains under consideration of the Member States.

This year also marked the successful convening of various ECO ministerial meetings. The Interior Ministers' Meeting, held in Tehran, on October 28, 2025 after a gap of 15 years, adopted the Tehran Declaration, reaffirming the member countries' collective commitment to combat terrorism, organized crime and emerging security threats through closer law enforcement and crimes prevention cooperation.

The Trade Ministers Meeting, held in Istanbul, after a gap of 14 years, took a number of important decisions, including the adoption of negotiation strategy to amend ECOTA. These outcomes would give new momentum to our trade integration agenda.

The 13th Transport Ministerial Meeting held in June in Tehran adopted the Tehran Declaration, which provides a forward-looking blueprint for enhancing regional connectivity. The proposals to establish ECO Special Fund for Transport Development and plans for an Investment Conference on Transport Projects reflect growing ambition to link our region through modern, green and digital corridors.

The 6th Tourism Ministerial Meeting in Erzurum achieved notable results by selecting Lahore (2027), Mary (2028) and Karakol (2029) as upcoming ECO Tourism Capitals, and launching the ECO Tourism Investment Guide to attract investment and promote cross-border tourism.

Moreover, the 1st Meeting of the High-Level Committee (HLC) at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers convened in February made valuable suggestions to improve the efficiency of the Organization. Unfortunately, the report and its important recommendations still remain under consideration.

Excellencies,

In the energy and environment sectors, the ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO) in Baku became operational and the ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO-REM) advanced toward implementation. The Five-Year Roadmap on Minerals Cooperation (2026–2030), the first of its kind and the RESCUE Initiative on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy further underline our collective pursuit of sustainable and resilient growth.

Our agriculture and industry agenda continued to progress with preparations underway for the 8th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture, to be hosted by Iran on February 17, 2026 and work continues toward convening the long-pending 4th Industry Ministerial Meeting in Tajikistan next year.

The First ECO Forum on Sustainable Development held in Arkadag and the establishment of the High-Level Working Group on Sustainable Development strengthened policy coherence in this vital area. In disaster risk reduction, steady progress has been achieved through technical meetings and regional exercises, leading to the updating of the ECO Regional Framework on DRR (ECORFDRR). The next major milestone will be the 10th Ministerial Meeting on DRR, to be hosted by Pakistan by end of February 2026, which will further consolidate our regional preparedness and resilience agenda.

The Secretariat has intensified its efforts to make ECO's operations more effective, transparent and results-oriented. The 22nd ECO Project Monitoring Group (PMG-22) reviewed 39 projects across all priority areas, including 8 completed, 16 under implementation and 15 under review.

In advancing ECO's global outreach, I have engaged a broad range of regional and international partners to align our Organization with emerging economic and development priorities. My recent participation in the SCO Summit in China provided an important opportunity to deepen ECO's dialogue with SCO, CIS, EAEU, ASEAN and the AIIB, with a shared understanding that closer interregional connectivity and coordinated initiatives can bring tangible benefits to our Member States.

This month, I also undertook a visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where constructive exchanges with the Government, the Islamic Development Bank, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Digital Cooperation Organization reinforced ECO's commitment to building practical cooperation. These engagements form part of our broader efforts to position ECO as an active and responsive partner within the evolving regional architecture, ensuring that our Member States are better connected, better placed and better funded to benefit from emerging opportunities.

We have accelerated our efforts to renew, refresh and further deepen our collaboration with the international and regional financial institutions. In this regard, close and regular coordination with ECO TDB to facilitate the expansion of its membership and capital base, and with ISDB and AIIB to secure their technical and financial help for regional grant eligible and bankable projects.

Excellencies,

While we witness collective progress, some challenges continue to demand our attention. The Finance Ministers' Meeting could not be convened since 2021, which has constrained the pace of progress in economic, financial and banking cooperation. The forthcoming ISDB Board Meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan could be an opportunity for our Financial Ministers to convene on its sidelines to address some of the urgent issues pertaining to banking cooperation and payment mechanisms. We would request Azerbaijan to consider this possibility.

From a financial perspective, the Secretariat has continued to work under austerity conditions, though this has created certain operational limitations. Staff salaries have remained unchanged for four years, and the Daily Subsistence Allowance, last revised in 2008, no longer reflects present cost levels. This year, our average increase of 1.5 per cent further reduced to 0.97 per cent, is significantly lower than the other sister organizations in the region with overlapping membership. We hope that the member states will take this into consideration while approving the budget of the organizing bearing in mind the need to strengthen and enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the organization. Also, timely payment of assessed contributions is essential for ensuring that the Secretariat can maintain its efficiency and continue to deliver on its responsibilities.

Excellencies,

The coming year will be one of implementation and consolidation. Member States have already reaffirmed their readiness to host the Ministerial Meetings on Environment (Uzbekistan), Industry (Tajikistan), Tourism (Azerbaijan), Agriculture (Iran), Transport (Kazakhstan) and Interior (Pakistan) in 2026 ensuring continuity and momentum in our agenda.

As we move toward finalizing the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation – 2035 with the involvement of all stakeholders through **inclusive** national processes, our collective focus must remain on translating this vision into practical outcomes, making ECO more responsive, modern and impactful.

Excellencies,

Before concluding, I would like to gently note the importance of holding our Council meetings in person, as envisaged in the Rules of Procedure. This annual gathering remains a valuable platform for our Ministers to engage directly and provide strategic guidance to the Organization. I sincerely hope that future COM meetings may resume in person, to fully reflect the spirit of dialogue and collegiality that characterizes the ECO.

In pursuance of the mandate given by the 28th COM, the Secretariat and the CPR have undertaken extensive consultations on establishing a more coordinated and efficient modality for convening ECO Summit and COM meetings under a unified and single-country chairmanship. The CPR has consequently reached a basic consensus to extend the ECO chairmanship from one year to two years, enabling each presiding country to organize a COM meeting in the first year, followed by hosting both the COM and Summit back-to-back in the second year. We hope to finalize this arrangement soon in consultation with the member states.

The year 2025 has revived the rhythm of our institutional work. As we move toward 2026 and the finalization and launch of Strategic Goals of ECO-2035, let us build on this momentum to strengthen our institutions, ensure sustainable financing and deepen partnerships for the region's shared prosperity. I would like to reiterate that the success of this key organization will ultimately depend on the level of political ownership by its Member States, as well as on stronger attention of line ministries and agencies whose active participation is indispensable for the success of our regional cooperation activities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Islamic Republic of Pakistan on their forthcoming ECO Chairmanship in 2026, and to assure that the Secretariat will exert its utmost efforts to ensure that the year becomes a landmark period of fruitful cooperation and tangible progress for our Organization.

Thank you

**STATEMENT BY Honourable MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ACTING MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE TURKISH CYPRIOT STATE
H.E. MR. ÖZDEMİR BEROVA**

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am deeply honoured to address you today in my capacity as Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs at the 29th Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). I extend to you all the heartfelt greetings of the Turkish Cypriot people and the Government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus from a sunny and beautiful day in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

At the outset, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its distinguished chairmanship of the Organization throughout this year. I would like to express our profound gratitude to H.E. Mr. Ermek Köşerbaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, for his able leadership in presiding over this significant virtual meeting.

I would also like to convey our thanks to H.E. Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, for his support to and solidarity with the Turkish Cypriot people. Furthermore, I wish to thank the dedicated staff of the Economic Cooperation Organization Secretariat for their tireless efforts in successfully organizing this important virtual meeting.

Honourable Ministers,

As you are aware, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has been a determined participant in the meetings of the Organization at all levels since 1992 and has had the privilege of co-hosting numerous successful ECO events. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has vast experience and expertise in the tourism sector, which also happens to be one of the prioritized areas of cooperation identified by ECO. Recently, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus co-hosted the 2nd Economic Cooperation Organization Tour Operators Forum, last week.

The forum was held in our beautiful city of Girne, a standing reminder of how geography, history, and hospitality intertwine – much like the historical and cultural affinities that bind the members of this Organization, strengthening our cooperation and deepening economic integration. I am pleased to share that the event was highly fruitful, and we would be delighted to co-host many more meaningful initiatives in our country in 2026.

The Turkish Cypriot State remains fully committed to the objectives of the Economic Cooperation Organization at large in general, and the ECO Vision 2025 in particular, which outlines the key areas of cooperation among member states.

As a dedicated observer member state, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has consistently done its utmost to contribute to the achievement of these goals and has worked closely both with the members of the Economic Cooperation Organization as well as with the Organization itself.

Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am confident that you are following the latest political developments regarding the Cyprus issue. After five decades of fruitless negotiations, the Turkish Cypriot side announced in 2021 its new vision for a settlement to the Cyprus issue, advocating a cooperative relationship between the two existing states on the island, as neighbours, based on the formal reaffirmation of our inherent sovereign equality and equal international status.

It is an undeniable fact that there exist two sovereign states and two distinct peoples on the island with two different nationalities, languages, and religions, each exercising sovereignty over their own territories.

It is, therefore, high time that the international community recognizes the inherent rights of the Turkish Cypriot people, namely the sovereign equality and the equal international status of their state, putting the two sides on the island on equal footing in real terms.

As will be known, the Greek Cypriot side has repeatedly demonstrated its lack of genuine willingness to share power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriot people, using the negotiation process to merely reinforce its unlawful claim as the so-called "Government of the Republic of Cyprus."

Despite this stance, and with the unwavering support of our motherland, the Republic of Türkiye, we continue to work tirelessly to counter the effects of the inhumane and illegal isolation imposed on our people, strengthening our resolve to take our rightful place as an equal member of the international community.

In this regard, I would like to express the deepest gratitude of the Turkish Cypriot people to H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of the Republic of Türkiye, for his consecutive speeches since the 77th United Nations General Assembly, openly calling upon member states of the United Nations to recognize the independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and to establish diplomatic, political, and economic ties with our country.

I take this opportunity to renew our call to the member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization to pave the way in supporting the rightful cause and aspirations of the Turkish Cypriot people and to further strengthen their bonds with them in all walks of life. Our solidarity is of utmost importance to our ongoing struggle to continue to live in Cyprus in peace and with dignity.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**Statement by CICA Secretary General
H.E. Mr. Kairat Sarybay**

Excellencies,
Esteemed Ministers,
Secretary General of ECO,
Distinguished Participants,

It is a great honor for me to address this distinguished gathering on behalf of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). I extend my warm appreciation to the esteemed Chair H.E. Yermek Kosherbayev, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan – for guiding the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers and for his steadfast commitment to advancing regional cooperation.

Today is ECO Day, marking the Organization's 1992 expansion and reaffirming its long-standing commitment to regional cooperation, trade, and development.

Excellencies,

This meeting highlights the strong alignment between CICA and ECO, in promoting trust, peace, economic resilience, and regional connectivity. Allow me to highlight recent CICA developments that resonate strongly with ECO's priorities.

At the Informal CICA Ministerial Council Meeting held on 25 September 2025, Member States took two important institutional steps. First, the CICA Finance Summit was established as an advisory body to promote cooperation in the financial sector, strengthen financial stability, and support sustainable economic development across the CICA region. Second, CICA Women Council was established to bring together state institutions responsible for women's affairs and empowerment to foster cooperation, dialogue, and the exchange of best practices among Member States.

In 2024, CICA convened its first Ministerial Conference on Environmental Issues in Astana, producing a High-Level Statement that affirmed our shared commitment to climate action, water security, biodiversity, and sustainable growth. We also commend Azerbaijan's successful COP29 Presidency, which revitalized the global climate agenda.

In 2025, CICA contributed through a side event on water security and climate resilience in Dushanbe and reaffirmed its support for land restoration at the Sustainability Dialogue in Ulaanbaatar, in line with Mongolia's Billion Trees Initiative. I congratulate Turkiye for being elected as host and Chair of COP 31.

Amid growing geopolitical tensions and fragile supply chains, secure and efficient transport routes are essential. Kazakhstan's initiative, supported by Azerbaijan, current chair of CICA, to establish the CICA Council on Sustainable Connectivity, aims to strengthen regional transport, logistics, and trade. Once operational, the Council will provide a pan-Asian platform for technical exchange, policy dialogue, and institutional cooperation, including with ECO.

Recognizing SMEs as the backbone of our economies, the 8th Plenary Session of CICA Business council in Baku in May 2025 focused on digitalization, industrial cooperation, women's entrepreneurship, and the green transition. A key outcome was the launch of the interactive e-book "SME Landscape in Asia: Interactive Guidebook," offering practical insights into the business environments of participating countries.

The CICA Fund was established in 2022, as a practical mechanism to finance development projects, and this year saw its first project completed in partnership with the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) and TIKA, providing 300 Afghan farmers with wheat seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural extension services.

Distinguished Delegates,

I commend the successful ECO Summit held in July 2025 in Khankendi, Azerbaijan, which strengthened regional dialogue, economic cooperation, and our shared commitment to peace, connectivity, and sustainable development. I thank you for your attention and wish Kazakhstan, as Chair, and all delegations a productive and successful meeting.

Thank you.

Agenda No. 5

**Follow-up of the outcomes of First Meeting of High-Level
Committee (HLC) of ECO Deputy Foreign Ministers;**



**First Meeting of the
High-Level Committee (HLC)**

DRAFT REPORT

**ECO Secretariat, Tehran
February 3, 2025**

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INAUGURAL SESSION

The 1st Meeting of the High-Level Committee (HLC) on ECO Reforms convened with the participation of Deputy Foreign Ministers/Heads of Delegation from ECO Member States, ECO Secretary General and relevant staff of the Secretariat. List of Participants is placed at **Annexure-I**.

2. Chaired by **Mr. Alibek Bakayev, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan**, the HLC served as an important forum to evaluate the current structure, operational mechanisms and future strategic direction of ECO.

3. Addressing the gathering, **H.E. Mr. Alibek Bakayev** acknowledged that the Organization's current role in economic and business relations does not fully reflect its members' potential. He emphasized the need for innovative approaches to overcome challenges, enhance mutual trade, strengthen transport and transit links, ensure energy security and promote tourism. He highlighted Kazakhstan's commitment to advancing regional connectivity, trade, food security and energy cooperation, aligning these goals with sustainable development and regional integration. His complete statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

4. In his presentation, the **ECO Secretary General Amb. Dr. Asad M. Khan** provided a brief assessment of the Organization's progress and challenges. He highlighted the lack of comprehensive institutional reforms since ECO's inception and emphasized the need for stronger commitment from member states to foundational agreements, financial contributions and institutional participation. He underscored the direct correlation between regular ministerial meetings and tangible progress in key sectors such as transport and tourism. Stressing the imperative of regional cooperation in an evolving geopolitical landscape, he called for collective efforts to enhance ECO's operational efficiency and strategic impact. His presentation is placed at **Annexure-II**.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BRIEF REMARKS OF THE DISTINGUISHED HEADS OF DELEGATION

5. **H.E. Mr. Yalchin Rafiyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan**, emphasized the importance of strengthening ECO's institutional framework and regional cooperation. He highlighted Azerbaijan's support for the organization's reforms and the initiation of ECO Vision-2035. Azerbaijan is committed to advancing regional sustainability, as demonstrated by hosting the ECO Research Center and ECO Clean Energy Center in Baku. He also underscored the need for a more results-oriented approach within ECO, focusing on regional connectivity, trade facilitation and clean energy transition. He reaffirmed Azerbaijan's dedication to working closely with member states to ensure the successful implementation of ECO's strategic goals, with a particular focus on the upcoming 17th ECO Summit in 2025 as a key opportunity for shaping the organization's future. His complete statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

6. **Mr. Seyed Rasoul Mohajer, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran**, highlighted the importance of building on the collective commitment shown during the 28th ECO Council of Ministers in Mashhad. He emphasized Iran's readiness to support the implementation of ECO Vision 2025 priorities and contribute to shaping a new Vision for beyond 2025. He called for reforms within ECO to increase its efficiency and dynamism, stressing the need for better participation and engagement among member states. He proposed transforming sectoral committees into standing committees and establishing a permanent budgetary and administrative committee to address organizational challenges. He expressed confidence that the meeting would yield positive outcomes for ECO's future. His complete statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

7. **H.E. Amb. Amna Baloch, Foreign Secretary/First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**, emphasized the importance of transforming ECO into a more vibrant and effective platform for regional cooperation. She noted the under-performance of intra-regional trade within ECO, urging the early implementation of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to foster economic growth. She also underscored the need for a re-assessment of ECO Vision-2025 and supported Uzbekistan's proposal for the ECO Strategic Objectives-2035. She also called for comprehensive reforms within ECO, including improvements in financial, budgetary and organizational matters to enhance bureaucratic efficiency. Pakistan remains committed to actively shaping ECO's agenda and fostering stronger regional trade and connectivity, she added. Her statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

8. **H.E. Mr. Ismatullo Nasreddin, First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan**, emphasized the importance of collective efforts to address global financial and economic challenges. He highlighted the untapped potential for trade and investment within the ECO region and proposed the removal of transit restrictions and tariff barriers to enhance economic cooperation. He also underscored Tajikistan's commitment to energy cooperation, particularly the CASA-1000 project, and the development of a regional energy market. He expressed strong support for a sustainable energy strategy and greater collaboration on food security, climate

change mitigation and tourism. He stated that Tajikistan remains dedicated to advancing the objectives of ECO Vision 2025, inviting member states to participate in the upcoming High-Level International Conference on Glacier Preservation in Dushanbe in May 2025. His statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

9. **H.E. Mr. A.K. Gurbanov, Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan**, stressed the importance of ECO as a strategic platform for promoting sustainable development and regional prosperity. He proposed several initiatives to enhance cooperation, including the development of a Regional Map of Sustainable Transport Routes and the digitalization of logistics through technologies like GIS and AI. He also highlighted Turkmenistan's commitment to energy security, advocating for a regional platform on renewable energy technologies and sustainable energy projects. Additionally, he proposed a Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development in April 2025, aimed at fostering collaboration among member states to address economic, social and environmental challenges. His statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

10. **H.E. Mr. Babur Usmanov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan**, highlighted the growing significance of the ECO in addressing global challenges amidst a complex geo-political and economic landscape. He emphasized the importance of sustainable economic cooperation and digital transformation in strengthening transport connectivity, trade and investment among member states. Reflecting on Uzbekistan's active participation in ECO, including hosting the 16th ECO Summit in November 2023, he expressed full support for Kazakhstan's chairmanship and the successful implementation of its priorities. He also called for the commencement of preparations for the upcoming 17th ECO Summit, emphasizing the importance of enhancing multilateral cooperation within the Organization. His statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

11. **H.E. Ambassador Aylin Sekizkök, Director General of International Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye**, emphasized the need for a strategic transformation within the ECO to enhance its efficiency and focus on trade and economic development. She pointed out that the organization has moved into areas un-related to its core mission, leading to stagnation in flagship projects like ECOTA. To revitalize ECO, she proposed simplifying its focus by eliminating areas with no progress or lack of engagement, deepening economic cooperation, prioritizing concrete and result-oriented projects and re-structuring the Secretariat for operational strength. Türkiye reaffirmed its commitment to supporting this transformation, ensuring that ECO remains a vibrant platform for regional economic growth, she said. Her statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

12. **H.E. Ambassador Turdakun Sydykov, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to ECO**, reaffirmed his country's commitment to strengthening the Organization by adopting new approaches to regional integration. He underlined the need to assess progress under the "ECO Vision 2025" and develop a revised strategy that is results-oriented and aligned with current economic realities. He supported comprehensive reforms to enhance ECO's effectiveness, particularly in

trade, transport, energy security and tourism. Additionally, he called for a detailed review of past recommendations and a step-by-step approach to reform discussions, ensuring well-informed and consolidated decisions for ECO's future. His statement is placed at **Annexure-II**.

WORKING PART-I
HLC OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ON
ECO REFORMS

The High-Level Committee (HLC) conducted a thorough and detailed review of the ECO financial, institutional and operational issues. While recognizing the progress made by ECO in promoting its agenda, the delegates acknowledged that persistent challenges continue to impede the Organization's ability to fully realize its potential. They broadly supported the thrust of the paper and key suggestions made on reforming various aspects of the Secretariat work and functions. The discussion collectively underscored the need of comprehensive reforms within ECO to better align with the evolving needs and ambitions of the member states.

1. Financial & Budgetary Matters

Observations:

The ECO Secretariat remains heavily reliant on member state contributions, which are often inconsistent and delayed, resulting in financial strain. To ensure financial stability within the Organization, it is imperative that all member states make payments of their contributions in accordance with the actual scale of assessments. Timely budget circulation aligned with member states' fiscal cycles is essential to prevent delays in payment processing by member states. A minimum contribution threshold could encourage greater ownership among all member states. Additionally, long-term financial planning and regular reviews of operational expenses are required to ensure resource efficiency. Administrative and operational costs must be managed effectively to ensure adequate funding for the Organization's developmental projects and activities. To address funding shortfalls, the Secretariat often resorts to the General Reserve Fund (GRF), which, though providing temporary relief, gradually depletes critical reserves meant for development initiatives. The establishment of a dedicated Standing Committee, meeting biannually for financial reviews, would significantly enhance financial transparency and oversight and strengthen the Secretariat's fiscal management.

Recommendations:

- Prepare the annual budget (s) in timely manner and submit it to the member states in alignment with their financial cycles to avoid delays in operational processes and obtaining approvals for payment of their respective contributions.
- Hold consultations at appropriate levels to ensure that member states fulfill payments of their contributions timely and according to the scale of

assessments approved by the 24th COM, to maintain a consistent and reliable flow of funding.

- Timely payment of contribution by the Member States should be ensured for the smooth functioning of the organization.
- Conduct regular reviews of operational expenses to ensure efficient use of resources.
- Figure out a plan to replenish reserve funds, ensuring that they are used effectively for their intended purposes, without being depleted for budget deficits.
- Manage administrative and operational costs effectively, ensuring sufficient coverage for the Secretariat's developmental projects and activities, thereby enabling the Secretariat to operate more efficiently.

2. Efficiency of the Secretariat and Organizational Structure

Observations:

The Secretariat's staff structure has not undergone a comprehensive review to eliminate inefficiencies and optimize workload distribution. Overlapping tasks that duplicate assignments result in the ineffective use of human resources. Furthermore, the roles of Category-III staff need to be adequately rationalized, to avoid their inappropriate positioning. Currently, Cat-III includes three positions: A1, A2 and A3. To attract highly qualified professionals with significant experience, it may be beneficial to introduce higher-level positions such as A4 and A5 or upgrade some existing positions within this category. This adjustment would help create more opportunities for skilled professionals and further strengthen the Secretariat's capabilities. Moreover, a clear mechanism for defining the responsibilities of desk and program officers is also required to improve workflow efficiency. Empowering the Secretariat to recruit professionals from open markets would enhance institutional expertise and overall efficiency.

Recommendations:

- Secretariat to work out a specific proposal for increasing efficiency of the Organization, through elimination of duplications and overlaps and focus on the following in this regard:
 - Rationalize the roles of Category-III staff, ensuring that their job descriptions and responsibilities are clearly defined and that their positions align with their skills to optimize their contribution to the Secretariat's goals.

- Look in to the possibility of creating or upgrading Category-III positions to establish A4 and A5 positions to retain and attract experienced professionals.
- Re-define the responsibilities of desk and program officers to ensure that their roles are clearly aligned with their respective job descriptions.

3. Recruitment and Capacity Building

Observations:

The recruitment process within the Secretariat is not consistently aligned with the relevant provisions of the ECO Staff Regulations, limiting the selection to only a single nominated candidate and restricting the opportunity to choose from a broader pool of highly qualified professionals. Recruitment policies, particularly for program officers and experts, require revision and alignment with the evolving needs of the Secretariat. Staff salaries and benefits are not competitive with international standards, making it difficult to attract and retain skilled professionals. Capacity-building initiatives remain under-funded and lack strategic direction, restricting staff development within budgetary constraints. There is currently no structured engagement with academic institutions, to support knowledge sharing and capacity-building efforts. Additionally, the Secretariat has yet to establish a formal internship program to foster the development of young professionals. It is also crucial that the Secretariat has a formal say in the recruitment and appointment process to ensure that selected candidates meet the specific needs of the organization and align with its strategic goals. Since English is the organization's official language, proficiency in English is essential for its smooth operation, including for current Category-III staff. For new staff, English proficiency should be made mandatory, with a certification from an accredited institution.

Recommendations:

- Overall recruitment process should be merit based, transparent and aligned with the relevant provisions of ECO Staff Regulations.
- Review the overall recruitment process to ensure it is consistently merit-based, transparent and aligned with the relevant provisions of the ECO Staff Regulations, to enable the selection of highly qualified professionals and prevent the limitation of choices to a single nominated candidate.
- Improvements can be made in the qualifications required for ECO staff and in the recruitment processes that will not prejudice the candidate selection of the Member States.

- Ensure staff salaries and benefits are competitive and aligned with international standards to attract and retain top talent, considering annual salary adjustments based on inflation.
- Focus for capacity-building initiatives to maximize staff development within existing budget constraints, helping the Secretariat to better meet its objectives.
- Establish a working group on the recruitment process which can address the common recommendations in a holistic manner.
- Establish the structured engagement with academic institutions, to foster collaboration and promote capacity-building opportunities for Secretariat staff.
- Develop formal internship programs aimed at nurturing young professionals from the member states, providing them with valuable experience and developing future talent for Organization.
- English proficiency should be made compulsory for the Cat-III staff, including for new recruits.

4. IT Infrastructure and Digital Solutions

Observations:

Modernizing the Secretariat's IT infrastructure is crucial for efficiency, security and seamless communication with Member States. Upgrades should focus on advanced systems, secure networks and high-speed connectivity. Strengthening cyber-security, allocating sufficient resources and providing staff training will ensure sustainability. A structured monitoring framework will support ongoing improvements. ECO website should be improved to provide access to in-depth information.

Recommendations:

- Invest in modernizing IT infrastructure to improve coordination, management and reporting capabilities, with a particular focus on enhancing cyber-security and digitalization.
- Implement a digital performance evaluation system for staff to improve accountability, transparency and the overall management of staff performance.
- Expand translation capabilities by integrating modern automated tools to improve communication and efficiency across the Secretariat.

- Adopt digital platforms to streamline management, enhance reporting capabilities and improve engagement, thereby optimizing the Secretariat's operations and collaboration.
- Improve the ECO website to provide access to more detailed and up-to-date information on ECO countries, project developments and results.

5. ECO Visibility

Observations:

Improving ECO's visibility is essential to strengthening its position both regionally and globally, as well as increasing engagement with stakeholders. Additionally, using digital platforms, building stronger connections with international organizations and media, enhancing coordination between the ECO Secretariat and ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies and outsourcing some visibility-related tasks could help expand ECO outreach in a cost-effective way.

Improving ECO's visibility is essential to strengthening its position both regionally and globally, as well as increasing engagement with stakeholders. One option could be creating a Media Manager role within the current Secretariat team to lead communication efforts. Additionally, using digital platforms, building stronger connections with international organizations and media, enhancing coordination between the ECO Secretariat and ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies and outsourcing some visibility-related tasks could help expand ECO outreach in a cost-effective way.

Recommendations:

- Develop a unified communication strategy that integrates digital platforms, media partnerships and outreach programs, focusing on engaging key stakeholders and the broader public to boost ECO's visibility.
- Enhance coordination between the ECO Secretariat and ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies, ensuring a more streamlined and cohesive approach to visibility and outreach efforts of the Organization.
- Enhance coordination between the ECO Secretariat and ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies, ensuring a more streamlined, timely and cohesive approach to visibility and outreach efforts of the Organization.

6. Resource Mobilization

Observations:

Efforts to diversify funding sources and build strategic partnerships cannot succeed without effective resource mobilization. Establishing a dedicated resource mobilization mechanism would enhance the Secretariat's ability to secure additional funding from multilateral donors, international organizations and national initiatives. This will also enhance the organizational and human capacity of the Secretariat to implement international projects.

Recommendations:

- Diversify funding sources by possibly creating a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy to build strategic partnerships (including with UN, IsDB, ADB, etc.).
- Clarify the financial implications of resource mobilization efforts, if any, to ensure alignment with the Secretariat's financial strategy and an understanding of their cost-effectiveness.
- Enhance the role of ECO Bank as the financial pillar of economic cooperation among ECO member states.

7. ECO Awards

The ECO Awards require clearer criteria to maintain their value, ensure fairness across member states, and preserve their intended impact. Additionally, the practice of giving the ECO Awards should be temporarily suspended until a tangible strategy is finalized that serves the intended purpose.

Recommendations

- ECO Awards may be given on not regular, but significant occasions, by means other than cash contributions.
- Temporarily suspend the practice of giving the ECO Awards until a comprehensive policy is developed, ensuring it aligns with the intended goals of the Organization.
- Develop clear and structured criteria for the ECO Awards to ensure they remain meaningful, fair and impactful, recognizing significant contributions in ECO-relevant areas.

Comment [KBY1]: In principle, instead of creating new positions at the Secretariat (such as hiring a Media Manager), the ECO reform process should be advanced according to the priorities of the Organization.

8. Engagement of Member States and Quorum Issues

Observations:

Member States' involvement in ECO activities, agreements and initiatives has been uneven, which has sometimes slowed down decision-making and limited the full impact of adopted frameworks. In addition, increased involvement from relevant line ministries could help improve decision-making. Developing a direct nexus between the technical teams of the ECO Secretariat and the focal points within the line ministries of member states is crucial. This would complement the existing diplomatic channels and strengthen coordination, leading to more effective outcomes. Furthermore, the ratification of key ECO agreements and institutions is taking longer than expected. Speeding up this process would help put them into action more quickly and increase their impact. Additionally, looking into more flexible event scheduling and direct engagement strategies could help ensure better participation from stakeholders in important meetings, leading to quicker and more effective decisions.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the role of RPC as a formal nexus between the expert staff of the ECO Secretariat and the relevant focal points in member states' line ministries/departments to ensure that effective communications and timely follow-ups are made, in addition to maintaining diplomatic channels.
- Strengthen diplomatic efforts to expedite the signing and ratification of key ECO agreements and institutions, ensuring their quick operationalization.
- Explore flexible scheduling of meetings to ensure member states' participation in all ECO meetings, ensuring consistent involvement and preventing quorum issues.

9. ECO Observers

Observations:

The process for engaging ECO Observers based on the modalities in some cases leads to inconsistent collaboration and increased administrative burdens. A structured and inclusive approach to observer engagement is required to enhance efficiency and strengthen ECO's partnerships.

Recommendations:

- Establish clear and inclusive approach for engaging ECO observers to streamline the observer invitation process and reduce administrative procedures, fostering more consistent collaboration and stronger partnerships.
- To possibly revise the modalities to allow observers, whose observer status is renewed more than three times should acquire the Permanent Observer status and be invited to the ECO meetings and events ex officio, without the need for CPR decision. (Türkiye's proposal) (Tajikistan requested to delete")

WORKING PART-II ECO VISION

Summary of Discussions

The High-Level Committee (HLC) discussions on ECO Vision 2025 underscored the need for a future-oriented strategy that builds on past achievements while addressing persistent challenges. There was consensus on the necessity of a pragmatic, results-driven vision with clear goals, strong implementation mechanisms and enhanced coordination among member states. It was emphasized by some delegates that financial constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies and inconsistent engagement have hindered progress in key sectors of trade, transport and energy. Along with the public representatives, the stakeholders' involvement, including representatives of the private sector, youth and academia was seen as vital for fostering a more dynamic and inclusive approach. Additionally, the importance of reforms within the Secretariat was also underscored to improve efficiency, ensure timely decision-making and enhance regional collaboration.

2. Looking ahead, some delegates advocated for refining the existing vision, while others pushed for a completely new framework aligned with evolving regional and global dynamics. However, there was a strong call for greater financial sustainability, digital transformation and sector-specific commitments to ensure meaningful outcomes. Trade agreements, like the ECOTA, were highlighted as crucial to deepening economic integration, yet challenges such as customs cooperation and regulatory alignment remain to be also taken into account on priority basis. Moreover, concerns were raised about the feasibility of long-term planning amid geo-political uncertainties, with suggestions to adopt a more flexible and adaptive strategy. Overall, the discussions emphasized the need for a well-structured and action-oriented vision that prioritizes economic cooperation and strategic coordination, ensuring that ECO's future direction remains relevant and impactful. Bearing all this in mind and after thoughtful deliberations, the HLC made following recommendations for the formulation of a new ECO Vision to be implemented in the post-2025 period.

Recommendations for Future Vision

1. Formulation of a New Vision

- Prepare a streamlined and result-oriented new vision document focusing notably on economic and trade relations, incorporating past achievements and addressing gaps, aligning with the priorities of member states by taking into consideration the expectations and the demands of the private sector.
- Ensure that the new vision includes clear, measurable goals, realistic timelines and accountability mechanisms to foster tangible outcomes.

- Explore the possibility of finalizing the new vision before the next Summit in Azerbaijan for presentation to heads of state/government. If this timeline is not feasible, prioritize formulating the post-2025 strategy before the next Council of Ministers meeting.

2. Implementation & Results-Oriented Approach

- Ensure the new vision is action-driven, focusing on practical and achievable initiatives with measurable outcomes rather than just conceptual framework.
- Strengthen financial sustainability by developing a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy, including partnerships with multilateral donors and international organizations.
- Establish concrete tools and monitoring mechanisms to track progress, ensuring timely implementation and effective follow-up.
- Regularly assess and adjust the vision based on evolving regional and global realities to maintain its relevance and effectiveness.

3. Trade & Economic Integration

- Prioritize the operationalization of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to boost intra-regional trade, with clear targets and regular reporting to track progress.
- Prioritize the operationalization of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to boost intra-regional trade
- Strengthen trade cooperation by addressing customs cooperation issues and supporting data-sharing initiatives to streamline cross-border trade.
- Prioritize actions which cover collective interest of the member states, and also encourage multi country-specific and scalable commitments in trade related sectors and areas (transport, agriculture, mining, energy, manufacturing, customs, finance, regulatory framework, technology and SMEs) to enhance regional collaboration, ensuring the active participation of member states in trade integration.

4. Sectoral & Cross-Border Cooperation

- Focus on key sectors, particularly trade, transport and energy with specific emphasis on digitalization and green transition.
- Address cross-border coordination challenges to enhance the efficiency of regional infrastructure projects, especially through better coordination in the ITI Corridor and within key sectors of trade, transport and energy.

- Promote regional cooperation on thematic initiatives, particularly in tourism, agriculture and industry to foster integrated development.

5. Stakeholder Engagement & Inclusivity

- Actively involve governments, private sector, academia and youth in shaping and implementing the new vision, ensuring inclusivity at all levels.
- Establish structured platforms for youth participation in ECO's regional development efforts, fostering engagement from the younger generation.
- Organize an "ECO Vision 2035 Forum" to foster dialogue among various stakeholders, including member states, private sector entities and academic institutions, to ensure broad-based support and input for the new vision.

Conclusion

The High-Level Committee (HLC) recognized the critical need for comprehensive reforms to enhance ECO's effectiveness, financial stability and strategic direction. To address this, the HLC agreed to establish a dedicated Working Group under the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR). This Working Group will be tasked with developing concrete reform proposals and contributing to the formulation of the New Vision Document based on HLC's recommendations. The composition and structure of the Working Group will be determined by the CPR.

The HLC also acknowledged the efforts of the ECO Secretariat in preparing HLC Working Paper prepared, which significantly facilitated the Committee's proceedings.

Agenda No. 6

Administrative and budgetary matters

- Recommendations of the Selection Panel**

Agenda No. 7

Any other business

Agenda No. 8

Date of the next CPR Meeting.