

The 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Environment

Report

(Almaty, June 30, 2006)

The 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment was held on 30 June 2006 in Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan. It was preceded by Senior Environmental Officials' Meeting on 28-29 June 2006. The meeting was attended by the Ministers/Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan (host), Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, and Republic of Uzbekistan as well as ECO Secretary General and his staff. The representatives of UNEP and CAREC also attended the meeting. The list of the participants is attached as **Annex-I.**

Agenda Item No. 1

Inauguration of the Meeting

1. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Nurlan Iskakov, Minister of the Environment Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan. He read the welcome address of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan which is attached as **Annex-II.** In his opening statement, he welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of ECO activities in the field of environment.

2. H.E. Mr. Askhat Orazbay, ECO Secretary General, in his opening statement expressed deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, particularly to the Ministry of Environment Protection, for hosting the meeting and wished the participants to have useful deliberations and fruitful results on the issues covered by its agenda. A copy of his statement is attached as **Annex-III.**

Agenda Item No. 2

Election of the Chairman

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3. In accordance with the ECO Rules of Procedures, H.E. Mr. Nurlan Iskakov, Minister of the Environment Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan., was elected the Chairman of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

Adoption of the draft Agenda

4. The draft agenda for the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting, which had been endorsed by the Senior Environmental Officials Meeting (SOM), was adopted by the Ministerial Meeting. A copy of the adopted Agenda of the Meeting is attached as **Annex-IV**.

Agenda Item No. 4

Appointment of the Drafting Committee

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5. The Senior Officials from all delegations acted as members of the Drafting Committee to prepare the draft- report of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No. 5

Statements by the Ministers and Heads of Delegation

6. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation presented their statements covering the state of the Environment in their countries, the policies and programmes concerning the environmental issues, implementation of the Plan of Action for cooperation among the ECO Member States on Environment (2003-2007) and proposals for regional cooperation in this field. Copies of their statements are attached as **Annex-V**.

Agenda Item No. 6

Follow up on the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Cooperation among ECO Member States on Environment (2003 – 2007)

7. H.E. Mr. Nurlan Iskakov, Minister of Environment Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan, briefed the meeting on the work done by the Senior Environmental Officials during their deliberations on 28-29 June 2006, enlightening it on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Cooperation among ECO Member States on Environment (2003-2007) [hereinafter referred to as the Plan of Action]. A copy of the Plan of Action is attached as **Annex-VI**.

8. The Meeting appreciated that ECO member states in “ECO Vision 2015” adopted as a Basic Reference Document of ECO for the next ten years at the 15th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held in Astana, Kazakhstan on 1 October 2005, emphasized their commitment to intensify cooperation in the field of environment by jointly addressing common concerns and regional problems and taking necessary actions in cooperation with relevant international organizations with a view to contribute to sustainable development and improve the quality of life of the peoples in the ECO region.

9. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation recalled the Declaration of the 9th ECO Summit held in Baku on 5 May 2006, in which a deep concern with the continued degradation of the environment was expressed and the implementation of the Plan of Action for Cooperation among ECO Member States on Environment (2003-2007) was underscored.

a) Means of Implementation

10. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation reviewed the implementation of the Plan of Action and took note of the outcomes of the 3rd and 4th meetings

of the ECO Working Group on Environment, established for the implementation of the Plan of Action, which were held in Islamabad and Tehran on 23-24 February 2005 and 21-22 May 2006, respectively.

11. The meeting underlined the need for more active participation of the environment organisations of the member states in the implementation of the Plan of Action and stressed in-particular the role of the appointed National Focal Points (NFPs) in facilitating coordination of implementation of the Plan of Action and their close collaboration with ECO Secretariat and with each other.

12. The Meeting directed to speed up the establishment of the e-mail group for environmental information exchange as well as creating network between National Focal Points with the assistance of the Republic of Turkey and to this end the member states which had not provided particulars of their NFP on environment as well as other relevant officials to be included in this e-mail group yet were invited to do so expeditiously.

13. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation welcomed the signing of the Memorandums of Understanding between ECO and WMO as well as UNEP in December 2004 and August 2004, respectively, and requested ECO Secretariat to develop cooperation with all relevant international organisations/financial institutions (UNEP, GEF, IDB, etc) seeking their assistance for implementation of the Plan of Action and identifying specific joint activities, together with the concerned authorities of the member states. The opportunities for cooperation with sub-regional organisations active in the field of environment such as CAREC (Central Asia) should also be explored.

14. The Meeting considered the matters of submission of the National Progress Reports (NPRs) by the Member States on the implementation of the Plan of Action and, taking into account the experience of the previous years, agreed that it would be submitted by the concerned authorities of the Member States annually, in the beginning of the next year on the agreed format positively, so that to

enable ECO Secretariat to prepare and submit an integrated regional report to CPR/RPC and the member states in the first quarter of each year.

15. It was found expedient to explore a possibility of getting assistance of international organisations, in particular UNEP, for preparing such a report, through holding a training course on their preparation as well as reviewing the course of the preparation of the NPRs by ECO WGE meeting to be organised at the fourth quarter of each year.

b) Implementation of the thematic sections of the Action Plan

16. Taking note of the developments in a number of thematic activities already undertaken as per the Plan of Action, the meeting stressed the need to continue that work for the effective and full implementation of the envisaged activities. The Meeting also considered the proposals/offers presented in the statements of Ministers and Heads of Delegations for the implementation of Plan of Action and requested the WGE to consider the ways and means for implementation of these proposals.

17. The meeting appreciated the efforts of the ECO Secretariat for the preparation and publication of the first four issues of the ECO Bulletin on Environment, made also available on the ECO Web-site. The meeting requested the concerned authorities in all member states to take active part in the process of preparation of its next issues by submission of their relevant materials to the Secretariat, regularly.

18. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation appreciated the assistance of the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the publication of the above issues of ECO Bulletin on Environment and requested the Secretariat to reflect the requisite financing for the said publication in its future draft annual budgets.

19. The Meeting took note that the Task Force, formed by the 2nd Ministerial Meeting, for consideration of establishing the ECO College of Environment, had held its three meetings (in Tehran and Islamabad in 2005 and in Ankara in 2006). It appreciated the work done by the Task Force and endorsed its recommendations on creation of Institute of Environmental Science and Technology for ECO region (instead of the College) as well as the proposed Strategic Plan for the said Institute, which is attached as **Annex-VII.**

20. The Meeting agreed that the functions of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology for ECO Region be carried out by the existing College of Environment in Tehran, provisionally, on a project basis, until the member states further decide on this matter on the basis of experience to be gained during four years of its functioning.

21. It was also agreed that the President of the said Institute would be appointed by the CPR on the recommendation of a Panel comprising the Head of the Department of Environment of I.R. of Iran or her representative, Chairman of CPR, Permanent Representative of I.R. of Iran to ECO and the Secretary General. The activities of the Institute will be monitored periodically by the CPR and the President of the Institute will present an overall report on the activities of the Institute through Ministerial Meeting on Environment after two years.

22. With regard of the allocating of the ECO Award for excellence for the work in the field of the Environment, the meeting took note that ECO Awards given every two-year on the occasion of ECO Summits currently include one which is awarded in the field of the Environment. As far as the establishment of an ECO Green Industries award is concerned, the consideration of all related issues might be pursued, including elaboration of the modalities, by the WGE.

23. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation took note of the several thematic Meetings/Events conducted in 2005 and approved the Calendar of Meetings/Events on Environment for 2006, as amended by the Senior Officials meeting. The approved Calendar is attached as **Annex-VIII.** While appreciating the offers made

by some member states to host the meetings/events from the above Calendar, the Meeting requested the concerned authorities of the Member States to take active part in their preparation and convening as scheduled.

24. The Meeting decided that the Plan of Action be extended till the year 2010 and its implementation should be reviewed by the next ministerial meeting and tasked the WGE to undertake consideration of implementation of those components of the Plan of Action particularly the establishment of ECO Environmental Fund and Environmental Monitoring Legal Framework which have not been dealt with so far. It should prepare, in cooperation with ECO Secretariat, a table of all issues covered by the Plan of Action with indication of proposed timeframe.

25. The Meeting further agreed that the 5th meeting of WGE be convened in the second half of the year 2006 – first quarter of the year 2007, and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Uzbekistan to host it. The exact date and venue of the meeting will be communicated to the ECO Secretariat as soon as possible.

26. The Ministers and Heads of Delegation directed that formulation of ECO regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Biodiversity be started at the earliest and, welcoming the offer of Pakistan to host a meeting for this activity, requested active participation of representatives of all member states.

Agenda Item No. 7

“Environment & Tourism”; a possibility for Cooperation among the ECO Member States - “a round table discussion”

27. The Ministers and Heads of Delegations discussed the subject of Environment and Tourism on the basis of information provided by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and agreed that development of ecotourism could bring economic benefits for the member states; However, it is necessary to take into account possible negative implications for the unique cultural and natural objects in

the ECO region. The participants agreed on the need to exchange experience among the member states. The minutes of round table discussion is attached as **Annex-IX.**

28. The meeting decided to establish a Task Force comprising of interested ECO member states' representatives from their Environmental and Tourism Organizations in order to study the potentials existing in the region to develop Ecotourism and work out a regional programme for cooperation in this field taking into account the guidelines given by the Ministers during the round table, views and proposals received from member states and outcome of the seminar on Ecotourism to be held in Turkey. The Meeting also welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the first meeting of Task Force in Tehran.

29. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the concerned authorities of the Republic of Turkey to hold a Seminar on Ecotourism in 2006-2007, at the National Park of Kure Mountains in Kastamonu and invited the member states to participate in the said Seminar.

Agenda Item No. 8

Any Other Business

30. In this Agenda Item, the Meeting welcomed the interesting presentation made by H.E. Dr. Fatemeh Vaez Javadi, Vice-President and Head of Environment Department of the Islamic Republic of Iran about the soil contamination and geo-medicine and decided to consider that issue during its next meeting while the Working Group on Environment would also discuss the matter and come up with its proposals.

Agenda Item No. 9

Date and Venue of the Next Meeting

31. The Meeting decided that the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment be held in 2008 and appreciated the offer made by the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host it.

Agenda Item No. 10

Adoption of the Almaty Communiqué

32. The draft Almaty Communiqué, as endorsed by the preceding Senior Officials meeting, was adopted by the Ministers and Heads of Delegation. The text of the adopted Almaty Communiqué is enclosed as **Annex-X**.

Agenda Item No. 11

Adoption of the Report of the Meeting

33. The draft report of the Meeting, prepared by the Senior Environmental Officials, was finalized and adopted.

Agenda Item No. 12

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

34. The participants expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the host country for the warm hospitality extended to the participants and excellent arrangements made for the meeting and to the ECO Secretariat for its contribution to the meeting's success.

35. The Chairman, before announcing the closure of the meeting thanked the participants for their participation and active deliberations and wished them comfortable stay and safe return to their homelands.