



Economic Cooperation Organization

Istanbul Declaration

Shaping the Future of Regional Trade through Liberalization and Facilitation

The 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade

(Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye, November 26, 2025)

We, the Ministers of Commerce and Foreign Trade/Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), having convened in Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye, on November 26, 2025 for the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade, while:

Reiterating our commitment to the foundational principles of the Treaty of Izmir, alongside the collective aspirations of ECO Heads of State/Government and Council of Ministers on promotion of regional integration, trade liberalization, and sustainable economic development, and **building on** the declarations adopted at the previous Ministerial Meetings on Commerce and Foreign Trade;

Recalling Framework Agreement on ECO Trade Cooperation and ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA);

Acknowledging the considerable time that has elapsed since the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce and Foreign Trade in 2011 in Kabul, and **recognizing** the pressing need for more regular and effective high-level engagement, particularly in light of evolving regional and global economic challenges;

Confirming the importance of multilateral trading system, for effective and mutually beneficial global economic integration, and **recognizing** the need to strengthen the principle of open, fair and predictable international trade in the context of challenges facing the global economy,

Reaffirming our collective belief that strengthened intra-regional trade, investment facilitation, and economic integration within the ECO region can serve as effective means to bolster economic resilience, promote sustainable growth, and ensure equitable development among Member States;

Bearing in mind the urgent need to promote and liberalize the intra-regional trade which presently constitutes a less-than-desirable share in the total volume of trade of the ECO Member States, and **acknowledging** that the delay in implementation of ECOTA has been the primary factor contributing to high trade costs and resultantly low shares in intra-regional trade;

Acknowledging the need for an effective trade facilitation framework to expand intra-regional trade and increase contribution of ECO region to global trade; **and welcoming** the adoption of the *ECO Trade Facilitation Strategy* by the 10th Meeting of the Heads of Customs Administrations, held in Tehran on May 28, 2025 and the approval of the *ECO Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters* and the *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Joint Trade*



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Promotion Activities among ECO Member States by the ECO Council of Ministers, effective June 25, 2025;

Reaffirming the importance of strengthening regional supply chains, enhancing productive capacity, and promoting intra-regional trade in the ECO region;

Recognizing the urgency of advancing regional digital trade and green transition, and the need to observe sustainable development goals; **and underscoring** the growing importance of digital connectivity in enhancing trade efficiency and transparency;

Also recognizing the critical role of robust quality infrastructure in facilitating trade and enhancing competitiveness;

Underlining the pivotal role of the private sector in advancing regional integration;

do hereby,

1. **Underscore** the importance of enhanced regional cooperation as a strategic instrument for adapting to current challenges and new trends in international trade;
2. **Adopt** the ECOTA Negotiation Strategy and Roadmap and **launch** the negotiations to amend and implement ECOTA, in this vein, and hereby **establish** a Technical Negotiation Committee consisting of interested Member States to conduct these negotiations, and **mandate** the Committee to prepare its ToRs at its first meeting;
3. **Task** our relevant authorities to actively participate in the amendment process and ensure ECOTA's alignment with contemporary Trade Agreements, and latest developments in international trade;
4. **Encourage** Member States to consider accession to the revised ECOTA upon its finalization;
5. **Recognize** the negative impacts of unilateral trade measures on free trade, and **emphasize** the importance of taking into consideration possible limitations in the course of the renegotiations to take place in the Technical Negotiation Committee referred to para. 2 above;
6. **Emphasize** the importance of successful conclusion of these negotiations as a corollary to deeper trade liberalization initiatives;
7. **Encourage** Member States to actively participate in the amendment process and to consider accession to the revised ECOTA upon its finalization;
8. **Call for** the enhancement of the *ECOTA Implementation Fund*, including a revision of its modalities as an integral part of the revised ECOTA, with a view to strengthening its capacity to support trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building activities;
9. **Approve** the ECO Trade Facilitation Strategy and **task** our relevant authorities to do utmost efforts to implement it;



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10. **Incorporate** the valuable work undertaken by the Joint Working Group on Trade Facilitation to prepare *ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement* into ECOTA's revision process as a dedicated chapter to ensure coherence, legal clarity and streamlined implementation across all trade-related disciplines within the ECO region;
11. **Welcome** the signing of the '*ECO Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters*' by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Türkiye and **invite** other Member States to sign and ratify the Agreement;
12. **Welcome** the signing of the MoU by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Türkiye, **affirm** that this MoU, as a non-legally binding text, is a statement of strong will of the Parties to enhance their cooperation, and **invite** other Member States to consider signing it in due course;
13. **Reaffirm** our support for the revitalization of the ECO-UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Project (Phase IV) and **encourage** Member States and the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) to consider extending financial and technical assistance to ensure the successful implementation of this initiative;
14. **Commend** the ECO Secretariat's efforts in delivering small-scale, train-the-trainers projects aimed at strengthening the relevant human capital and **encourage** the continuation of such capacity-building activities;
15. **Support** the Secretariat's initiative to conduct analytical studies, including the ECO Quality Infrastructure Survey, as a useful tool to assess and, where necessary, enhance the institutional capacities of Member States;
16. **Encourage** the expansion and interoperability of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems across the ECO region, **invite** Member States to take necessary steps toward the full operationalization of the ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank, and to actively engage in initiatives aimed at advancing cross-border e-commerce, EDI-enabled trade, and the streamlining of customs procedures;
17. **Task** the ECO Secretariat to strengthen coordination with the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI), including and **support** the institutionalization of an annual *ECO Calendar of Joint Trade Promotion Activities*;
18. **Take** note of the limited progress in operationalizing the ECO Network of SEZs/FTZs, **urge** Member States to accelerate their nominations to the Joint Commission and Permanent Standing Committee and **encourage** Member States to volunteer to host the 3rd Meeting of SEZ/FTZ Heads in 2026;
19. **Invite** the ECO-CCI and **instruct** ETDB to collaborate with ECO Secretariat to scale up existing technical assistance programs targeting SMEs, export development, and regional



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trade competitiveness and **call for** enhanced cooperation with international organizations for trade capacity building in the region;

20. **Welcome** the ongoing formulation of the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2035, **encourage** inclusive national consultations and **emphasize** the importance of alignment of trade policies with regional sustainability goals, innovation-led growth and inclusive economic participation;
21. **Task** the ECO Secretariat to monitor progress on the implementation of this Declaration in collaboration with relevant national authorities and to report on developments at the next Ministerial Meeting;
22. **Pledge** to convene biannually at the latest in order to keep the momentum achieved;
23. **Commend** the ECO Secretary General, His Excellency, Dr. Asad Majeed Khan and his team for the continuous hard work by the ECO Secretariat;
24. **Convey** our sincere appreciation to His Excellency Prof. Dr. Ömer BOLAT, Honorable Minister of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye, for his excellent chairing of the meeting,
25. **Express** our deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Türkiye for hosting this important meeting and for the excellent arrangements and generous hospitality.

Adopted in Istanbul on November 26, 2025.