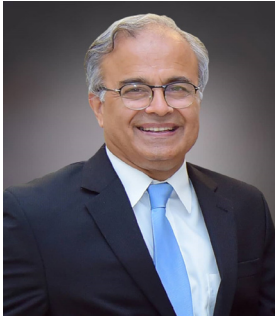




# ECO Newsletter

Economic Cooperation Organization

May, 2026- No. 21



Dear Readers,

May 2026 was a month of active and wide-ranging engagement for the Economic Cooperation Organization, reflecting the Organization's determination to advance its regional agenda with purpose and resolve, even amid a challenging environment.

This month's central institutional event was the 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council, held in hybrid format in Tehran from 17–20 May. Its successful conclusion, with the adoption of the ECO Work Programme and Calendar of Events for 2026, has charted a clear course for the year ahead. I commend all member states' delegations for their constructive engagement, and the Government and people of Iran for their resilience in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. The Council's observance of a minute of silence in solidarity with Iran was a fitting expression of the fraternity that binds our member states.

This month also saw active engagement across ECO's sectoral agenda. The Secretariat participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Istanbul International Water Forum underscoring the Organization's commitment to water security and climate resilience. Our Deputy Secretary General represented ECO at the 18<sup>th</sup> TRACECA Annual Meeting in Astana, advancing our shared connectivity agenda across the Trans-Caspian corridor. ECO and the ITU also jointly convened a regional webinar on ICT Policy and Regulation, bringing together regulators and digital experts from across the region to strengthen the policy frameworks underpinning our digital future.

At the bilateral level, I had the privilege of meeting Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, H.E. Amna Baloch, where we reviewed Pakistan's priorities as ECO Chair for 2026–2027 and the full calendar of forthcoming Ministerial Meetings that will define the Organization's output this year. I also met with the leadership of the FPCCI and ECO-CCI, where we agreed on concrete steps to deepen business-to-business connectivity among ECO member states. I also met with Dr. Sina Samadi, Head of the ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters, to strengthen the Centre's activities and enhance regional resilience-building.

In addition, the consultative meeting for the 4<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry, scheduled for September 2026, held between the Secretariat and Tajikistan's Ministry of Industry and New Technologies was an encouraging step, reflecting the shared determination of both sides to make this a defining moment for regional industrial cooperation.

Taken together, the engagements of May reflect a region increasingly committed to meaningful cooperation and a Secretariat determined to deliver results. As we advance toward the finalization of the Strategic Goals of ECO 2035 and a full calendar of Ministerial Meetings in the months ahead, the momentum is clear and the Secretariat remains firmly focused on translating it into tangible outcomes for the peoples of our region.

Secretary General  
Economic Cooperation Organization

# 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council Convenes



Tehran – May 17, 2026

The 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) commenced on May 17, 2026, with a plenary session held at the ECO Secretariat in Tehran. Organized in hybrid format, the session was attended by delegations from ECO member states and observers, along with representatives from ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutes and Affiliated Bodies.

In his opening remarks, ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan emphasized that the RPC is an important institutional process, aimed at providing direction, assessing progress, reviewing implementation and helping shape the future strategy of the Organization, where the entire government of every member state comes together through the participation of relevant line ministries. He highlighted ECO's key achievements over the past year and provided an update on major flagship initiatives, programs and projects.

He further informed the Council that, despite extraordinary regional and international challenges, the Secretariat continued its work in the past year, and successfully convened the Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction in Pakistan and the Tourism Ministerial Meeting in Shusha in the first half of 2026, while expecting to convene several important ministerial meetings in the second half of 2026.

Presiding over the plenary session, Dr. Muhammad Ali Talpur, Joint Chief Economist, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives of Pakistan commended the ECO Secretariat and the Iranian Government for their efforts in keeping the Secretariat operational through challenging circumstances..

The participating delegations in their statements underscored the importance of further strengthening ECO particularly in view of its growing relevance in the changing geo-political environment.

The RPC also observed one minute silence in solidarity and support with the Government and People of Islamic Republic Iran in the present challenging circumstances, while offering condolences over the loss of precious lives with the families of the victims.



## 306<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

The 306<sup>th</sup> meeting of Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) was held virtually on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2026, bringing together representatives of ECO member states and the ECO Secretariat to review progress on ongoing regional cooperation initiatives and to prepare for upcoming organizational meetings. Discussions focused on advancing implementation of ECO decisions and the 2026 work programme. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening regional collaboration and improving coordination among member states.

## ECO Secretary General meets with the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

Islamabad – May 8, 2026

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization Dr. Asad M. Khan held a meeting with the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, H.E. Amna Baloch, in Islamabad.

The Secretary General expressed sincere appreciation to the Foreign Secretary for Pakistan's extraordinary diplomatic role in facilitating de-escalation in the region and hosting the US-Iran peace talks in Islamabad in April 2026 and expressed the hope that Pakistan's efforts will contribute to a durable and lasting stabilization of the regional environment.

Acknowledging the challenging geopolitical environment in the region, Dr. Khan informed Ms. Baloch that the ECO Secretariat has continued to keep the organization operational under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, conducting virtual meetings, and sustaining its work program.

The meeting discussed the priorities of Pakistan's chairmanship of the Organization during 2026-2027. Dr. Khan and Foreign Secretary Baloch exchanged views about fostering regional economic cooperation under the ECO framework in priority areas.

They further reviewed status of upcoming important events in ECO agenda, while noting that ECO will maintain the momentum with the scheduled Ministerial Meetings on Environment (Uzbekistan), Industry (Tajikistan), Energy (Turkiye), Agriculture (Iran), Tourism (Azerbaijan) and DRR (Pakistan) in 2026, as well as the Regional Planning Committee meeting and finalization of the ECO Strategic Goals 2035.



## Meeting between ECO Secretary General and President ECO CCI and FPCCI

May 8, 2026

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization held a meeting with Mr. Atif Ikram, President ECO-CCI & FPCCI, which was also joined by senior FPCCI leadership. They agreed on creating more B2B networking opportunities under CCI, ECO-CCI & strengthening B2B collaboration between CCIs in the region for enhancing intraregional trade.



## Meeting between ECO Secretary General and Head of ECO Regional Centre for Risk management

May 18, 2026

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, H.E. Amb Asad M. Khan held a productive meeting with Dr. Sina Samadi, Head of the ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters today, to discuss strengthening the activities of the Centre and enhancing regional cooperation in disaster risk management and resilience-building across the ECO region.





## Water for Sustainable Development

Dushanbe, May 28, 2026

As part of the 4<sup>th</sup> High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028, held in Dushanbe, the Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was represented by ECO Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Yerzhan Mukash.

In his statement, Mr. Yerzhan Mukash emphasized the importance of strengthening regional cooperation in the field of sustainable water resource management, noting that issues of water security are directly linked to sustainable development, food and energy security, as well as the climate resilience of the countries in the region.

The ECO Deputy Secretary General reaffirmed the Organization’s commitment to promoting dialogue, exchanging expertise, and implementing joint initiatives in the areas of efficient water resource management, infrastructure development, and the introduction of innovative technologies.

During the conference, ECO also confirmed its readiness for further cooperation with member states, international organizations, and partners in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen regional partnership.

## ECO Participates in the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of TRACECA

Astana – May 15, 2026

Deputy Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, Ambassador Mr. Yerzhan Mukash, participated at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) Intergovernmental Commission), along with representatives of several governments and international organizations.

ECO and TRACECA share 8 common Member States, while aiming to enhance intra and inter-regional connectivity. ECO’s “Strategic Goals for Economic Cooperation–2035” in its transport dimension and TRACECA’s Strategy for 2027-2036 mutually aimed at development of ECO corridor network, including Cross-Caspian and routes from East that leads towards Europe and the Middle East.

At the meeting the ECO delegation has exchanged views on further concerted development of multimodal operations, border crossings, digitalization of documents and infrastructure, and the development of green and sustainable solutions. In this regard ECO commended the ongoing efforts within TRACECA to advance harmonization of transit procedures, including the development of the Single Transit Permit system. Ambassador Mukash further expressed his hopes for close collaboration with the newly established sub-institutions of TRACECA, including its Business Council and Fund.





## ECO Participates in the 5<sup>th</sup> Istanbul International Water Forum

Istanbul- May 5-6, 2026

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Istanbul International Water Forum, held on 5–6 May 2026 in Istanbul. Dr. Hüsnü Tekin, Director of Human Resources and Sustainable Development (HRSD), represented the ECO Secretariat at the Forum.

Convening ministers, policymakers, academics, and water experts from around the world, the Forum addressed pressing regional and global water challenges in the context of increasing climate pressures. Through a series of high-level sessions and panel discussions, participants emphasized the critical importance of strengthening water resilience, enhancing sustainable water management practices, and fostering international cooperation.

Organized jointly by the Turkish Water Institute (SUEN) and the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSİ), the Forum was held under the theme “Strengthening Water Resilience: Innovation to Action,” providing a prominent platform for exchanging knowledge, sharing best practices, and developing innovative policy approaches to address water-related challenges, including scarcity, pollution, and the impacts of climate change.

The ECO Secretariat reaffirms its commitment to supporting regional cooperation and sustainable development initiatives in the water sector, recognizing water security as a critical component of resilience and long-term socio-economic stability in the ECO region.



## Virtual Consultative Meeting on Preparations for the 4<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry in Dushanbe



On 25 May 2026, the Directorate of Agriculture and Industry of the ECO Secretariat and the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Tajikistan held a virtual consultative meeting to coordinate preparations for the forthcoming 4<sup>th</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry, scheduled for 23 September 2026 in Dushanbe.

The meeting was attended by H.E. Mr. Aziz Nazar Savzali, Deputy Minister of Industry and New Technologies of Tajikistan, together with officials from the Ministry's International Relations Department. The ECO Secretariat delegation was led by Dr. Saberi Ansari, Deputy Secretary General for Agriculture and Industry.

The participants reviewed the status of preparations, discussed priority follow-up actions, and agreed to maintain close coordination in the lead-up to the events, which will also include the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the High-Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Industry and the Second International Textile Forum – Tajikistan 2026. Both sides also underlined the importance of ensuring the active participation of Member States and maintaining close coordination for the successful organization of the forthcoming events.

As the last ECO Ministerial Meeting on Industry was held in 2006, the forthcoming events are expected to mark an important step toward revitalizing and strengthening regional industrial cooperation among ECO Member States, in line with emerging regional economic priorities.



# ECO and ITU jointly hold webinar on ICT policy and regulation

Tehran- May 20, 2026

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), successfully held a regional webinar under the theme of “ICT Policy and Regulation for a Digital Future”. The Event, held online on 20 May 2026, brought together regulators and ICT experts from the ECO Member States to address sound and effective ICT policy and regulatory frameworks in an digitally transforming global landscape.

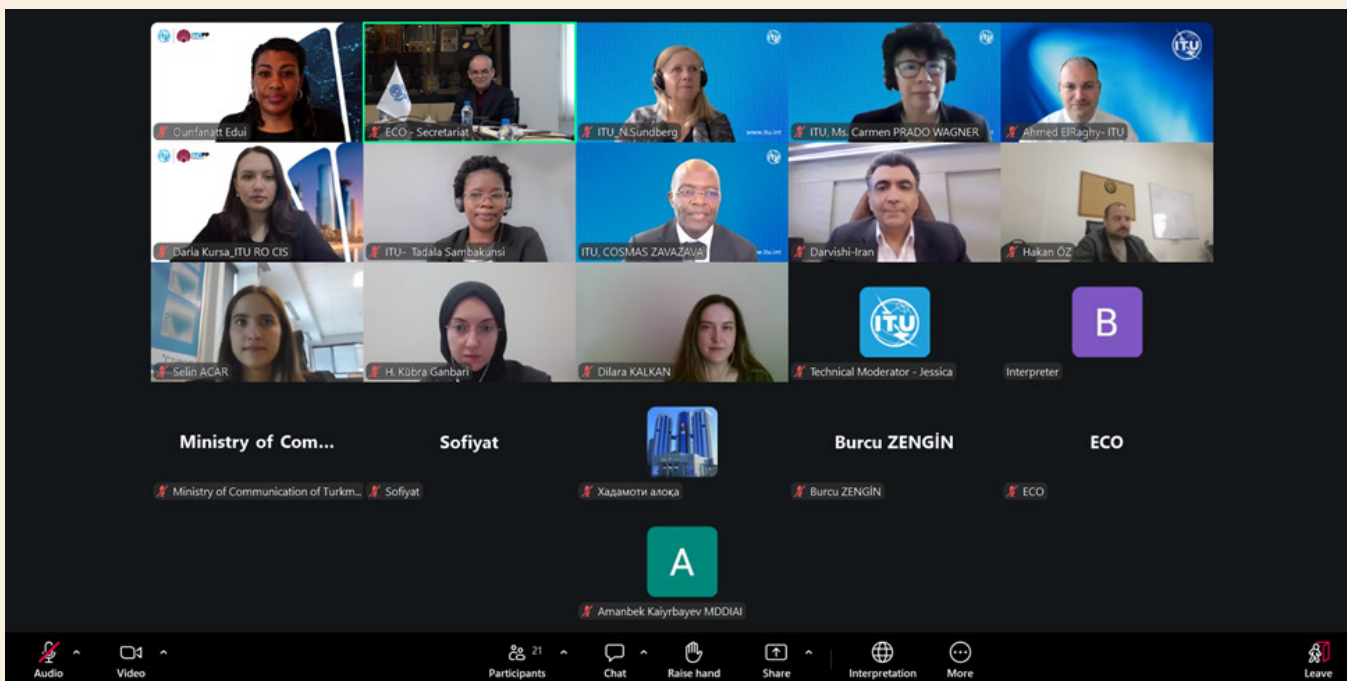
The Webinar was jointly opened with introductory remarks by Seyed Jaleedin Alavi Sabzevari, Director for Transport and Communications at the ECO Secretariat, and Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT). In his opening remarks, Amb. Alavi underscored the critical role of sound ICT policies and regulatory frameworks in accelerating digital transformation, fostering innovation, and bridging the digital divide across the ECO Region. Dr. Zavazava highlighted the need for agile, collaborative, and human-centric regulation that improves quality, affordability, resilience, and digital skills.

During the Webinar, representatives from regulatory authorities from some ECO Member States presented brief national presentations highlighting their respective ICT policy priorities, regulatory environments, and market developments, as well as good practices and ongoing challenges.

There were 4 presentations by ITU officials and advisors focusing on global ICT policy and regulatory trends, best practices, and the range of tools and capacity-building initiatives offered by ITU, including its Study Groups.

The Webinar concluded with the ECO reaffirming its desire to strengthening collaboration with ITU in assisting its Member States in their efforts for adopting sound and effective ICT policy and regulatory frameworks, including through ITU-developed tools, products, guidelines and best practices.

The outcomes of the webinar are also expected to contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance ICT ecosystems in the ECO Region with a view to securing digital transformation and intra-regional connectivity.





Economic Cooperation Organization



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