



ECO Newsletter

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Despite the continued challenging security environment in the region, June 2026 proved to be a productive month for the Economic Cooperation Organization, marked by high-level engagements, landmark ministerial outcomes, and a tangible deepening of regional partnerships.

The 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, under the theme "New Horizons for Enhanced Regional Environmental Action through Collaborative Solutions." The meeting marked a decisive step forward with the adoption of the ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2026–2030), its thematic Work Programmes on Climate Change and Biodiversity, and the Samarkand Declaration on Regional Environmental Cooperation.

The Ministerial Meeting was held in conjunction with productive Senior Officials and Working Group sessions that examined the outcomes of the first meeting of the ECO High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation (HLDPE), alongside bilateral engagements with Uzbek leadership. On the margins of the Meeting, strategic discussions were also held with Pakistan's Minister of State for Climate Change, Ms. Shezra Mansab, focusing on climate justice and coordinating ECO positions at international forums.

A historic milestone followed as I participated in the Opening Ceremony of the 8th Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) - the first time this flagship global forum has been hosted in the ECO region.

I also took part virtually in the International Conference marking the 25th anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Dushanbe on June 12, 2026, reaffirming the convergent objectives and shared commitment of ECO and SCO to peace, stability, and joint development across Central Asia. Bilateral engagements continued with a meeting with National Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Tourism in Islamabad to discuss preparations for Lahore's designation as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027 and to advance the implementation of the 2026–2030 Roadmap for Expansion of Tourism Services. Additionally, a meeting was held with the UN Resident Coordinator in Iran to strengthen institutional ties and explore avenues for deeper cooperation with UN agencies in areas of mutual priority.

Parallel to these engagements, the 8th meeting of the UNECE-ECO Coordination Committee on the Trans-Caspian and Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul Corridors was convened in Istanbul on 5 June 2026, advancing regional transport connectivity through the adoption of the Istanbul Strategic Framework for Inter-Regional Transport Corridor Management.

The month concluded with a ceremony at Imam Khomeini International Airport to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, where I paid tribute to grassroots activists and witnessed the launch of the "IKA Green Belt Extension Project" - a model initiative for land restoration and climate resilience.

Taken together, these engagements reflect ECO's unwavering commitment to translating regional priorities into tangible progress - building connectivity, fostering environmental sustainability, and advancing shared prosperity across its Member States.

Secretary General
Economic Cooperation Organization



6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment- ECO Ministers Adopt Cooperation Framework and Samarkand Declaration

Samarkand – June 3, 2026

The 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, held under the overarching theme “New Horizons for Enhanced Regional Environmental Action through Collaborative Solutions”, concluded in Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan, with the adoption of landmark documents that will navigate on regional environmental cooperation for the next five years.

The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Aziz Abdukhakimov, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Chairman of the National Committee on Ecology and Climate Change, and attended by Ministers and Heads of Environment Authorities from ECO Member States, alongside the ECO Secretary General, Dr. Asad M. Khan.

In a decisive stride, Ministers endorsed the ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2026-2030) and its two Thematic Annexes – the ECO Work Program on Climate Change (2026-2030) and the ECO Work Program on Biodiversity (2026-2030). These documents provide a structured, actionable roadmap for addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, while promoting resource efficiency, circular economy, and clean energy transition.

The Meeting also adopted the Samarkand Declaration on Regional Environmental Cooperation, a unified political statement reaffirming the commitment of ECO Member States to enhanced regional coordination, stronger cooperation, and mobilization of means of implementation, including finance, technology transfer, and capacity building.

Ministers welcomed the progress of the High Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation and the RESCUE Initiative on circular economy, and instructed the ECO Secretariat to continue working with partners such as UNIDO to advance project development.

The Meeting expressed profound gratitude to the Government of Uzbekistan for its exceptional hospitality and leadership in hosting the Ministerial Meeting, which took place immediately before the 8th Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Senior Officials Meeting / 8th Working Group on Environment Convenes in Samarkand



Samarkand – June 2, 2026

The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) / 8th Working Group on Environment of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) convened in Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan, as a preparatory forum for the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment.

The meeting brought together senior experts and environment officials from ECO Member States to conduct a detailed review of the substantive agenda items, including the draft ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2026-2030) and its thematic Work Programmes on Climate Change and

Biodiversity. The SOM also examined the outcomes of the first meeting of the ECO High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation (HLDPE) and the progress of the Regional Initiative on Resource Efficiency, Sustainability, and Circular Economy (RESCUE).

The SOM successfully refined texts and forged consensus, thereby presenting a clear set of actionable recommendations for consideration and adoption by the Ministers on 3 June 2026. The meeting underscored the importance of regular technical level engagement to build up momentum on regional environmental cooperation.

ECO Secretary General Participates in GEF Assembly Opening Ceremony

4 June 2026 – Dr. Asad M. Khan, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), participated in the Opening Ceremony of the 8th Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), held in Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan.

The GEF Assembly serves as the highest governing body of the world's largest multilateral trust fund for environmental action, convening every four years to review policies, replenish resources, and set strategic directions for addressing global environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and pollution.

This marks the first time that the GEF Assembly has taken place in the ECO region – a significant milestone for regional environmental diplomacy and a testament to Uzbekistan's growing leadership in this field.

The Secretary General joined heads of delegations, international organizations, and environmental leaders from around the world at the ceremony. ECO's engagement with the GEF Assembly reflects the Organization's commitment to strengthening regional environmental action and leveraging international financial mechanisms to support the implementation of the newly adopted ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2026-2030).



ECO Secretary General Meets Chairman Abdukhakimov of Uzbekistan to Enhance Environmental Partnership

Samarkand – June 2, 2026

On the eve of the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, Dr. Asad M. Khan, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), held a bilateral meeting with H.E. Mr. Aziz Abdukhakimov, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Chairman of the National Committee on Ecology and Climate Change.

The two sides reviewed the successful preparations for the Ministerial Meeting and expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the Senior Officials/Working Group Meeting held earlier in the day. ECO Secretary General conveyed deep appreciation to Uzbekistan for its exemplary leadership, including the hosting of the first meeting of the ECO High Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation in Astana in April 2026.



They also discussed the strategic importance of the upcoming Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Assembly (4 June 2026) and agreed to coordinate efforts to ensure that the ECO region speaks with a stronger collective voice on environmental finance, technology transfer, and simplified access to global funds.

ECO Secretary General acknowledged the exceptional support provided by the Uzbek team and the ECO Secretariat's close collaboration in organizing both the High Level Dialogue Platform and the Ministerial Meeting. They exchanged views on future environmental events and the pivotal role Uzbekistan can play in environmental stewardship in the ECO region, highlighting the Uzbekistan's recent initiative regarding early warning system on sand and dust storms as requisite for effective and data-driven interventions in this area.

The meeting reaffirmed the strong partnership between ECO and Uzbekistan and laid the groundwork for continued cooperation on regional environmental collaboration.

ECO Secretary General Meets with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

On 5 June 2026, during his working visit to Tashkent, the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Dr. Asad Majeed Khan held a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Mirvokhid Azimov.



The parties reviewed current issues on the ECO agenda and exchanged views on a wide range of priority areas of regional cooperation. The Secretary General commended the active role of Uzbekistan within the Organization and expressed gratitude for the personal contribution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in advancing ECO initiatives. The significant contribution of the Uzbek side to the work of the Secretariat was noted, particularly in the areas of tourism, transport and digitalization.

The parties discussed the progress of implementation of key ECO documents. In particular, the importance of the early adoption of the "Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation for 2025–2035", developed at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, was emphasized. They further reviewed important agenda items within ECO framework, as the Secretary General briefed on the preparation of the ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement, the activities of the Trade Negotiating Committee, as well as the upcoming meetings of energy, agriculture and industry ministers.

The parties paid special attention to transport connectivity, digitalization of customs and trade procedures, as well as environmental issues. In this context, the outcomes of the 6th ECO Ministerial Conference on Environment held in Samarkand were positively assessed, including the adoption of the new Regional Environmental Framework and the Samarkand Declaration. The Secretary General encouraged Uzbekistan to assume a leadership role in coordinating the environmental agenda within the ECO.

ECO Secretary General and Pakistani Minister of State for Climate Change Discuss Leveraging Strong Legacy of Pakistan in International Environmental Stewardship

Samarkand – June 3, 2026

Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Dr. Asad M. Khan, met today in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) with Ms. Shezra Mansab, Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination of Pakistan, to discuss enhancing regional collaboration on environmental challenges, climate justice, and improving the ECO's internal coordination mechanisms.



The meeting acknowledged Pakistan's historic and proactive role in global climate change discussions, including its notable proposals and advocacy for developing countries. With Pakistan assuming the Chairmanship of ECO for a two-year term, the opportunity was underscored to leverage this leadership to host the ECO events, thereby advancing the regional environmental agenda on a larger stage.

ECO Secretary General highly appreciated Minister Mansab for her insightful proposals at the 6th Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Samarkand. Both sides emphasized the critical need for ECO Member States to unite on pressing climate issues. They highlighted the importance of forging a common voice on climate justice and climate finance, particularly given the disproportionate impact of climate change on the ECO region. Strengthening coordination of ECO positions at international forums, including upcoming COP meetings, was identified as a key priority to ensure that the region's concerns are effectively represented.

The meeting concluded with a mutual resolve to translate these discussions into concrete action, reinforcing ECO's role as a platform for effective regional cooperation on climate and environmental sustainability.

ECO Secretary General Participates in International Conference Marking the 25th Anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Tehran – June 12, 2026

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, Dr. Asad M. Khan, participated virtually in the International Conference titled "Central Asia – the Core of the SCO, Space of Peace and Joint Development", hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The conference served as a platform for senior officials, diplomats, and representatives of international and regional organizations to reflect on the SCO's evolution and deliberate on pathways for promoting peace, sustainable development, and regional integration across Central Asia and beyond.

In his remarks, the Secretary General congratulated the SCO and its member states on the milestone anniversary and expressed appreciation to the Republic of Tajikistan for organizing the conference and inviting ECO to participate. He also acknowledged Tajikistan's valuable contributions to ECO and its important role within the SCO.

Highlighting the close relationship between ECO and the SCO, the Secretary General noted that the two organizations share overlapping membership, common geography, and increasingly convergent objectives. Referring to the theme of the conference, the Secretary General highlighted Central Asia's pivotal role in promoting regional cooperation, connectivity, and economic integration across Eurasia. He emphasized that the region's experience demonstrates the value of sustained dialogue and cooperation in building trust, expanding economic ties, and advancing shared prosperity. Stressing the importance of cooperative regionalism as a pillar of effective multilateralism, he noted the growing convergence between ECO and SCO objectives while also acknowledging the contributions of Central Asian leaders to the region's stability and development.

Concluding his remarks, the Secretary General expressed appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for organizing the conference and reaffirmed ECO's readiness to continue engaging with regional partners to promote cooperation, mutual understanding, and shared prosperity throughout Central Asia and beyond.





ECO Secretary General Meets Pakistan's National Tourism Coordinator to the Prime Minister

Islamabad, Pakistan – June 1, 2026

ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan met today with Mr. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, National Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Tourism of Pakistan and management of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, to strengthen regional tourism cooperation.

The Secretary General appreciated Pakistan's active role in ECO frameworks, commending for its recent visa facilitation efforts and promotion activities for tourism development. He congratulated Pakistan on Lahore's selection as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, and both sides discussed preparations for celebratory events in Pakistan as well as the upcoming 8th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism.

Ambassador Khan requested Pakistan's continued support for various tourism cooperation initiatives, including implementation of the 2026-2030 Roadmap for Expansion of Tourism Services, development of human resources in the tourism industry, attraction of new tourism investments, and joint promotional activities.

Noting recent growth in international visitor arrivals to the ECO region, the Secretary General emphasized tourism as a driver of regional stability and connectivity. Both sides committed to continued partnership for shared success in the regional tourism industry.



ECO Secretary General Meets UN Resident Coordinator

Tehran – June 21, 2026

ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan received Ms. Christine Weigand, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Iran, at the ECO Secretariat. The meeting reviewed the existing cooperation, as well as possible areas of future cooperation between ECO and the UN agencies.

Congratulating Ms. Weigand for her appointment as the Resident Coordinator, Dr. Khan briefed her ECO's activities during the past months and for the rest of 2026. He particularly noted that ECO was able to convene two Ministerial Meetings (Tourism in Azerbaijan and Environment in Uzbekistan) despite logistical challenges in the region. He further provided an overview of ECO's initiatives in trade, disaster risk reduction, health and water, while also noting that ECO is looking forward to have its 18th Summit of Heads of State/Government in Iran and 30th Council of Ministers Meetings in Pakistan, later this year.



Referring to the longstanding institutional relationship between ECO and the UN and its agencies, as well as the essential role that the Resident Coordinator Office can play in this respect, both sides stressed the importance of further strengthening ties between ECO and the UN agencies, especially in the areas of common priorities such as environment, disaster risk reduction, health, and Sustainable Development Goals. They further agreed to hold regular meetings between the two organizations for efficiently following up the status of cooperation.

ECO Secretary General Joins World Day to Combat Desertification Ceremony

Tehran – June 17, 2026

The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Dr. Asad M. Khan, participated today in the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought ceremony at Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKA). The venue underlined the message that the fight against land degradation can and must begin at our own doorsteps.

In his address, the Secretary General noted that just weeks earlier, at the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Samarkand, ECO Member States adopted the ECO Cooperation Framework on Environment and the Samarkand Declaration on Regional Environmental Cooperation, charting a path for land restoration and climate resilience. He further noted that in April, the ECO High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation confirmed air quality and sand and dust storms as the central regional environmental priority.

A central moment of the ceremony was the acknowledgement of activists combating desertification, land degradation and drought. The Secretary General personally offered his deep appreciation, stating: “You are the hands that plant hope, the voices that awaken communities, and the conscience that holds us all accountable. Your efforts are not just local acts of restoration; they are contributions to regional and global security.”

The event also witnessed the official launch of the “IKA Green Belt Extension Project,” a strategic investment that will reduce dust, cool the microclimate, and serve as a model for the region. The Secretary-General reaffirmed ECO’s unwavering commitment to supporting regional cooperation that turns shared environmental vulnerabilities into joint, lasting solutions.

The ceremony was also attended by the Head of the Natural Resources and Watersheds Management Organization, and the Resident Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



UNECE-ECO Coordination Committee holds its 8th meeting in Istanbul

Istanbul- June 5, 2026

Delegations from Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkiye, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia and UNECE and ECO Secretariats joined discussions in the 8th meeting of the Coordination Committee on Trans-Caspian and Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul Corridors held on 5 June 2026 in Istanbul.

The Honourable Minister of Transport and Infrastructure of Republic of Turkiye, H.E. Mr. Abdukadir Uraloglu attended the opening session and delivered his statement. H.E. Ms. Tatiana Molcean, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) virtually attended the opening session and made her opening remarks through video conference.



The participants from different ministries of the en-route countries of the Trans-Caspian corridor and Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul corridor informed the Committee about the latest developments of the corridors in their territories and exchanged views on the existing challenges and ways and means to implement corrective measures together with a view to making these two corridors realize their full capacities.

The Meeting agreed with the proposed Istanbul Strategic Framework for Inter Regional Transport Corridor Management as the framework for the future activities of the Coordination Committee. The participants also discussed the Programme of Work of the Coordination Committee for 2027-2028.

ECO Director for Transport and Communications represented the Organization in the Meeting.

The Coordination Committee was established by the UNECE on a joint initiative with the ECO Secretariat in 2022 and has been active through separate work programmes since 2023. The Committee is expected to embark on its new phase in the format to be defined and adopted in the next UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) in September 2026.



Economic Cooperation Organization



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