

**ECO Senior Officials Meeting
14 October 2026 – Astana
10:00–13:00 – Hotel Wyndham Garden**

Statement by Amb. Silapberdi Nurberdiyev

ECO Deputy Secretary General

**Distinguished Participants,
Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning to all.

I would like to welcome you to this Senior Officials Meeting, which is being held to finalize the preparations for the **14th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport**, scheduled for tomorrow.

Let me begin by expressing our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for its generous hospitality and excellent arrangements for this important meeting in the beautiful city of Astana.

Today, we have two main tasks: first, to review the progress made since the last ECO Ministerial Meeting, held in Tehran in June 2025; and second, to finalize the preparations for tomorrow's Ministerial Meeting.

Let me briefly report on the progress made in these areas.

The **Tehran Declaration** adopted at the last Ministerial Meeting gave us an important and ambitious agenda. It called for the development of our regional transport corridors, removal of border and transit bottlenecks, digitalization of transport, stronger cooperation in maritime and aviation sectors, mobilization of financing, and preparation of a new transport strategy for the coming decade.

The **36th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council**, held in Tehran in May 2026, supported this agenda and called for priority implementation of the Tehran Declaration.

One of the important tasks was to prepare the **ECO Sustainable and Resilient Transport Strategy for 2026–2035**, which we are expected to finalize today.

The Strategy is in line with the Tehran Declaration and with current regional and international developments. At the same time, we need to focus on practical short- and medium-term actions to ensure its effective implementation.

Since the last Ministerial Meeting, progress has been made on several ECO transport corridors.

In Islamabad, on 8–9 September 2025, Pakistan hosted meetings on the **ITI rail and road corridors**. The meetings focused on improving operations, completing missing links and attracting investment. The participating countries also discussed eTIR, eCMR, the ECO Visa Scheme for drivers and closer cooperation with the private sector.

We encourage the ITI countries to give priority to implementing the decisions and proposals agreed in Islamabad.

At the same time, we were not able to organize similar meetings for some other corridors, including **TUTIT, KUTIT, KTI, KTAI, KTAP, Qazvin–Rasht–Astara, Istanbul–Almaty and Bandar Abbas–Almaty**.

We hope to organize these meetings later this year or early next year. However, we also need a more practical corridor implementation mechanism that does not depend only on meetings.

The main purpose of the ECO corridors is to connect **Europe with China and beyond**. To achieve this, we need regular exchange of information, joint action plans and concrete projects that can attract investment.

Let me also highlight several other developments.

- The **ECO Secretariat** has continued its work with UNECE on the Trans-Caspian and Almaty–Tehran–Istanbul Corridors. The Istanbul Strategic Framework and the Programme of Work for 2027–2028 were developed and approved by the relevant UNECE Working Party in Geneva in September 2026.
- **ECO and IRU** have started implementing their Joint Action Plan for 2026–2027. This includes work on eTIR and the establishment of TIR Green Lanes at border crossing points in the ECO region.
- On **digitalization**, we have continued consultations with potential partners and with Uzbekistan regarding the establishment of an **ECO Digital Transport and Customs Office in Tashkent**. The private sector dialogue to be held tomorrow in Astana will also address the digitalization of transport.
- In **aviation**, the first High-Level Meeting of Private Airlines of the ECO Region and the 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Civil Aviation were held in Tashkent in November 2025. These meetings showed strong interest in closer cooperation, including training, mutual recognition of certification and development of regional air hubs.

- Regarding **landlocked countries**, following the ECO Ministerial Meeting held in Awaza in August 2025, we have continued cooperation with regional and international partners to support the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action in the ECO region. On 18 November 2026, on the sidelines of the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Transport in Bangkok, we will co-organize a meeting to develop a roadmap for its implementation in the ECO region. Iran, Pakistan and Türkiye, as the three ECO transit countries, are also ready to work together on initiatives supporting ECO landlocked countries.
- On **maritime transport**, the 7th Meeting of the Heads of ECO Maritime Organizations is scheduled for 26–27 October 2026 in Iran. We are also working with IsDB on the second phase of the **ECO Gates Project**, focusing on ports and maritime transport, including the Caspian Sea. I encourage Member States to support this initiative.

- **Financing** remains one of the biggest challenges for our transport sector. ECO and the ECO Trade and Development Bank are working to organize an **International Financing Conference for ECO Transport Corridors and Projects** in the first half of 2027. We have already contacted several partners, including multilateral development banks and other international financial institutions. We hope that priority ECO corridors and projects will be presented at the Conference for possible financing.
- On **cooperation with China**, the Regional Planning Council requested the Secretariat to develop a mechanism for cooperation between ECO and China in transport and transit. The aim is to strengthen connectivity, develop economic and trade corridors, improve infrastructure, promote digitalization and exchange experience. As a first step, we have approached China regarding its possible contribution to the ECO Financing Conference.
- Finally, two small studies prepared by ECO International Consultants have been completed. The first looks at how the **KTI rail corridor can be developed into an economic corridor**, which could provide a model for other ECO corridors. The second focuses on **digital modelling for the construction and maintenance of railways**. The results have been presented to experts from Member States, and we are now considering the next steps.

Dear Colleagues,

Today, we are expected to finalize two important documents: the **Astana Declaration** and the **ECO Sustainable and Resilient Transport Strategy for 2026–2035**.

I would like to thank all Member States that actively participated in the four online meetings held to prepare these documents.

These two documents will provide important guidance for our future work in the transport sector. However, their real value will depend on effective implementation and follow-up.

In this regard, we may consider asking Member States to designate **national focal points** for implementation of the Strategy and the Declaration.

We also need to develop concrete project proposals in line with ECO project procedures and priorities.

Before concluding, I would like to assure you that the Secretariat will continue its efforts to implement the mandates given by Member States and to advance cooperation in the ECO transport sector.

We count on your continued support and active cooperation.

I wish you a successful and productive meeting today.

Thank you very much for your attention.