

**Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Communications**

**Speech
by Federal Secretary, Ministry of Communications
For ECO Transport Ministers Meeting
(15th October 2026 Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan)**

**Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation
Organization, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Assalam-o-Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

It is a great honour to participate in this important meeting of the Transport Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) here in Astana.

I sincerely thank the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting this meeting and for its warm hospitality. I also appreciate ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad M. Khan and his team for their efforts in advancing our shared agenda of regional cooperation.

Excellencies,

Transport connectivity is the backbone of regional economic integration. It facilitates trade, promotes investment, creates employment and strengthens people-to-people contacts. For the ECO region, strategically located between Asia and Europe, an efficient and resilient transport network offers tremendous opportunities to expand regional trade and connect our economies with global markets.

Pakistan attaches great importance to ECO's vision of enhanced regional connectivity. Our geographical position, linking Central Asia and Western China with South Asia and the Arabian Sea, offers significant opportunities for transit and trade. Our seaports at Karachi and Gwadar, supported by an extensive network of highways and motorways, can serve as important gateways for ECO Member States to international markets.

However, connectivity requires more than physical infrastructure. It demands harmonized policies, efficient border-crossing procedures, digital solutions, sustainable financing and strong institutional coordination.

Excellencies,

Pakistan supports the adoption of the **ECO Sustainable and Resilient Transport Strategy 2026–2035** as an important step towards modernizing regional transport systems. However, the real value of this Strategy will depend on its effective implementation.

We encourage the ECO Secretariat, in collaboration with Member States and development partners, to develop practical short- and medium-term action plans with clear priorities, timelines, institutional responsibilities and appropriate financing arrangements.

The full operationalization and commercialization of ECO transport corridors must remain a key priority. We need to address physical and non-physical bottlenecks, improve road and rail infrastructure, strengthen connections with seaports and logistics centres, and promote multimodal transport.

Pakistan stands ready to work with fellow Member States to develop commercially viable transit routes, connect regional production centres with international markets, and provide landlocked economies with more efficient access to seaports and global supply chains.

Distinguished Delegates,

Efficient border-crossing arrangements are essential for competitive regional transport. Delays, complex customs procedures, restrictive visa arrangements, inadequate insurance coverage and inconsistent documentation increase costs and undermine the commercial viability of our corridors.

Pakistan calls for concerted efforts to enhance transport and transit capacities at ECO border-crossing points and simplify procedures in accordance with national legislation and applicable international agreements.

Digital solutions, including the electronic TIR system, electronic permits, digital transport documents and advance cargo information, can significantly reduce delays, improve transparency and strengthen the security of cross-border operations.

We must also facilitate driver visas, vehicle insurance and transit permits while maintaining appropriate standards of safety and regulatory compliance.

Excellencies,

The private sector is indispensable to making regional connectivity commercially sustainable. We encourage greater participation by transport operators, logistics companies, investors and traders in the planning and implementation of ECO connectivity programmes.

We welcome the meeting of ECO private-sector representatives on the sidelines of this Ministerial Meeting. Their engagement provides a valuable opportunity to identify practical challenges and develop market-oriented solutions.

The scale of our ambitions also requires substantial and sustained investment. Pakistan encourages international financial institutions, development banks, donor agencies and relevant United Nations bodies to participate actively in the **International Financing Conference for ECO Transport Corridors and Projects, scheduled for 2027.**

Ports must also be effectively integrated with inland transport networks, border-crossing points, logistics centres and regional corridors to reduce transit times and improve the competitiveness of our transport systems.

Distinguished Delegates,

Achieving our connectivity objectives requires stronger partnerships beyond the ECO framework. Pakistan supports enhanced cooperation with organizations and partners including UNECE, UNESCAP, the Asian and Pacific Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development in Almaty, the Islamic Development Bank, the International Road Transport Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Digital Cooperation Organization, CAREC, China and other relevant partners. Pakistan stands ready to contribute constructively to these collective efforts.

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ECO region possesses enormous geographical, economic and human potential. Our responsibility is to translate this potential into tangible improvements in connectivity, trade, investment and the well-being of our people.

Let us renew our commitment to implementing the ECO Sustainable and Resilient Transport Strategy 2026–2035, operationalizing regional corridors, removing border-crossing barriers, adopting digital solutions, mobilizing sustainable financing and promoting meaningful public-private partnerships.

Pakistan firmly believes that connectivity is not merely about linking roads, railways and ports; it is about connecting economies, creating opportunities and building a shared future of peace, stability and prosperity.

Through mutual trust, cooperation and shared responsibility, we can transform the ECO region into an integrated, resilient and competitive transport and trade hub connecting Asia with Europe and beyond.

I look forward to our constructive deliberations and to concrete outcomes that will strengthen regional connectivity and cooperation.

Thank you.