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24th

ECO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING

EKONOMİK İŞBİRLİĞİ TEŞKİLATI
24. EİT BAKANLAR KONSEYİ TOPLANTISI



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION
24th ECO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING

8-9 KASIM / NOVEMBER 2019
ANTALYA



ANTALYA - TURKEY





Foreword



This present issue of ECO Chronicle gives a glimpse of the activities of ECO for the period autumn 2019 - spring 2020. ECO continued its efforts for fostering regional integration and mutual cooperation among the Member States leading to sustainable socio-economic development in the region.

ECO has come a long way since the 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting held in 2018 Dushanbe. We have made remarkable progress in our activities and initiatives aimed at fostering regional economic development by following the key directions of the

Regional Leadership. Particularly, I would like to mention the significant outcome of the 24th COM Meeting held in November 2019 in Antalya where regional leadership successfully finalized the comprehensive reform process aimed at increasing the sense of ownership among all Member States and enhancement of efficiency of the organization. The other noteworthy outcome of the COM was approval of the Secretariat's proposal on the ECO Scale of Assessments for the years 2020-2025. With the generous support and compassionate guidance of our leadership, the overall conclusion of the COM provides a practical and integrated approach for trade growth, enhanced connectivity and socio-economic development in the region.

We successfully hosted the 30th Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) in January 2020 in ECO Secretariat, Tehran. In order to meet the objectives of ECO Vision 2025, the RPC recognized the new approach of the Secretariat to transform the organization into a project and result oriented one by formulating such a "work programme" which to large extent includes events connected in one way or another to the implementation of a regional projects in the fields of trade, transport, energy, agriculture, industry, tourism and sustainable development. It is my hope that those new practical proposals based on ECO's new project oriented approach would increase the visibility of the organization at regional as well as international level.

We shall continue to work in line with the ideals and aspiration of our regional leadership to broaden and strengthen regional cooperation to achieve the objective of a well developed and prosperous ECO region.

*Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour
ECO Secretary General*

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CONTENTS

2-3 Contents

4-45 News in ECO

- ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held in Antalya4
- Antalya Communiqué.....8
- ECO Secretary General and Turkish Foreign Minister hold post COM Joint Press Conference in Antalya16
- ECO Secretariat hosts 30th Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council18
- ECO Day 2019 Celebrated in Tehran.....22
- ECO Secretariat

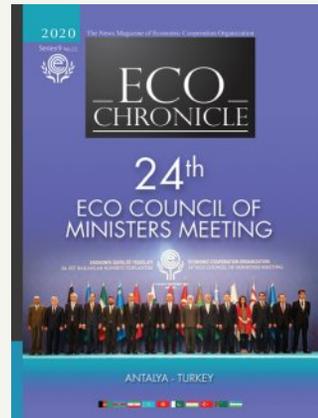
- Participated in "Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process 8th Ministerial Conference" in Istanbul.....24
 - ECO Organizes Training Course on Drought Monitoring and Prediction.....26
 - ECO Secretary General Visits Uzbekistan as an International Observer for Election Process of Legislative Assembly28
 - New ECI President Meets ECO Secretary General29
 - The 4th Meeting of HLWG on KTAI and 5th Meeting on ITI Road Corridors held in Tehran.....30

- Baku hosts 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture.....32
 - ECO SG Participates in Charge Assumption Ceremony of the new ECI President.....33
 - ECO Secretary General Receives Credentials of New Pakistani Ambassador in Tehran34
 - ECO Regional Seed Trade Congress held in Antalya, Turkey.....36
 - Iran hosts 5th ECO HLWG Meeting on Qazvin - Rasht - Astara Railway Project38
 - Photography Exhibition



In The Name Of God

Front Cover



ECO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING ANTALYA - TURKEY



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'Uzbekistan at Crossroads of Silk Road' Organized at ECO Cultural Institute	40
■ Ambassador of Malaysia in Iran Visits ECO Secretariat	41
■ ECO Secretary General Organizes Farewell Ceremony for Outgoing President of ECI	42
■ Delegation of ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) Visits ECO Secretariat	44

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ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held in Antalya

**ECO
CHRONICLE** The 24th Meeting of the
ECO Council of Ministers
(COM) of Economic Cooperation
Organization (ECO) was held on 9
November 2019 at the Turkish city of
Antalya city.

The meeting was attended by all ten
ECO member states and two observers
namely the Turkish Cypriot State and the

Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking
States. The ECO Specialized
Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated
Bodies and the representative of interna-
tional organizations were also present
during the meeting.

Speaking at the session, the ECO
Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi
Soleimanpour expressed his profound
gratitude to the Government of the
Republic of Turkey for hosting the 24th
Meeting of Council of Ministers and
expressed optimism over Turkey's leader-
ship to certainly facilitate and contribute
to further flourishing the Organization as
well as bringing prosperity and develop-
ment in the entire ECO region.

Dr. Soleimanpour also acknowledged
the contribution of Tajikistan, underlining
some significant achievements made dur-
ing their ECO's chairmanship under the
patronage of H.E. Mr. Emangoli
Rahmon, the honourable President of
the Republic of Tajikistan.

The ECO Secretary General briefed the





Meeting about the activities and developments including, the approach adopted for evolving the organization to be more project-oriented, measures taken for the implementation of ECO Vision 2025, fuelling the spirit of ownership, partnership and commitment to mutual obligations through organizational reform as well as steps taken to achieve the perceived aims and objectives of the organization in the areas of trade, transit-transport, energy and tourism.

The outgoing chair of the COM, the First Deputy Minister of Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, welcomed the delegates and felicitated the Republic of Turkey to assume the COM's Chairmanship. He highlighted some of the significant developments made during Tajikistan's Chairmanship of the ECO to implement the organization's overall

objectives in consonance with ECO Vision 2025, the emerging regional and global targets as well as other international developmental goals. Later, H.E. Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey was unanimously elected as new Chairman of ECO Council of Ministers.

He extended his gratitude to the Council of Ministers for reposing confidence in him.

In his statement to the session, H.E. Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, while acknowledging activities of the ECO and its contribution towards regional development, assured Turkey's consistent support to ECO and country's proactive role to realize and execute the organization's agenda for implementation of the ECO Vision 2025 in close coordi-



nation and cooperation of the Member States. Minister Cavusoglu emphasized that with 8 million square kilometers land area and nearly half a billion population ECO is an important regional platform and that we would work together to make ECO a more effective organization. He hoped that the ECO Projects

would bring enhanced trade, regional integration through transport corridors, energy, tourism and cultural activities.

The Council of Ministers (COM) is the highest policy and decision-making body of ECO and is responsible for formulating and approval of policies, strategies,



work, annual budgets, audit reports, fiscal and administrative regulations, organizational charts, etc.

The 24th Council of Ministers' Meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials' Meeting held on 8 November 2019.

During the working session, the Council commended the ECO Secretary General for his comprehensive report on organization's activities made in the post 23rd COM period.

The Council appreciated the report on implementation progress on ECO Vision 2025 and encouraged the Member States to coordinate and extend full support to the Secretariat for ensuring the implementation of the Vision. The Council acknowledged the importance of steps taken under reform process aimed at increasing the sense of ownership among all Member States and enhancement of efficiency of the organization.

The Council considered and approved the Secretariat's report/proposal on the ECO Scale of Assessments for the years

2020-2025.

The Council further approved the initiative of the Secretariat for priority projects developed through the Sectoral Meetings to meet the objectives of ECO Vision 2025 and make the organization more project-oriented.

It also considered the Annual Reports of the ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies and encouraged them for acceleration of their activities to secure the intended aims and objectives in line with ECO Vision 2025.

Moreover, the Council unanimously adopted the Antalya Communiqué aimed at integrated approach for trade growth, enhanced connectivity and socio-economic development in the region.

The Ministers/Heads of delegation of the Member States also reaffirmed their commitments to the broader cause of regional cooperation and emphasized on the need for close cooperation among ECO Member States for overall development in the region.



Antalya Communiqué

 In the concluding session of the 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held on November 9, 2019 in Antalya, Republic of Turkey, the Ministers adopted the Antalya Communiqué. Main points of the Communiqué are:

We, the Foreign Ministers/Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization, gathered in Antalya on November 09, 2019 to participate in the 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, while:

Reaffirming our resolve towards ECO's principles and objectives as enshrined in the Izmir Treaty;
Reiterating the implementation of the objectives set forth under the

ECO Vision 2025 for enhanced economic cooperation, advanced social welfare, improved quality of life of the people, increased economic growth and secured sustainable development in the ECO Region;

Reaffirming the timely implementation of strategic objectives envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025 and supporting the ongoing efforts of the Organization on their fulfillment;

Appreciating the steps taken for enhancement of sense of ownership in bringing about stronger collaboration amongst the Member States for fulfilling mutual responsibilities;

Encouraging the project and result-oriented approach of the Organization, enabling it to be more responsive to the current regional and global economic developments as well as the needs and requirements of our peoples;

Acknowledging that trade as a principal driver of the national and regional economies continues to play an instrumental role in generating



wealth and employment opportunities leading to the collective welfare of our peoples;

Reiterating the prominent role and importance of trade and connectivity for regional integration which is a pre-requisite for socio-economic development;

Calling upon the Member States to consider ways to further increase the share of intra-ECO



trade with a view to augment its role in development of the ECO Region, as well as increase share in the global trade in the coming decades;

Emphasizing the importance of undertaking

sustained efforts for boosting trade and investment in the region; and Calling Upon the Member States to further strive for deepening cooperation to liberalize trade to unlock the full potential of the ECO Region;

Commending endeavours made for increasing cooperation in the areas of Trade and Investment and supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); and Encouraging the further improved conditions and more conducive environment for attracting investments among ECO Member States;

Acknowledging the importance of border crossing points and facilitation of customs procedures to expand intra-regional trade and make it economically viable and commercially justified;

Recognizing the importance of further expanding and interlinking the transport connectivity in the ECO Region and to that end; Encouraging and supporting the result-oriented initiatives and projects to enhance regional connectivity;

Supporting the full implementa-



tion of Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) as a major means to connect dry-ports to the seaports and establish economic zones in the ECO Regions well as address the transit transport issues amongst Member States;

Encouraging the paradigm shift towards mainstreaming sustainable energy and regional electricity markets in ECO's overall energy agenda, which goes hand in hand with regional and international objectives to promote deployment of clean energy in the region which will also significantly contribute to addressing environmental and climate concerns;

Recognizing the importance of stronger and more coherent institutional and cooperative relations with the international organizations active in the priority areas of the organization, notably the International Energy Charter (IEC), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Railways Union (IRU), International Road Transport Union (IRU), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The United Nations Economic and Social Commission (UNESCAP), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB);

Reiterating full support for implementation of the ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan (EAPA);

Highlighting the contribution of sustainable tourism to the economic growth and development of the ECO Region and its role in strengthening economic coopera-

tion among ECO Member States and enhance socio-economic ties within our societies and promote understanding, peace and prosperity among the nations;

Underlining the vast potential of the ECO Region in the field of tourism, inter alia, in terms of increasing the region's share in global tourism; and Calling upon the Member States to enhance cooperation and coordination to support tourism industry in line with the objectives outlined in the ECO Vision 2025;

Acknowledging the important role of agriculture sector and food security for sustainable growth and welfare of the people of the



region while considering the need for enhanced food safety regulations in the ECO Region;

Appreciating the efforts made by the Secretariat to initiate, strengthen and expand ties with the United Nations system and other international and regional bodies; and Recognizing the need to further promote ECO as a dynamic and resilient regional organization at all relevant regional/international fora;

Encouraging greater ownership of the Member States and more focused engagement

of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies in promoting cooperation within the ECO in their respective fields;

Have agreed to:

■ 1. Emphasize the need for effective functioning of the ECO in the coming decades as a more project and result-oriented, innovative and inclusive organization;

■ 2. Recognize the importance of the ECO platform to forge regional links and partnerships with similar organizations;

■ 3. Prioritize the need for increasing intra-ECO trade through gradual trade liberalization, implementing existing trade agreement, harmonization of standards, dissemination of market information, enhancing trade facilitation and removal of measures which hamper trade flows and make better use of instruments at hand on our priority areas of cooperation;

■ 4. Endorse efforts for preparation of ECO Trade Facilitation Agreement and Urge Member States to actively participate in and contribute to relevant meetings;

■ 5. Emphasize the need for finalization of the draft ECO Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Custom Matters;

■ 6. Recognize the established role of investment for enhancing trade and fostering economic growth in the region; Emphasize the Member States who have signed the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI) to complete the ratification procedures for its early effectuation; and Invite other Member States, to sign and ratify the Agreement to benefit from this vital agreement for promotion of trade and investment in the region;

■ 7. Appreciate the establishment of the ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Databank in Ankara, the Republic of Turkey, under

the Agreement on the Establishment and Operation of ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank; Call Upon the Contracting Parties to actively cooperate for successful operation of the Data Bank; also Encourage remaining Member States to join this Agreement;

■ 8. Encourage the ECO Trade and Development Bank as the regional institution of ECO to continue to develop appropriate modalities, to finance and support the implementation of regional projects; Emphasize the need to further support the Bank through strengthening its role and expanding its Membership;

■ 9. Reaffirm our support to the accession of all ECO Member States to WTO, and in this context, we denounce any effort for restricting accession of the remaining ECO Member States to the WTO;

■ 10. Reaffirm the commitment for implementation of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) for furtherance of the objective of regional integration through Free Trade Area as envisaged in ECO Vision 2025; Call upon the Contracting Parties to accelerate processes for its implementation; Devise mechanisms and solutions at the earliest convenience taking into account the concerns and views of the Contracting Parties for the maximal productivity of each of them; also Invite the remaining Member States to join ECOTA;

■ 11. Encourage the Member States and the Secretariat to consider ways for establishing a system of clearing payments through

means such as developing cooperation with the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) or, where appropriate, by establishing an ECO Clearing Union, taking into consideration the existing models, experiences and challenges;

■ 12. Assign the task to the ECO Secretariat and, if appropriate, ECO Trade and Development Bank, with collaboration of relevant institutions, to develop the Structure and Modalities of the ECO Vision Fund provided for under ECO Vision 2025;

■ 13. Call for consideration of the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the ECO Vision 2025 with a result-based approach;

■ 14. Emphasize on the significance of the role of private sector in regional development and the need for increased interaction among the businessmen of the region and to this end, Instruct ECO Secretariat to include ECO CCI in its work impacting the business community, Encourage the Member States to strengthen and support ECO-CCI to enhance its activities for strengthening of pri-

vate sector activities in the Region;

■ 15. Reaffirm our commitment to further strengthen the ECO multimodal transit and transport network to be aligned with the ongoing transformation in the ECO countries' transport networks;

■ 16. Underscore the importance of the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) project aimed at strengthening a sustainable cooperation by creating of information (internet) infrastructure for the establishment of regional digital information society and bridge the digital divide across the wider region;

■ 17. Invite the public and private sector stakeholders to contribute to the development of the ECO regional transportation network, particularly conveyance of passengers by rail and provision of railway freight services by introducing new and innovative and thus more effective and commercially reasonable transport transit technological solutions;

■ 18. Recognize the importance of the initiatives that are developed within and outside the framework of ECO which are contributing to inter-regional connectivity and cooperation, including inter alia, Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran and Oman Corridor, Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan-China) Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar Port, Belt and Road, Iran-Republic of Azerbaijan's portion of the



International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) i.e. Qazvin - Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan), West-China and West-Europe Expressway, Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) Railway, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Rail and Road Corridors, Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Turkmenistan Project, Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) Rail and Road Corridors, Almaty-Bandar Abbas, Istanbul-Almaty Railway Container Trains, CASA-1000, TAPI Corridor, 5 Nations Railway Corridor (China, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Iran, Afghanistan), Lapis-Lazuli Trade and Transit Corridor, China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway Corridor, Development of Chabahar Port, Kunar Dam Project, Peshawar-Kabul Express Highway, Khost-Miran Shah Railway, Chaman-Spin Boldak Railway, Mazar-E-Sharif-Herat Railway, Khaff-Herat Railway, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline, South Caucasus Pipeline, Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP) and Iran-Azerbaijan-Russia electricity transmission line;

■ 19. Renew the commitment for full implementation of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) to facilitate regular and commercially justified operation of transnational transport corridors in the ECO Region and modernization of border crossing points, and to provide the necessary facilities and related installations needed for multimodal transport in ECO Corridors, as well as logistic centers and ECO Zones in seaports; also Invite Turkmenistan to complete and the Republic of Uzbekistan to accelerate the consideration of

accession process to TTFA;

■ 20. Acknowledge the need for implementation of major international conventions/agreements aimed at simplifying procedures for smooth travel of people and transportation and transit of goods within the region and beyond;

■ 21. Appreciate preparation of "2025 Regional Strategy for Information Society Development", a strategic framework to develop the digital economy within ECO region by creating world-class information society to ensure access to affordable higher-speed broadband, e-services, digital knowledge/skills, and an enabling environment for cross-border flow of goods, services and digital products and designing an Action Plan to be followed-up/implemented through devising a mechanism under ECO;

■ 22. Support the steady progress in promoting the project of establishment of the ECO Clean Energy Centre (CECECO) in view of the launching and implementation of its preparatory phase, as an explicit endeavour to contribute to the sustainable energy transition in the ECO Region; and Task the



Secretariat to map out and implement the first operative phase of CECECO;

■ 23.Reiterate the crucial role of alignment towards regional electricity market within the ECO Region; and Call for renewed impetus for launching of the Project of establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market (ECO REM), which remains one of the flagship project initiatives within the Organization, as a means to consolidate the long-term regional energy sustainability;

■ 24.Encourage the Member States, relevant international organizations, financial institutions, national development funds and other stakeholders to actively support the inclusive, multi-dimensional connectivity projects and associated infrastructure in energy, transport, communications and industry that could potentially transform into economic corridors in the long-term perspective;

■ 25.Acknowledge the importance of enhanced engagement of the Organization on addressing the environmental and climate challenges at global and regional level where appropriate;

■ 26.Assign the Secretariat to expand its ties with the United Nations and its affiliated bodies and specialized agencies, relevant international Organizations and peer regional organization including ASEAN, SCO, EU,CIS, ACD etc. and some potential partners including European and Asian countries to further promote mutually beneficial partnerships in the sphere of international relations;

■ 27.Encourage all Member States to participate for finalizing the Regional Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 8th Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction in Turkey in 2019, to strengthen regional and international cooperation in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; and Call for development/review of national strategies for disaster risk reduction and report it through the online Sendai Framework Monitoring System;

■ 28.Encourage the ECO Member States to make adequate contributions to the ECO Fund for Afghanistan, to support efforts of the ECO and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, particularly ECO related projects, aiming at promoting stability, reconstruction, sustainable development and economic growth in Afghanistan and to actively participate in the ECO Donors Conference on Afghanistan;

■ 29.Reaffirming our commitment to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan in support of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

■ 30.Acknowledge the importance of enhanced cooperation in the field of agriculture targeted on addressing the food security challenges at global and regional level; and Realize the need for harmonized, science-based food safety regulations and requirements on the basis of international standards and formulation of mechanisms for achieving mutual recognition and certification in and outside the ECO region to catalyze agricultural growth and cooperation and to facilitate smooth trade;

■ 31.Reiterate the support for ECO Coordination Center for Food Security (ECO-RCC); Support the Center's efforts for ensuring food security; Emphasize enhancing and strengthening the regional cooperation in the field of food security and Encourage more coordination and cooperation amongst ECO Member States in the field of agriculture;

■ 32. Encourage all Member States to participate in the upcoming Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture to be held in the Republic of Azerbaijan in December 2019 to discuss the regional agricultural challenges and opportunities, food safety and security situation in the region;

■ 33. Realize the need for harmonized, science-based food safety regulations and requirements on the basis of international standards and formulation of mechanisms for achieving mutual recognition and certification in and outside the ECO region to catalyze agricultural growth and cooperation and to facilitate smooth trade;

■ 34. Acknowledge the efforts of the Secretariat in developing ECO Regional Strategy on Tourism; and Encourage the Member States to play an active role in the activities of the Secretariat aimed at promoting regional Tourism;

■ 35. Support the steady implementation of tourism related projects to facilitate the movement of tourists to the region and enhance the capacity of regional tourism industry;

■ 36. Reiterate the support for ECO Regional Strategy on Industrial Cooperation; Encourage more coordination and cooperation amongst the Member States in the field of industry; and Emphasize the importance of preparing an Action Plan including knowledge, experience and expert exchange programmes to increase cooperation between Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and related organizations;

■ 37. Support harmonized privatization approach amongst Member States to enhance the role of private sector in economic development of the region and increase mutual investment amongst Member States by networking of the Privatization Organizations for data and knowledge sharing as well as Privatization Investment Forum;

■ 38. Encourage all Member States to partici-

pate in the upcoming Ministerial Meeting on Economy to be held in the Republic of Tajikistan in the first half of 2020 to discuss the regional economic challenges and opportunities, address financial and banking system in the region, and to consider the draft document on the ECO Clearing Union;

■ 39. Reiterate concerns about the existing unresolved conflicts in the ECO region, including Armenia - Azerbaijan conflict, which hinder the economic growth and realization of the full economic potential of the Region and impede the development of economy cooperation on regional as well as broader level, and stress the importance of making increased efforts for the earliest resolution of these conflicts based on the norms and principles of international law, in particular, the principles of respect to sovereignty and territorial integrity;

■ 40. Reiterate concerns about the existing unresolved conflicts, disputes, threats and biased measures and pressures against some of the Member States in the ECO Region and in this context Express solidarity for each other in line with the relevant resolutions of the UN and International Law; Condemn all forms and manifestations of terrorism; and Support ECO Member States in their counter terrorism efforts;

■ 41. Express profound gratitude to H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, to host and chair the 24th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers in an excellent manner.

ECO Secretary General and Turkish Foreign Minister hold post COM Joint Press Conference in Antalya



ECO CHRONICLE Following the 24th Council of Ministers Meeting, the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Cavusoglu held a joint press conference in Antalya, Turkey.

Mr. Mevlüt Cavusoglu, in his remarks, pointed out that

Turkey will assume the chairmanship of the organization in the next year and emphasized that the Organization is an important regional platform to increase the economics and cultural ties among its members. In this regard, he also highlighted that in the coming period one of the main priority of Turkey as the chairman will be to transform the organization into a result and project oriented-organization.

He also expressed that as a founding member and the Chair of the Organization, they

will continue to support the activities of the ECO which aims at increasing cooperation and well-being in ECO region.

ECO Secretary General, in return, while expressing his gratitude to the Republic of Turkey for the organization of the meeting and congratulating the member for the chairmanship, briefed the press on the significant conclusions of the Meeting specifically underlining the headway on the institutional reform of the organization and importance of increasing intra-regional trade.

In reply to a question on Turkey's role within the Organization in the coming period, the Secretary General responded that as a founding member alongside Iran and Pakistan, and as one of the strongest economies of the region the Republic of Turkey can in line with its New Asia Initiative continue to prioritize the development of the Organization.

He highlighted some of the significant initiatives taken by the ECO under his leadership in order to materialize the vision of regional leadership and to upgrade the living standards of the people of the region.

He also informed the press about his comprehensive strategy to make the organization more project-oriented. He particularly mentioned ECO's plans in the field of connectivity by making the major transport corridors commercially viable and operational, and transformation of the selected transport corridors into economic corridors.





ECO Secretariat hosts 30th Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council

ECO CHRONICLE The 30th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held on 14-16 January 2020 in ECO Secretariat, Tehran.

The delegates from all the ECO Member States, ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions attended the meeting. Council of Turkic Speaking States also

participated in the meeting as an observer.

During the opening ceremony the ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, welcomed the Heads of delegations from the ECO Member States and other participants.

The ECO Secretary General briefed the Council on the activities and programmes

of the Secretariat during the course of the last year.

He informed the Council that during 2018, intra-ECO trade accounts for 8.1 percent of the total trade of its members, significantly modest amount compared to other regional economic blocks. While mentioning the regional potential in enhancing the intra regional trade, he referred to recent ECO study which demonstrates the possibility to increase the trade among the member states by ten-fold. In order to realize this potential, the Dr. Soleimanpour emphasized upon an early implementation of ECO Trade Agreement.

The ECO Secretary General also mentioned the highlights of some of the key achievements of ECO in 2018-19 in priority areas including Transport, Energy, Industry, Tourism, Agriculture, and Human Resource Development. He also assured the Council about the ECO's commitments to support the processes and interactions

aimed at securing peace, stability, development and economic growth in Afghanistan.

Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour particularly underlined the progress on the organizational reforms to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization, and readjustment in the Organization's top management system and organizational chart according to the priorities specified by the Vision.

He also mentioned the importance of transformation of the ECO towards a project oriented Organization and support of the 24th ECO Council of Ministers to this approach.

The Chief Guest of the ceremony, H.E. Dr. Gholam Reza Ansari, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran made his inaugural statement.

He highlighted the importance of multi-lateral cooperation and tapping the trade potential of the region referring to the fig-





ures in the recent study of the Secretariat in this regard.

H.E. Mr. Hayri Maraslioglu, the head of delegation of Republic of Turkey assumed the chairmanship of the RPC and made his opening statement. He emphasized the importance of regional economic cooperation and mentioned Turkey's willingness to implement new projects in line with the new approach of the ECO Secretary General.

Later, the Heads of Delegation of the ECO Member States made their country statements, highlighting policies, programmes and activities of the Organization at national, regional and global levels, including the progress achieved on implementation of the decisions taken during the 29th Meeting.

The Heads of delegation of the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies also delivered their statements, elaborating activities and

progress achieved since last RPC Meeting.

After the Opening session, various Sectoral Committees were formulated on trade, investment, transport, communications, energy, environment, agricultural, industry, tourism and the Afghanistan development projects.

The Sectoral Committees thoroughly discussed the ongoing programs and projects as well as the areas of future cooperation and shared of conclusion of their deliberations to the closing ceremony wherein, the final RPC report was presented and adopted with consensus.

The Council noted, with appreciation, the work of the Sectoral Committees as well as the ECO Secretariat for finalizing the ECO Work Programmes and Calendar of Events for 2020.

In the concluding session of the RPC, the ECO Secretary General appreciated the endeavour of the Sectoral Committees of

the RPC to transform the organisation into project and result oriented one by formulating such a "Calendar of Events" which to large extent includes events connected in one way or another to the implementation of a regional projects in the fields of trade, transport, energy, agriculture, industry, tourism and sustainable development. He informed the Council that for the next work programme of the organisation eight Ministerial Meetings in the areas such as Economy, Trade, Transport, Energy, Disaster risk reduction, Agriculture, Tourism and industry have been finalized which would certainly provide their guidelines for further expansion of the regional cooperation in their respective fields.

Regarding the new initiatives introduced in the next work programme of the organization, the Secretary General of the ECO particularly referred to the events on tourism, sports, media and flagship projects, among others which are already in

the Calendar of Events. He expressed his hope that those new proposal would increase the visibility of the organisation at regional as well as international level. He also assured the Council that the Secretariat will make every effort to achieve all the targets and goals identified by the Council in efficient and diligent manner.

The Regional Planning Council (RPC) is the main technical planning body of the Economic Cooperation Organization and comprises the heads of the Planning Organizations of the Member States as well as officials and experts from the national relevant ministries and agencies.

RPC convenes its annual meetings to "evolve programs of action for realizing the objectives of the Organization along with a review of past programs and evaluation of results achieved to be submitted to the Council of Ministers."





ECO Day 2019 Celebrated in Tehran

ECO CHRONICLE The ECO Day 2019 was celebrated on 26 November 2019 at the Institute for Political and International Studies in Tehran. The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, was the chief guest of the event.

Ambassadors and senior representatives of the Tehran diplomatic corps

as well as high-ranking authorities from the host country attended the ceremony.

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, in his welcoming remarks highlighted the core features of the regional cooperation within ECO framework under his leadership in the last two years. He also gave an overview of the ECO



Vision 2025 and hoped that in the light of the Vision, the Member States will realize further achievements in future.

The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, underlined the ECO recent performance and

achievements and assured the Organization for the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He also highlighted the significance of regional cooperation in the present world and emphasized the Member States for more proactive approach towards realization of the core objectives of the organization.





ECO Secretariat Participated in "Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process 8th Ministerial Conference" in Istanbul

ECO CHRONICLE "Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process 8th Ministerial Conference" was held on 9 December 2019, in Istanbul. Deputy Secretary General of ECO Ambassador Huseyin Avni Bicakli represented the organization in the conference. ECO attended the conference as supporting organization upon the invitation extended by the co-chairs, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Ambassador Bicakli in his speech mentioned the continuous support of the ECO in creating the necessary conditions to achieve sustainable economic growth and develop-

ment, peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. He explained the ECO's efforts to assist Afghanistan through the established ECO Fund for Afghanistan, seeking willingness of all interested countries, international and regional donors as well as philanthropists to actively participate in the First Donor Meeting to be organized by the ECO in 2020.

The 8th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference was jointly inaugurated by the Presidents of Turkey and Afghanistan H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan and H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. Peace,

Partnership and Prosperity themed the Ministerial Conference which brought together Foreign Ministers and high-ranking officials of 15 participating countries, 16 supporting countries and 12 regional and international organizations including the ECO.

The opening statements were followed by a group photo of the event's participants and speeches delivered by Afghan Foreign Minister H.E. Idrees Zaman and his Turkish counterpart H.E. Mevlut Cavusoglu. Both Foreign Ministers, commending the process and recalling the progress in some major regional projects, maintained that the region is still facing security challenges which require concerted regional effort to be overcome.

The participants of the conference reiterated their support of an Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process and expressed renewed commitments towards the shared vision of the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process by endorsing the declaration of this important event.

The Declaration adopted at the end of the Conference called for concerted regional and international cooperation to ensure the elimination of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the dismantling of terrorist sanctuaries.

Participating Countries highlighted in the Declaration the important role of regional organizations, such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), covering different combinations of the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process particularly in the context of cooperation towards enhanced security and economic development in the region. Participating Countries also welcomed Afghanistan's active participation in the regional organizations it is currently a member of, including ECO.

The revised action plans of the seven confidence building measures (CBMs) were also adopted and a new CBM, Women Empowerment, was added to the existing ones. The meeting also endorsed the Implementation Plan for Agriculture Development Confidence Building Measure and welcomed Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan's willingness to lead these measures.

The Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process is a regional initiative of Turkey and Afghanistan, which was launched in 2011. It has two chairs with Afghanistan as the permanent chair, and a co-chair from among the member states that shifts each year. Tajikistan assumed co-chairmanship in the upcoming period and will host the next SoM.



ECO

Organizes Training Course on Drought Monitoring and Prediction

ECO CHRONICLE ECO Secretariat organized the 2nd Training Course on Drought Monitoring and Prediction in ECO Region on 12-13 November 2019 at the ECO Secretariat Tehran.

The course was attended by the delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran (Host), the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic

of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkey as well as the representatives of ECO Secretariat.

The Training Course was organized with the major objective of boosting capacity building of the Member Countries and increasing know-how in various spheres of drought monitoring, seasonal forecasting and prediction in





ECO Region as well as fortifying synergic and coherent cooperation among relevant organizations of the Member States within the pertinent frameworks of the Organization, including ECO Vision 2025.

The Training Course covered the following subjects/issues:

- i. Drought Monitoring and Early Warning System
- ii. Dust and Sand Storm Early Warning system (including Characterization of dust storms in the ECO region by area of origin and Techniques and Technologies for Sand and Dust Storms Detection and Monitoring in ECO region by area of origin)
- iii. Monthly forecast of precipitation Using North American Multi-Model Ensembl Prediction (NMME)
- iv. Seasonal Forecast Toolkit (SFT)

v. Drought risk and water management in the desert belt of the region

The participants expressed appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for valuable contribution, regarding preparation of documents, as well as other notable services to facilitate the successful proceedings of the Training Course.

The participants considered Training Course extremely fruitful and strongly recommended that similar capacity building activities and training programmes should continue and be convened by the Member States in future as well.

At the end of the Training Course, the participants were awarded with "Certificates of Appreciation and Completion" by H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the Secretary General of the ECO.

ECO Secretary General Visits Uzbekistan as an International Observer for Election Process of Legislative Assembly



ECO CHRONICLE On invitation of the Uzbekistan's Central Election Commission, Dr. Hadi Soliemanpour, the ECO Secretary General visited the Republic of Uzbekistan on December 22, 2019 to witness the elections of the country's Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis.

The ECO Secretary General paid visit to three

electoral pools in Samarkand to observe election process. On conclusion of the process, the ECO Secretary General expressed his satisfaction over the entire electoral process, transparency and competitiveness of the elections. A number of Representatives from other regional and international organizations, members of the diplomatic corps based in Uzbekistan as well as foreign and local media persons also witnessed the electoral process.

During the visit, Dr. Soliemanpour also called on Minister for Tourism of Uzbekistan and Head of Chamber of Commerce & Industry and exchanged views on mutual interest.



New ECI President Meets ECO Secretary General

ECO CHRONICLE The ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, held a meeting with new President of the ECO Cultural Institute, Mr. Sarvar Bakhti on 26th of December 2019. During the meeting, the ECO Secretary General congratulated the new ECI President on his appointment and expressed hope that Mr. Bakhti's visionary approach could pave the way for enhancing cultural cooperation in the region.

Dr. Soleimanpour expressed hope that under the reform process the organization would be able to strengthen the coordination mechanisms between the specialized agencies and regional institutions of ECO to achieve the socio-economic objectives enshrined in the Treaty of Izmir and envisioned goals under the ECO Vision 2025. He added that evolution of approaches is needed to meet the needs of the region.

The ECI President, while expressing the importance of cultural cooperation in the region through institutionalized efforts, noted that the scope of the Institute's activities and programs could be broadened to improve and deepening the appeal and commitment of ECI. Addition of new members, branding of cultural products of the region and enhanced cooperation on cultural heritage could serve the purpose, Mr. Bakhti added.

ECI is a specialized agency of ECO.



The Treaty of Izmir provides basis for establishment of specialized agencies in social, cultural, technical and scientific fields to promote close cooperation among the Member States in these areas. Considering the deep-rooted historic and cultural affinities binding the peoples of the region, the charter of ECO Cultural Institute was signed by eight ECO Member States during the 3rd ECO Summit held in 1995 in Islamabad. Presently four ECO Member States namely Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan are the member of the Institute.

The 4th Meeting of HLWG on KTAI and 5th Meeting on ITI Road Corridors held in Tehran

ECO CHRONICLE The 4th Meeting of High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) and the 5th meeting of HLWG on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Road



Corridors were held on 25 - 26 November 2019 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The Maintenance and Transportation Organization under Ministry of Road and Urban Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted the meetings.

The officials from the concerned authorities of the enroute countries including private sector of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey discussed and decided on practical issues requiring



joint and uninterrupted collaboration between the enroute countries at post-study phase.

During the meetings the participants discussed the comprehensive regional strategy for sustainable development of road corridors in the region. In particular, the ECO Member States reviewed the study on the KTAI and ITI road corridors. Thus, the Member States, jointly with representatives of IRU and ECO Secretariat, have endorsed the findings of the study project. The role of new technologies and digitalization of roads in using TIR carnets was also noted by ECO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kanan Nazarov in inaugural session. Boosting of infrastructure development along road corridors of ECO and expansion of logistics whilst reduction of transport costs in an emerging regional road transport market, were highlighted by Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Abdolhashem Hasannia.

The Meetings came up with the following decisions/outcomes:

i. The study for the establishment of these two road corridors have been approved.

Major Recommendations of the study to be followed by the enroute countries;

ii. Action Plan to serve as a framework for inter-agency interaction between consular, customs, transport, insurance authorities of the enroute countries and regular follow up;

iii. Principal support of the general concept of "KTAI and ITI Corridor visa pilot scheme" and possible setup of the proposed mechanism in parallel with existing visa procedures;

iv. Decision on the test run of loaded trucks under TIR Carnets;

A wrap-up discussion was also took place at ECO Secretariat where next steps have been specified by both, ECO and IRU, as follow up measures on aforementioned Joint ECO-IRU Project on road corridors. In specific terms, soft and hard infrastructure was considered through visa facilitation, digitalization, and functioning of TIR green lanes along road corridors. In practical terms, digital TIR IT tools will be introduced in Afghanistan and Tajikistan while e-TIR pilot project between Iran and Turkey will be expanded to all TIR customs offices and all TIR transport operators and Pakistan will join Iran and Turkey in the e-TIR project.



Baku hosts 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture

ECO CHRONICLE The 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture preceded by 5th High Level Experts Meeting (HLEM) on Agriculture was held on 3-4 December 2019 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Inam Karimov, Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Meeting was attended by the delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Uzbekistan. Turkish Cypriot State participated in the meeting as an observer. The representatives of FAO, OIE, ECO-CCI, ECO-RCC and ECO-RCRM as well as the



delegation of ECO Secretariat also participated in the meeting.

The meeting, apart from other issues, discussed the comprehensive regional strategy for sustainable development of agriculture in the region. The Baku declaration on cooperation in agriculture and food security in the region was also adopted by the Ministers.



ECO SG Participates in Charge Assumption Ceremony of the new ECI President



ECO CHRONICLE A charge assumption ceremony was organized on March 30 2019 in the honour of new President of the ECO Cultural Institute, H.E. Mr. Sarvar Bakhti at ECI Headquarters in Tehran.

ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour was the guest of honour of the ceremony. While addressing on the occasion, ECO Secretary General congratulated Mr. Bakhti for his new assignment and assured him of ECO's full patronage to support the ECI's future course of action with a view to accelerating the cultural progress and activities in the region. The ECO Secretary General also acknowledged the outstanding services of the institute's outgoing President Dr. Mazaheri, appreciating his excellent contributions for the continued development of ECI and its expanded as well as effective cultural engagements.

In response, Mr. Sarvar Bakhti assured of

his best efforts to sustainably promote and broaden the relevant activities and the organization's cultural agenda in the region. He valued the presence of all participants and extended his sincere gratitude to the participating dignitaries.

The ceremony was also attended by H.E. Dr. Asharf Boroujerdi, Director General of Iran National Library and Archives, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran for Economic Diplomacy, Mr. Ghorban Ali Pourmarjan, H.E. Dr. Derya Örs, Ambassador of Turkey, H.E. Dr. Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, Ambassador of Afghanistan, representatives of the diplomatic corps in Tehran, including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Russia, Kyrgyz Republic, China, as well as host country's political and cultural officials, intellectuals, artists and figures of the relevant faculty.

ECO Secretary General Receives Credentials of New Pakistani Ambassador in Tehran



 The newly appointed ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Rahim Hayat Qureshi presented his letter of credence to the ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour at the ECO Secretariat on 27 February, 2020.

At the very outset, the Secretary General extended warm felicitations to the visiting ambassador for assuming the ambassadorship and expressed his belief that appointment of Ambassador Qureshi as a permanent representative would be proved an asset for the ECO. During the meeting, the Secretary General briefed the ambassador of Pakistan about the key activities of ECO in various spheres.

The ECO Secretary General also apprised the visiting dignitary about the six priority areas of the ECO Vision 2025 including Trade, Transport and Connectivity, Energy, Tourism, Economic Growth as well as Social Welfare and Environment.

Dr. Soleimanpour expressed his gratitude to the Pakistani ambassador for the invaluable contributions made by Pakistan, as a founding member of the ECO, towards the accomplishment of the strategic objective and goals of the organization.

He also highlighted the lead role played by Pakistan in establishing ECO's financial institutions including the ECO Trade Development Bank and the ECO Reinsurance Company as well as the country's continued support and rigorous facilitation in

the ongoing implementation process of the ECO trade Agreement (ECOTA) and Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA).

The ECO Secretary General also briefed the ambassador about his successful visit of Pakistan in March 2019. He informed Mr. Qureshi about the outcome of his meetings with the President of Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Imran Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi and various other key Ministers of the country. He specifically appreciated the vision of the Prime Minister for regionalism.

H.E. Rahim Hayat Qureshi, while underling the significance of ECO as regional economic organization in

order to enhance commercial activities in the region, thanked the Secretary General for his valuable briefing.

He mentioned that ECO is an essential component of foreign policy of Pakistan and the country always maintained its traditional support and enduring commitment in pursuit of regional cooperation among ECO member states.

Ambassador Qureshi also appreciated the Secretary General's approach to evolve ECO into a project oriented organization and offered his full support towards the achievement of the objectives and goals of the organization as enshrined in the Treaty of Izmir and ECO Vision 2025.



ECO Regional Seed Trade Congress held in Antalya, Turkey



ECO CHRONICLE The 7th ECO Regional Seed Trade Congress has been jointly organized by ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) and Turkish Seed Union (TURKTOB) in Antalya, Turkey between 29 November and 01 December 2019 with the attendance of more than 200 businessmen and stake-

holders from ECO region.

The congress was preceded by Growtech 18th International Greenhouse, Agricultural Technologies and Livestock Fair has which hosted 86,780 visitors from 120 countries and over 800 brands from 30 countries in Antalya, Turkey.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the 7th ECO Regional Seed Trade Congress, ECOSA and TURKTOB Chairman Mr. Savas Akcan, stated that based on the common interests of ten ECO member countries, the development of the seed sector in the ECO region was their priority. He added that the total world seed market reached around \$ 60 billion but unfortunately the



domestic seed market in the ECO region had a small portion of world seed market. He urged the countries to increase cooperation in the development of seed trade.

Mr. Savas Akcan mentioned that ECO region is neighbor to some major food importing markets and this brings enormous opportunities for our countries in seed trade and seed cooperation and there is a potential for increasing the current volume to much higher values. In order to increase high quality seed trade in the region ECOSA had an essential role for integration of our region with the international seed market.

During the inauguration session, Ms. Aysegül Yorulmazlar, Programme Officer of the Economic Cooperation Organization gave a statement on behalf of the organization. She highlighted the importance of the 7th ECO Regional Seed Trade Congress and similar events to promote regional seed trade within and outside the region and to help in sharing

experiences among stakeholders of the seed industry.

Mr. Özkan Kayacan, General Director of Agricultural Research and Policies of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Republic of Turkey, stated that seed production is a very strategic sector and that coun-



tries that do not invest in the seed sector cannot survive in future.

During the Congress, in addition to bilateral trade meetings, country presentations on Current Situation and Future of ECOSA were made by representatives of ECOSA member states.



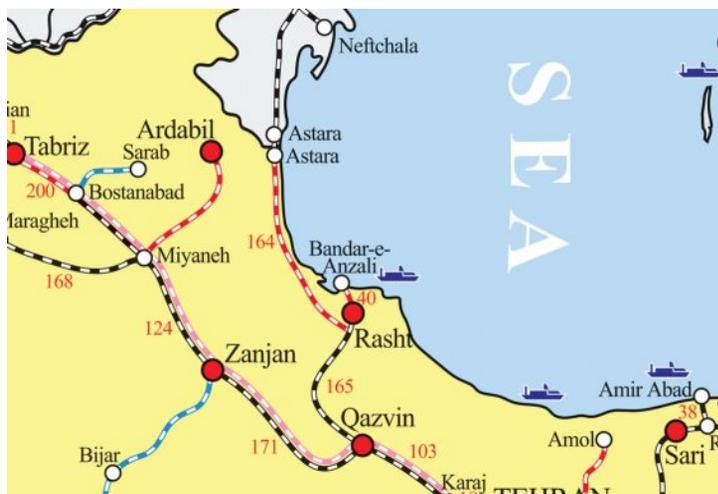
Iran hosts 5th ECO HLWG Meeting on Qazvin - Rasht - Astara Railway Project

hosted by the Iranian Railways (RAI). The meeting was inaugurated by Deputy Director General of International Department of Railways of Iran (RAI) Mrs. Mojgan Kordbache.

ECO Director for Transport & Communications, Mr. Ahmad Saffari, esteemed the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) railway project as one of ECO's best performing projects enabling potential economic gains and social benefits for project's multiple parties. The Delegations from the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran updated the Meeting on progress on project's two completed segments and useful exchange of views on operations' issues at Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) resulted in concluding that a bilateral working group be soon established to address the operations' matters.

The Meeting pinpointed acute aspects of ongoing construction on the 162km Rash-Astara railway segment, of which engineering studies had been completed and land acquisition for Rasht-Astara has started. The double track substructures (9km) have been so laid down that one rail stretch links Rasht with Anzali whereas the other with Astara. As per the decisions of the 14th

ECO CHRONICLE The 5th ECO High-Level Working Group Meeting on Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) was held on 17 December 2019 in Tehran, I.R of Iran,





Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities/8th Railway Committee Meeting (20-21 June 2019, Dushanbe), the meeting requested the Secretariat to explore best international practices of other countries in implementing public-private partnership

infrastructure projects relating to transcontinental corridors like the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) railway project.



Photography Exhibition 'Uzbekistan at Crossroads of Silk Road' Organized at ECO Cultural Institute



 Ambassador of
Uzbekistan to Iran H.E.
Mr. Bakhodir Abdullaev inaugurated a
four day exhibition 'Uzbekistan at the
Crossroads of Silk Road' on 17
February 2020 at ECO Diplomatic Art

Gallery in ECO Cultural Institute (ECI).

At the exhibition about 40 photos taken by Mr. Husniddin Ato, a renowned Uzbek photographer, have been showcased.

The Deputy Secretaries General of ECO, Ambassador Hüseyin Avni Biçakli and Mr. Kanan Nazarov, represented the ECO Secretariat in the event.

In his inaugural remarks, the ECI president, H.E. Mr. Sarvar Bakhti thanked the embassy of Uzbekistan in Tehran to co-organize this important event. Acknowledging the rich culture and history of ECO region, the ECI president elucidated the significance of such events for the promotion of our shared culture, customs, art, poetry and literature.

H.E. Mr. Bakhodir Abdullaev mentioned that the photographs displayed at the exhibition described historical monuments, tourist attractions, customs and traditions of the people of Uzbekistan. He mentioned that ancient Uzbek cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Tashkent are located at the heart of the Silk Road.

He also touched upon the measures being adopted by the Government of Uzbekistan for the preservation of monuments and historical sites of the country.

He stressed upon the need for greater collaboration at regional level for the preservation of historical monuments and common heritage in the ECO region.

The inaugural session of the exhibition was attended by ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan as well as representatives of various diplomatic missions based in Tehran.

Ambassador of Malaysia in Iran Visits ECO Secretariat

 The Ambassador of Malaysia to Iran, H.E. Mr. Dato' Rustam Yahaya, met with the ECO Secretary General, H.E Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, on 22nd January, 2020 in the ECO Secretariat.

The meeting focused on ASEAN-ECO cooperation with a view to exploring possibilities of revitalizing and enriching mutually beneficial collaboration of the two organizations. In this regard, the Secretary General of the ECO highlighted the possible role of Malaysia as an active member of the ASEAN.

The ECO Secretary General briefed Ambassador Yahaya about the background of the Economic Cooperation Organization and its activities in various spheres. The ECO Secretary General also apprised the visiting dignitary about the six priority areas of the ECO Vision 2025 including Trade, Transport and Connectivity, Energy, Tourism, Economic Growth as well as Social Welfare and Environment. Referring to the importance attached by the ECO to ASEAN, the ECO Secretary General described a brief history of cooperative relationship between the two organizations.

He informed the Malaysian Ambassador that so far 14 ASEAN-ECO Joint Ministerial Meetings have been organized and in the course of these meetings the leadership of the two regions has continuously stressed upon strengthening and expanding the ongoing cooperation.

The Malaysian Ambassador expressed



his readiness to support the initiative of the ECO Secretary General to establish a mechanism of consultations between ASEAN and ECO at the ministerial and ambassadorial levels to render their relationship more productive and useful for their mutual benefit.

In order to revitalizing the ASEAN-ECO joint Ministerial Meeting and reviewing the existing MoU and Work Programme between ASEAN and ECO, the two sides also agreed to organize regular meetings among Ambassadors of ASEAN and ECO countries based in Tehran.

ECO Secretary General Organizes Farewell Ceremony for Outgoing President of ECI



ECO CHRONICLE The ECO Secretary General, Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour organized a farewell lunch in honour of Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri, at the end of his tenure as President of ECO Cultural institute.

The farewell ceremony, held on 25 December 2019 at ECO Secretariat, was

attended by the Honorable Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Islamic Republic of Iran, spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Secretary General of Supreme Council of Iran's Free Trade, Industrial and Special Economic Zones as well as ECO Ambassadors in Tehran.

Dr. Soleimanpour, while welcoming the new

President of ECO Cultural Institute Mr. Sarvar Bakhti, appreciated the excellent services of Dr. Mazaheri, and acknowledged his outstanding and valuable contributions aimed at expanding the scope and activities amongst the Member States under ECO's cultural agenda.

Dr. Seyyed Abbas Salehi, Minister of Culture and

Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran admired the relevant activities of ECI, especially during the tenure of Dr. Mazaheri. He added that the relevant capacities and potentials of the Member States, who hold common values and history as well as maintain excellent cultural relations, could be exploited for the mutual benefit and interest of the region.

The Ambassador of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Director General for ECO and Multilateral

Economic Cooperation of Foreign Ministry of Iran and representatives from other ECO countries, in their respective statements praised the good offices of Dr. Mazaheri for paying attention to broader aspects of cultural capacities of ECO countries during his tenure.

Mr. Seyed Abbas Mousavi, distinguished Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran also expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Mazaheri for the successful completion of his tenure and making effective and meaningful initiatives during his presidency of ECI.

Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri expressed his appreciation to ECO Secretary General for arrang-

ing the farewell ceremony and briefed the audiences about programs and substantial achievements during his tenure.

He unveiled that during his term a diverse range of programs owing to different topics such as women, peace, family, poetry and literature; painting, illustration and visual arts exhibitions alongside research activities in different languages have been carried out.

He added that during recent years, fruitful interactions with some international cultural institutions have been tailored.



Delegation of ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) Visits ECO Secretariat



ECO CHRONICLE A delegation of ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) led by the Deputy President of ECOSA, along with Secretary General and advisor visited the Economic Cooperation Organization Secretariat, Tehran on 08 January, 2020.

The delegation held a meeting with H.E Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour, the Secretary General of the ECO. During the meeting, views were exchanged regarding ongoing projects of the ECOSA for the development of seed sector in ECO region. The delegation expressed gratitude to the Secretary General and ECO Secretariat and hoped that the ECO would continue its support to ECOSA.

The ECO Secretary General while acknowledging the efforts of ECOSA for enhancing the seed trade among the ECO Member States appreciated the organization of 7th ECO Regional Seed Trade Congress during 2019 in Antalya.





Economic Cooperation Organization