

26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)

Report

*January 24, 2023
Tashkent - Uzbekistan*

Report

The 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held on January 24, 2023 in Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan. The Honourable Foreign Ministers of the Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyz** Republic, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, Republic of **Türkiye**, **Turkmenistan** and Republic of **Uzbekistan** (host) participated in the meeting. The Delegations from ECO Observers, namely; the Turkish Cypriot State and the Organization of Turkic States, as well as the ECO Secretary General along with his team also participated in the meeting. Moreover, the Presidents of ECO Cultural Institute (ECO-CI), ECO Educational Institute (ECO-EI) and ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), as well as representatives of D8, CICA, IDB and ADB also attended the event. **Annexure-I** contains the list of participants.

Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

2. The Agenda and other related documents of the Meeting of the COM were discussed and finalized by Senior Officials Meeting (SoM) held on January 23, 2023.

3. In his opening remarks, the ECO Secretary General Ambassador Khusrav Noziri expressed pleasure to join the distinguished Senior Officials of the Member States in their meeting organized to facilitate the proceedings of the 26th Meeting of the COM. He extended deep appreciation to the Government of Uzbekistan for making excellent arrangements and providing kind hospitality to the visiting delegations in the splendid city of Tashkent. **Annexure-II** contains His Excellency's detailed statement.

4. The First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Furkat Sidikov welcomed the delegates of the Member States to their Senior Officials Meeting preceding the 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM). He thanked the ECO Secretariat for making effective coordination and preparation of required documents to facilitate the proceedings of the Meeting. **Annexure-II** contains His Excellency's detailed statement.

Council of Ministers Meeting (COM)

Inauguration

5. The Honourable Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Saidov extended warm greetings to the Honourable Ministers/Heads of Delegations of the Member States, welcoming them to the 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) in Tashkent.

6. H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Honourable Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, in his capacity as the ECO Chair in 2021, called the meeting to order. **Annexure-III** contains His Excellency's complete statement.

7. The Acting Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Saidov chaired the event and welcomed the Honourable Foreign Ministers of the ECO Member States as well as other delegates to the Meeting. **Annexure-III** contains His Excellency's complete statement.

8. As the ECO Chairman for 2023, the Honourable Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov also delivered a statement. **Annexure-III** contains His Excellency's complete statement.

9. In his remarks, the ECO Secretary General Ambassador Khusrav Noziri briefed that the holding of 26th Meeting of the COM under Chairmanship of the Republic of Uzbekistan in January 2023 was an extraordinary arrangement given the fact that the Republic of Azerbaijan had already taken over the Chairmanship of the Organization on January 1, 2023 based on the ECO Rules of Procedure. He extended his gratitude to the Republic of Uzbekistan for generously hosting the event and facilitating the participating delegates. **Annexure-III** contains His Excellency's complete statement.

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda

10. The Council adopted the following Agenda of its meeting as proposed by the Senior Officials Meeting held on January 23, 2023:

Draft Agenda

1. Adoption of the Agenda;
2. Statements by the Honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ECO Member States;
3. Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General on activities of the Organization;
4. Adoption of the Statute of ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM);
5. Approval of Amendment to Article IX of the Charter of the ECO Clean Energy Center;
6. Approval of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the High-Level Committee (HLC);
7. Abandonment of the practice of dividing ECO Member States into "founding" and "non-founding";
8. Establishment of a High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation;
9. Review and Approval of:
 - Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings;
 - Report of the 32nd and 33rd RPC Meetings;
 - Reports of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings.
10. Administrative and Financial Matters of ECO Secretariat:
 - ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2023;
 - Appointments.

11. Adoption of Tashkent Communiqué;
12. Treaty Event;
13. Any other business:
 - Statements by ECO Observers;
 - Reports by Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies.
14. Date and Venue of the next COM meeting;
15. Adoption of Report of the 26th Meeting of Council of Ministers;
16. Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting.

Agenda Item No.2

Statements by the Honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ECO Member States

11. In their remarks, the Honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ECO Member States underlined the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as an important intergovernmental forum to promote regional cooperation. They also acknowledged the importance of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies in particular reference to their technical and administrative charters to support the Organization in the continued promotion of its regional agenda, including in the economic, cultural, education and scientific fields. Lighting on their national policies and programs, they briefed the Council on some of their significant activities within the framework of ECO. **Annexure-III** contains Their Excellencies' complete statements.

Agenda Item No.3

Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General on activities of the Organization

12. While appreciating the all in-inclusive Report presented by ECO Secretary General on activities and programs of the Organization, the Council noted and stressed as under:

- **Follow-up of the decisions of 26th COM Meeting**

13. The Council reviewed the status of overall activities and engagements of the ECO, especially some important sectoral developments made after its 25th Meeting held at Ashgabat in November 2021. Given the inconducive working conditions emerged in the post-pandemic era coupled with some global crisis and escalations, the Council emphasized on the need for an elevated level of cooperation amongst the Member States with a view to addressing their common challenges and issues in a more effective and efficient manner.

14. In this regard, the Council requested the Member States and the ECO Secretariat for increasing their collaboration, coordination and cooperative efforts to ensure smooth implementation of the Organization's policies, programs and projects in line with the Council's previous and fresh decisions.

- **ECO Agreements/Treaties concluded among Member States**

15. The Council mulled over the status of Agreements and Treaties concluded amongst the Member States. While encouraging the Member States to accelerate the ratification process as regards such agreements to which they are signatories, the Council noted the importance of enhanced coordination between the ECO and PAECO Secretariats to help ensure early finalization of the issues pending with regard to the ECO Legal Frameworks. The Council also urged the Member States to consider joining such agreements to which they are non-signatories.

- **Implementation of ECO Projects and Programmes**

16. The Council reviewed the status of completed, ongoing and proposed ECO projects and programmes reflected in the Secretary General's Report. While appreciating the accomplished projects, the Council encouraged the Member States and the ECO Secretariat for early implementation and finalization of all the ongoing and proposed projects, respectively.

17. The Council acknowledged the progress rate concerning the implementation of priority projects during 2022 in light of the targets of ECO Vision 2025 and the previous decision of the COM.

- **ECO relations with International Agencies**

18. The Council noted, with appreciation, the Organization's accelerated efforts for the continued promotion of its inter-regional and global relations as well as enhancing the worldwide visibility of ECO.

19. The Council re-entrusted the Organization to make its existing partnerships more active and vibrant, and knot some fresh ties with other regional and international organizations, particularly the United Nations and its various agencies.

Agenda Item No.4

Adoption of the Statute of ECO Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM)

20. The Council considered the Draft Statute of the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM) recommended by 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture held in Baku on December 4, 2019.

21. The Council adopted the Statute of ECO-RCRM as recommended by relevant Ministerial Meeting. Given the significance of the Center, the Council encouraged all Member States to sign and ratify the adopted document with a view to increasing the working and collaborative scope and nature of ECO-RCRM, as well as supporting regional efforts aimed at efficient risk management and effective preparedness for natural disasters.

22. The Council also appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for signing the Statute of ECO-RCRM during the Treaty Event organized under Item 12 of its Agenda.

Agenda Item No. 5

Approval of Amendment to Article IX of the Charter of ECO Clean Energy Center

23. The Council approved the following amendment proposed by the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Article IX of the Charter of ECO Clean Energy Center:

ARTICLE IX

Legal Stratus

The Center shall possess legal personality as an ECO Regional Centre accorded by the legislative authorities of the host country. ~~The Staff of the Center shall enjoy immunities and privileges identical to those of ECO Staff.~~ The privileges and immunities of the Center and its staff shall be defined by agreement concluded between the Center and the Host Country.

24. The Council requested the Secretariat to circulate the amended version of the Charter of ECO Clean Energy Center amongst the Member States.

Agenda Item No.6

Approval of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the High Level Committee (HLC)

25. The Council appreciated the work excellently done by the Secretariat on formation of High-Level Committee (HLC) and approved the HLC's Terms of Reference (ToR).

26. The Council further desired that the ECO Member States and Secretariat may accelerate their collaboration and coordination to materialize the functioning of the established HLC with a view to ensuring the intended process for facilitating ECO Reform and the prospect of cooperation in the region.

Agenda Item No. 7

Abandonment of the Practice of Dividing ECO Member States into "founding" and "non-founding"

27. The Council acknowledged the following outcome secured by ECO Member States and the Secretariat in connection with abandoning the practice of dividing Member States into "founding" and "non-founding" countries:

"The terms 'founding' and 'non-founding' Member States are no longer employed as a basis for distinguishing the Member States in different categories. This is without prejudice to the practice developed there-under as to the assessment of the rates of contribution of the Member States and the rotation of the position of the Secretary General".

28. While appreciating the outcomes and approving the formula reproduced above, the Council congratulated the Member States on their mutual agreement for abandoning the practice of dividing Member States into founding and non-founding countries.

Agenda Item No.8

Establishment of a High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation

29. The Council recognized the importance of enhanced cooperation on environment in view of the growing challenges associated with the environmental spoliation and climate change. The Council, therefore, considered the proposal of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the establishment of a High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation in the ECO with the participation of international scientists and experts.

30. While agreeing with the proposal, the Council tasked the CPR together with the ECO Secretariat to work out necessary Terms of Reference (ToR), organizational and governance structures, nature and scope of activities as well as funding mechanism of the said Platform.

Agenda Item No.9

Review and approval of:

- i. Reports of (258st to 271st) Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR);
- ii. Reports of 32nd and 33rd Meetings of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC);
- iii. Reports of Ministerial Meetings on Transport (February 2, 2022, virtual), Agriculture (July 5, 2022, in-person), and Tourism (December 13, 2022, virtual);
- iv. Annual Reports of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI), ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB), ECO Regional Center for Risk Management for Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM) and ECO College of Insurance.

31. The Council appreciated the ECO and its Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and the Affiliated Bodies for presenting such comprehensive reports/documents on their programs and activities.

32. While considering and adopting the presented reports, the Council acknowledged the importance of ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies and their activities, encouraging them to continue and enhance their collaborative engagements with ECO to support the Organization in its efforts aimed at consolidating regional nexus in diversified areas, including economic, cultural, educational and scientific cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 10

Administrative and Financial Matters of ECO Secretariat

- **ECO Secretariat's Budget for the Year 2023**

33. The Council considered and approved the ECO Budget for the year 2023 as recommended by the Senior Officials Meeting (SoM) held on January 23, 2023, authorizing the Secretariat to utilize an amount of US\$ 249,410/- from the General Reserve Fund to cover some part contributions of the Member States under the ECO Budget for 2023.

- **Appointments**

- Appointment as Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, Project Management, Judicial and Parliamentary Coordination and EAPA)

34. The Council considered and approved the appointment of Ambassador Jandos Asanov (Kazakh national) as Deputy Secretary General (Tourism, Project Management, Judicial and Parliamentary Coordination and EAPA) for another term of 3 years to be effective from the date of completion of his existing tenure.

Agenda Item No. 11

Adoption of Tashkent Communiqué

35. The Council adopted the Tashkent Communiqué as endorsed and recommended by Senior Officials Meeting (SoM) held on January 23, 2023. **Annexure-IV.**

Agenda Item No.12

Treaty Events

36. The Council commended the signing of the Charter of ECO Research Center by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Statue of ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disaster by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Agenda Item No. 13

Any other business

37. The Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot State and the Organization of Turkic States also delivered their statements as ECO Observers. **Annexure-V** contains their complete statements.

Agenda Item No. 14

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

38. The Council appreciated and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Azerbaijan to organize the 27th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers at Baku, noting that the exact dates of the event will be finalized through diplomatic channel.

Agenda Item No. 15

Adoption of Report of the 26th Meeting of Council of Ministers

39. The Council unanimously adopted the Report of its 26th Meeting held on January 24, 2023 at Tashkent.

Agenda Item No. 16

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

40. The Council concluded the event's proceedings with a vote of thanks and appreciation to H.E. Mr. Bakhtiyor Saidov, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan for excellently chairing the 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers. Moreover, the Council extended gratitude to Mr. Furkat Siddikov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan for efficiently leading the Senior Officials Meeting.

41. While valuing and acknowledging the participation and contribution of the Heads and the Members of their Delegations as well as their productive interaction, the Council appreciated the Government of Uzbekistan for warm hospitality provided to the visiting delegations.

42. The Council also praised the ECO Secretary General and his team for preparation of necessary documents and considerable assistance to the host authorities for successfully convening the 26th Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers.
