

# **25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM)**

## **Report**

*November 27, 2021  
Ashgabat - Turkmenistan*

## Report

The 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held on November 27, 2021 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. The delegations of the Republic of **Azerbaijan**, Islamic Republic of **Iran**, Republic of **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyz Republic**, Islamic Republic of **Pakistan**, Republic of **Tajikistan**, Republic of **Turkey**, **Turkmenistan** (host) and Republic of **Uzbekistan** participated in the meeting. The President of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), the President of ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO CCI) as well as the ECO Secretariat's delegation headed by the Secretary General also attended the Meeting. *List of participants attached as Annex-I.*

### Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

2. The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) held on November 26, 2021 finalized the agenda and relevant documents of the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) as well as the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit.

3. In his opening remarks, the ECO Secretary General H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri expressed his pleasure to join the participants, and deeply thanked as well as appreciated the Government of Turkmenistan, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for making excellent arrangements to facilitate the meeting and receptively welcome the visiting delegations in the beautiful city of Ashgabat. He briefed on the preparations of the meeting (s) and activities of the Organization made ever since the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COM (Antalya, November 9, 2019). He recalled that the post-24<sup>th</sup> COM period marked by regional and global crisis due to the outbreak of COVID-19 experienced a hampered socioeconomic progress. He mentioned that due to untoward situation inflicted by the pandemic, the ECO like other regional and international organizations resorted to the virtual/hybrid working modes for the continuity of regular activities of the organizations in line with the its aims and objectives as envisaged in the ECO Vision 2025 (*Annex-II*).

4. H.E. Mr. Berdiniyaz Matiyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan receptively welcomed the delegates of the Member States to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). He thanked the ECO Secretariat for effective coordination and preparation of required documents to facilitate the meeting. He underscored that Turkmenistan considers this meeting very important to assess and analyze the progress made so far, as well as ascertain the prospects of future cooperation. He also underlined the importance of the creation of energy clusters in the ECO region and diversification of energy supplies with close collaboration of the Member States that he considered a key task to be secured with enhanced interest and accelerated efforts. He further appeared glad to note that within the framework of this event an MOU on Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) Corridor is planned to be signed by the representative of the relevant countries. The Turkmenistan side is firmly convinced that effective regional economic cooperation in the Member Countries, based on the principles of sustainability, interconnectedness and mutual respect, remains the main factor for development of the ECO, he added (*Annex-III*).

## Council of Ministers Meeting (COM)

### Welcoming Remarks by Host

5. H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of the Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs made welcoming remarks and extended warm greetings to the honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation.

### Opening of the Meeting

6. The former ECO Chairman His Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey, called the meeting to order. In his inaugural remarks, he welcomed and congratulated Turkmenistan for their excellent chairmanship during the year 2021. The Minister said that the Member States should benefit from ECO to have an integrated regional response to challenges like the pandemic and needed economic recovery. During the chairmanship of Turkey, the organization worked towards this goal and at the same time focused on increasing regional trading connectivity, he added. (*Annex-IV*).

### Statement by the ECO Secretary General

7. H.E. Ambassador Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General while expressing pleasure to attend this high-level ECO meeting extended his sincere thanks to the Government of Turkmenistan, especially His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, the honourable Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan for hosting the important event and warm hospitality extended to the visiting delegations. He also thanked the honourable Foreign Ministers as well as the heads of delegations for their kind participation in this important meeting.

8. The Secretary General acknowledged that under the ECO's Chairmanship of Turkmenistan during 2021 the Organization successfully maintained its momentum and activities to pursue the aims and objectives of the ECO Vision 2025 for greater regional integration. He also thanked the former ECO Chairman His Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Cavusoglu, the honourable Foreign Minister of Republic of Turkey for excellently chairing the Organization, noting that during Turkey's Chairmanship the ECO experienced a notable progress in the pursuit of its noble goals for the collective socioeconomic developments of the Member States. The Secretary General also congratulated the Republic of Uzbekistan for their upcoming ECO's Chairmanship in January 2022. Assuring his full support and cooperation, he believed that under Uzbekistan's Chairmanship the Organization would plow ahead with further advancement to achieve expanded cooperation in the region.

9. Moreover, ECO Secretary General underlined that due to the hardworking conditions developed in the aftermath of COVID-19, the regional and global economies witnessed substantial nosedives. He, however, stated that the organization took some most immediate steps for the continuity of work and resumption of normal socioeconomic activities in the region that included virtual organization of meetings, issuance of concise Preliminary Assessment concerning

the potential impact of the pandemic on the ECO Region's Economy, release of Practical ECO Guidelines on Cross Boarder Facilitation Measures under conditions of COVID-19 as well as finalization of a declaration on health in the specific background of the ongoing pandemic (*Annex-V*).

### **Agenda Item No.1**

#### **Election of the Chairman and Statement by the Chairman**

10. The former ECO Chair, His Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu proposed the election of current ECO Chair, H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of the Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan for chairing the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers.

11. Having been unanimously elected as Chairman, H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov warmly welcomed the honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation in Turkmenistan and extended his gratitude to them for participation in the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COM. While referring the concept of Turkmenistan's chairmanship that the country developed to lead the Organization, he emphasized on some key objectives given under their concept that particularly entailed the intensification of investment activities in the Member States, creation of free trade and economic zones, formation of new economic corridors and establishment of partnerships in the field of sustainable energy, including renewable energy sources. H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov also highlighted that comprehensive support and promotion of cooperation in the field of science, education, sports, scientific research in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, as well as expansion of interaction in agriculture, food security and other fields, remained priority for ECO Member Countries. He stated that fulfillment of these tasks requires the establishment of appropriate coordination mechanism, creation and provision of favorable political conditions and constructive atmosphere of cooperation in the ECO.

12. The Chairman noted that an important component of successful integration of ECO with modern system of world economic relations is strengthening its partnership with United Nations Organization (UNO). He recalled that under the initiative of Turkmenistan the UN General Assembly in September this year adopted a resolution on "Cooperation between UN and ECO", regarding this to be the first step towards systematic and focused interaction with UN and its agencies. He acknowledged the important role of ECO Secretariat to meet such goals. Moreover, he thanked the ECO Secretary General H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri and his team for joint work during the Chairmanship of Turkmenistan and for preparation of this meeting. While highly appreciating the competence and dedication of the Secretariat, he believed that the Secretariat's team should keep up with the current time and work in accordance with today's requirements and standards (*Annex-VI*).

### **Agenda Item No.2**

#### **Adoption of the Agenda**

13. The Council adopted the following agenda of its meeting, as proposed by the Senior Officials Meeting (*Ashgabat, November 26, 2021*):

## Draft Agenda

- Welcoming remarks by the Honorable Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan
  - Opening of the Meeting and remarks by the Chairman of the 24<sup>th</sup> COM
  - Statement by the ECO Secretary General
- 1) Election of the Chairman and Statement by the Chairman of the 25<sup>th</sup> COM
  - 2) Adoption of the Agenda
  - 3) Statements by:
    - Ministers/Heads of Delegation of Member States
    - Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies
  - 4) Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General and Recommendations on ECO Regional Projects (2021-2022)
  - 5) ECO Vision 2025 Midterm review: Progress and Assessment
  - 6) Consideration of the proposal regarding abandonment of practice of dividing ECO Member States into "founding and "non-founding"
  - 7) Consideration to adopt Charter on establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre
  - 8) Review and approval of ECO Activities as well as Annual Reports of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/ Affiliated Bodies:
    - Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings;
    - Reports of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> RPC Meetings: (Annual Calendar of Events 2020-2021: Work Programme 2020-2021); Midterm RPC
    - Reports of Sectoral Ministerial Meetings.
  - 9) Administrative and Financial Matters of ECO Secretariat:
    - ECO Secretariat's Budget for 2022;
    - Audit Reports 2019 and 2020;
    - Appointments.
  - 10) Preparation for the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit:
    - Draft Agenda
    - Draft Ashgabat Consensus for Action
    - ECO Awards 2021
  - 11) Treaty Event
  - 12) Any other business
  - 13) Date and venue of the next meeting
  - 14) Adoption of Report of the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Council of Ministers
  - 15) Vote of thanks and closing of the Meeting

### **Agenda Item No.3**

#### Statements by:

- Ministers/Heads of Delegations

14. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs/Heads of Delegations of the ECO Member States delivered their statements. In their respective remarks, they highlighted the

importance of the ECO as a vital regional economic forum. They also briefed on the activities, action plans/programmes and policies being undertaken in their countries to enhance regional cooperation within the framework of ECO (*Annex-VII*).

- **Heads of ECO Specialized Agencies**

15. President of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) in his statement underlined the progress made by Institute since 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Ministers, he also conveyed ECI's future plan to support the process of development in the region (*Annex-VIII*).

#### **Agenda Item No.4**

#### **Consideration of the Report of ECO Secretary General and Recommendations on ECO Regional Projects (2021-2022)**

16. The Council noted, with appreciation, the comprehensive report presented by ECO Secretary General on activities of the organization made in the post-24<sup>th</sup> COM period, and emphasized on the following:

- **Follow-up of the decisions of 25<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting**

17. The Council reviewed the progress of the organization made after the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the COM. Moreover, it encouraged the Member States for accelerating their collaborative actions and engagements in particular reference to implementing the decisions taken by the Council in association with their relevant authorities and the ECO Secretariat.

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

18. The Council reviewed the latest status of agreements concluded amongst the Member States and requested the countries to expedite the process of ratification in regard to the agreements to which they are signatory. The Council encouraged the non-signatory Member States to consider joining such agreements. The Council also appreciated the Republic of Turkey for the ratification of the Charter of ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (RISCAM) and the Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment.

- **Implementation of ECO Projects and Programmes**

19. The Council took into account the ECO projects and programmes reflected in the Secretary General's Report and desired speedy implementation of these projects by the Secretariat and Member States.

20. The Council commended the progress made by the Organization on priority projects in 2020 and 2021 to secure the objectives of ECO Vision 2025 and transform the ECO into a more project-oriented Organization.

21. The Council also mulled over the Secretariat's proposal to expand the scope of small-sized projects to pre-feasibility/feasibility study projects, and approved 10

more projects to be implemented each within the cost of US \$10,000/- annually from GRF. Moreover, it desired that the Organization should also focus on some mega and long-term projects, alongside the execution of short-term small and medium sized projects.

- **ECO relations with International Agencies**

22. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Organization to boost and promote its collaborative relationship with other regional and international organizations. The Council also acknowledged the importance of the recent UNGA Resolution adopted on September 09, 2021 on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization.

23. The Council further encouraged the Secretariat to continue such endeavors to push the process for the expansion of its ties with other regional and international organizations in line with the ECO Vision 2025 and the recommendations made during different sectoral meetings that would increase the visibility of Organization in the greater regional interest.

**Agenda Item No.5**

**ECO Vision 2025 Midterm review: Progress and Assessment**

24. The Council appreciated the work excellently done by the High-level Committee (HLC) on the midterm review of the ECO Vision 2025 and follow-up of the 14<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit and approved its final Report (*Annex-IX*). The Council also requested the ECO Secretary General to submit annual progress report to COM regular meetings on the state of affairs of the implementation of the measures and recommendations envisaged in the report.

**Agenda Item No. 6**

**Consideration of the proposal regarding abandonment of practice of dividing ECO Member States into "founding" and "non-founding"**

25. The Council mulled over the proposal made by the honourable President of the Kazakhstan during 14th ECO Summit concerning the founding and non-founding status of the Member States.

26. The Council tasked the CPR together with the ECO Secretariat to work out concrete proposals before the next meeting of the COM, for addressing the issue regarding practice of dividing ECO Member States into "founding" and "non-founding".

**Agenda Item No.7**

**Consideration to adopt Charter on establishment of ECO Clean Energy Centre**

27. The Council welcomed the offers by the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey for hosting the ECO Clean Energy Center and congratulated the Republic of Azerbaijan being selected as host of the Centre, and adopted its Charter(*Annex-X*).

28. The COM also agreed to establish the Ad-hoc Mechanism for Assisting Operationalization of the Center with participation of abovementioned three countries, other interested Member States, the ECO Secretariat and with possible collaboration of UNIDO, and other relevant international organizations, to expedite preparatory work for early operationalization of the Center.

#### **Agenda Item No.8**

##### **Review and approval of ECO Activities as well as Annual Reports of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/ Affiliated Bodies**

- **Reports of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Meetings**

29. The Council adopted the Reports of (244<sup>th</sup> to 257<sup>th</sup>) Meetings of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR).

- **Reports of 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> and Midterm Meetings of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) along with (i) Annual Calendar of Events 2020 & 2021 and (ii) Work Programme 2020 & 2021**

30. The Council considered and adopted the Reports of 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> RPC Meetings, along with Work Programmes for 2020 and 2021, as well as Annual Calendar of Events for 2020 and 2021. The Council also considered and adopted the Report of the Midterm RPC along with reviewed Work Programme and Calendar of Events for 2021.

- **Reports of the Sectoral Ministerial Meetings**

31. The Council also adopted the Reports and Declarations of Virtual Meeting of ECO Ministers of Transport (December 15, 2020), 8th ECO Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (March, 17, 2021), 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Economy and Finance Ministers (May 26, 2021), ECO Ministerial Meeting on Health (June, 2, 2021), 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting on Energy (June 24, 2021).

- **Annual Reports of ECO Specialized Agencies/Regional Institutions/Affiliated Bodies**

32. The Council took into account the Annual Reports presented by ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI), ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECOTDB), ECO Regional Center for Risk Management for Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM) and ECO Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology (ECO-RISCAM).

33. The Council recognized the importance of these ECO bodies and their activities to support the process of socioeconomic development in the region. The Council, therefore, appreciated and encouraged them to continue and enhance their work for shouldering the ECO in its efforts to meet the aims and objectives of the ECO.



## **Agenda Item No. 9**

### Administrative and Financial Matters of ECO Secretariat

- **ECO Secretariat's Budget for the Year 2022**

34. The Council considered and approved the ECO Secretariat's Budget for the Year 2022 prepared based on the recommendations and endorsement of the 259<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CPR.

- **Audit Report 2019 & 2020**

35. The Council considered and endorsed the Audit Report for the year 2019 & 2020, as recommended by 252<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the CPR.

36. The Council required the Secretariat to ensure the observance and implementation of the recommendations made in the Audit Report.

- **Appointments**

- Nomination against the post of Deputy Secretary General (Trade and Investment, Agriculture and Industry)

37. The Council approved the appointment of Mr. Mohsen Esperi (Iranian National) against the post of Deputy Secretary General (Trade & Investment and Agriculture & Industry) for a period of 3 years to be effective from the date of his assumption of responsibilities.

## **Agenda Item No.10**

### Preparation for the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit:

- **Draft Agenda of the Summit**

38. As recommended by the Senior Official Meeting (SOM) held on November 26, 2021, the Council endorsed the following draft agenda of the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit:

- 1) Welcoming Remarks by the President of Turkmenistan
- 2) Opening of the Event and:
  - Remarks by the Chairman of the 14<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit
  - Election of Chairman
  - Statement by the Chairman of the 15<sup>th</sup> Summit
  - Statement by the ECO Secretary General
- 3) Adoption of the Agenda
- 4) Statements by Heads of State/Government
- 5) Adoption of the Ashgabat Consensus for Action
- 6) ECO Awards Ceremony
- 7) Any other business
- 8) Date and Venue of the next Summit
- 9) Closing remarks by the Chairman and Vote of Thanks

- **Draft Ashgabat Consensus for Action**

39. Based on the recommendations of the SOM, the Council agreed with the text of the Ashgabat Consensus for Action and endorsed the document for adoption by the 15<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit.

- **ECO Awards 2021**

40. As recommended by the SOM, the Council approved the following winners for ECO Awards 2021:

No.	Names of Winners	Country	Field
1.	Prof. Ms. Ulduz Fayizi Gizi Hashimova	Republic of Azerbaijan	Science & Technology
2.	Dr. Mitra Rahanejat	Islamic Republic of Iran	Economics
3.	Mr. Orazak Ismagulov	Republic of Kazakhstan	History, Culture, Literature, & Fine Arts
4.	Ms. Mambetova Nazira Ismailovna	Kyrgyz Republic	History, Culture, Literature, & Fine Arts
5.	Prof. Dr. Robina Farooq	Islamic Republic of Pakistan	Agriculture and Environment
6.	Mr. Nizomov Jahongir Nizomovich	Republic of Tajikistan	Science & Technology
7.	Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ocal Oguz	Republic of Turkey	Education
8.	Mr. Yazklych Orazklychev	Turkmenistan	History, Culture, Literature, & Fine Arts
9.	Ms. Mastura Khalimova	Republic of Uzbekistan	Agriculture & Environment

### **Agenda Item No.11**

#### Treaty Events

41. The Council welcomed the signing of the MoU for institutionalizing the cooperative relationship signed between the ECO and UNESCAP during the COM.

### **Agenda Item No. 12**

#### Any other business

42. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

### **Agenda Item No. 13**

#### Date and Venue of the next Meeting

43. The Council appreciated and welcomed the offer of the Republic of Uzbekistan to organize the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers in Tashkent during 2022.

### **Agenda Item No. 14**

#### Adoption of Draft Report of the 25<sup>th</sup> COM Meeting

44. The Council unanimously adopted the Report of its meeting.

**Agenda Item No. 15**

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

45. The Meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, to excellently chairing the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers. The meeting also commended the effective and efficient chairmanship of Mr. Berdiniyaz Matiyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan during the SOM.

46. The Council further appreciated and thanked the Government of Turkmenistan for its receptivity and making necessary arrangements to facilitate the participants.

47. 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 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers.

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