

**Draft Report**  
**of the 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the**  
**Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)**  
**(ECI Headquarters, 24 August 2022)**

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 35<sup>th</sup> meeting at the ECI Headquarters on 24 August 2022. The meeting began under the chairpersonship of Mr. Mian Azmat Farooq, Representative of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to I.R. Iran. The Meeting was attended by the Chargé d'affaires of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Iran, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan, to Iran as well as a delegation of the ECO Cultural Institute. (List of Participants is enclosed as **Annex. I**).

**Agenda item 1**

**Adoption of the Agenda**

- The draft agenda of the meeting which had been circulated among Member States via Note No. ECI/524/370 dated 10 August 2022, was unanimously adopted as follows:
  1. Adoption of the Agenda,
  2. Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the previous ECI-CPR meeting,
  3. Statement by ECI President on the ECI activities,
  4. Consideration and adoption of "ECO Youth Award" modality,
  5. Budgetary issues:
    - Latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states
  6. Consideration of report of Cultural Donation in ECO Cultural Institute,
  7. Any other Business,
  8. Date and venue of the next meeting.

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**Agenda item 2**

**Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the previous ECI-CPR meeting**

- The draft report of the 34<sup>th</sup> ECI-CPR meeting which had been circulated among the Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/398 dated 29 August 2021 was adopted.

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### **Agenda item 3**

#### **Statement by ECI President**

H.E. Mr. Murodjon Buriboev, ECI President made the following statement:

***Mr. Chairman,  
Honorable Ambassadors and Representatives of the ECO Member States,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

*In my capacity as the new President of the ECO Cultural Institute, I would like to welcome all Your Excellencies to the 35th meeting of the ECI-CPR and take this opportunity to thank you for attendance in this meeting.*

*Excellencies,*

*Since the last ordinary meeting of ECI-CPR in August 2021 we have conducted a variety of activity as follows:*

*To pay tribute to important figures of the ECO region, ECI holds series of commemoration ceremonies, participated by scholar, researchers and authors from various ECO member states. In this regard, ECI held a diplomatic Poetry Night to pay homage to Hafez, the great Persian poet of the ECO region in which the members of diplomatic missions residing in Tehran read pieces of Hafez poetry in October 2021.*

*Also, the international conference "An Overview of Rumi's System of Thought" was organized in October 2021 by ECI and participated by the researchers and scholars from ECO member countries to mark Rumi and Shams Tabrizi Commemoration Day.*

*Besides, on the occasion of the 144th birth anniversary of Allama Iqbal, ECI held the international event "Iqbal-e Ishq" in November 2021 in partnership with the Embassy of Pakistan and the Sahar TV Channel.*

*Also, ECI in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Tehran held a webinar in December 2021 titled "Khana-e Del" to Mark 80th birth anniversary of Loiq Sherali, the prominent Tajik folk poet.*

*Furthermore, ECI organized a poetry night in June 2022 titled "Oriental Melody" for the Afghan diaspora residing in Iran. On the sidelines of the event, an exhibition of artworks and statues by the Afghan Master Ali khan Abdullahi.*

*In addition, ECI participated in the commemoration of the late Afghan poet, writer and cultural activist Mohammad Sarvar Rajae in the last year. Shah Mansur Shah Mirzo, Tajik author and Mahtab Sahel, Afghan poetess, both members of ECI staff delivered speeches at the event which was well-received by a considerable number of Persian-speaking poets and writers.*

*Besides, ECI took part in commemoration of the prominent Iranian contemporary poet, Hamid Sabzevari. On the occasion of the death anniversary of the great poet in June, a commemoration was held in his hometown Sabzevar and attended by a group of academicians and poets.*

*Also, ECI in cooperation with "Dang Kooban" Institute for Arts and Culture held a commemoration for Maestro Vahid Asadollahi, who is known as the father of "Naghara" musical instrument in Iran. During the event which was well received by the audience, his latest music album was unveiled in July 2022.*

*Besides, ECI President was one of the speakers at the inauguration of the Millennial Congress on Sheikh Ahmad Jam in which thoughts and works of the prominent Iranian mystic were discussed by scholars from various countries. The congress was held in July in Torbat-jaam.*

*Also, ECI participated in the International Congress of Noorallah Oman Samani, a great epic poet which was held in Shahr-e Kord in August 2022.*

*Furthermore, ECI marked International Day of Peace in September 2021 and held a ceremony attended by diplomats from Tajikistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Romania, Turkey, Philippines, Slovakia, Mexico and guests from ICOM Iran, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and a group of artists.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Nowruz is one of the most significant traditions of common cultural heritage in the ECO region and celebrating Nowruz rituals in the ECO countries dates back thousands of years. On the eve of the beginning of the new Hijri Shamsi (solar) century in March 2022, the diplomatic Nowruz Festival, was held in A'bgineh Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, ECO Secretary General, ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions in Tehran.*

*At the event, ECI exhibited a collection of handicrafts from ECO member countries as well as the Institute's publications.*

*Also, ECI and the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO jointly held a celebration of Nowruz in Tehran in which Nowruz special sweets and dishes from the ECO member states were exhibited.*

*Excellencies,*

*ECI had the honor to be visited by the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan during his trip to Tehran in June 2022 at the invitation of his Iranian counterpart.*

*The Azerbaijani Minister visited different sections of the Institute and praised the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute and its efforts to promote the common culture of the ECO region. ECI hopes the visit will accelerate the ratification of its Charter by the Republic of Azerbaijan.*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*Teaching and promotion of the languages of the Region is among the key objectives envisaged in the Charter of ECO Cultural Institute. To this end, ECI in cooperation with Saadi Foundation offered the first online Persian language course for diplomats residing in Iran in September 2021. It was a free course for the novice learners which was well-received by the members of the diplomatic corps including the ECO member states.*

*Also, ECI in partnership with Allameh Tabataba'i University offered an Uzbek language course in October 2021 for the first time in Iran.*

*Dear colleagues,*

*ECI avails any opportunity to promote the common culture of the ECO region. To this end, ECI set up two stalls in the charity bazaar of the Diplomatic Women Association for exhibiting handicrafts, food and sweets of the ECO region. The charity bazaar was opened in presence of the spouse of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the spouses of ambassadors residing in Tehran in June.*

*Also, ECI participated in the 11th Fajr International Clothing Festival held in July 2022 in Tehran where the Institute put on display traditional clothes of the ECO member countries.*

*To preserve and promote fine arts in the ECO Region, ECI organized an exhibition of calligraphy-painting works by Mr. Soleyman Miri, a talented young Iranian calligrapher in July.*

*Dear Colleagues,*

*ECI attaches great importance to participation in regional cultural events which are held across the ECO region. In this regard, ECI took part in the International cultural forum "Central Asia at the Crossroads of World Civilizations" which was held in September 2021 in the city of Khiva, Uzbekistan.*

*Excellencies,*

*As you are well aware, ECI always encourages the esteemed ECO member states to hold their national or cultural events in the ECI premises and use its facilities at no charge. In this regard, Pakistan Cultural Night and Food Festival was held at the initiative of the Pakistan Embassy at the ECO Cultural Institute in October 2021. The event featured Qawwali music performance by a widely acclaimed Pakistani group.*

*Also, we had the honor to host an event on "Kazakhstan's Achievements in 30 Years of Independence" in October 2021 and a ceremony which marked the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the Kyrgyzstan and Iran, held in May 2022. In addition, ECI hosted the Kyrgyz Film Week in its auditorium. Also, ECI hosted a similar event which marked the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.*

*Regarding publications of ECI, at the proposal of the Embassy of Uzbekistan, we published a special issue of our quarterly journal, ECO Heritage, on Khiva city tourist attractions. Also, we will publish a special issue to promote tourism in Shaki, Republic of Azerbaijan in the near future. The other esteemed ECO Member States may also propose to ECI to publish special issues of the journal on their top historic cultural cities or any other subject of their interest.*

*In addition, as promised in the last meeting of ECI-CPR, we published the first volume of a book on Allama Iqbal titled " Our Iqbal" which is a detailed bibliography in two volumes addressing all the books, papers and articles on Allama Iqbal published in Iran since 1928 until present. The author of the book is Ms. Dr. Dastranji, an Iranian scholar and university professor who had been studying in Pakistan several years.*

*Excellencies,*

*Today, as mentioned on the agenda, we will consider the "ECO Youth Award" modality. The modality has already been circulated among the esteemed embassies of the member states. I will present the highlights of the Award briefly.*

*The significant role of youth as a major driving force for the ECO countries development, has increased the importance of planning to maximize their optimal participation in cultural activities. The ECO Youth Award initiative has been proposed with the aim to discover young talents. Each member country may nominate talented youths between 18 to 30 years of age. Further details are provided in the modality. We hope that it receives the approval of this Council, so that we may proceed with the Award.*

*Excellencies,*

*With only 4 months left before the end of the year, no annual contribution has been received from the esteemed member states except for the Republic of Tajikistan. This has led to a difficult financial situation for ECI.*

*The esteemed member states are requested to kindly take necessary measures for acceleration in their payments. The details of the latest status of payments and arrears of the member states will be provided under the relevant agenda item.*

*Dear colleagues,*

*We hope that all the esteemed member states would cooperate with ECI more actively to organize the planned events and programs which had been endorsed by the Regional Planning Council. Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to you for taking part in this meeting.*

*Thank you.*

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#### **Agenda item 4**

Consideration and adoption of the "ECO Youth Award" modality:

ECI Executive Director briefed the meeting on the modality of the "ECO Youth Award" which was welcomed by the ECI member states. He noted that the Modality of the Award had been circulated among the member states and requested the members of the Council to kindly adopt it. Also, a motion graphics in Persian and English, prepared by the ECI, was displayed for introduction of the Award.

In addition, he spelled out how the Call for Entries of the Award would be available online in the common languages of the region and Submission Time would be within three months. It would be preferred to hold the awards ceremony in December. The ceremony may be held in person or virtual, (Subject to change due to Covid 19 restrictions).

In between, the Culture Ministries of the ten ECO member states would review the entries and convey their observations to the Award committee which would be established by the ECI. The committee would make the final decision and one winner from each ECO member state would be selected. Accordingly, each winner will be awarded USD 1,000. The laureates may travel to Iran and receive their awards in person.

ECI Executive Director declared that the amount of the award is modest but seems appropriate for the first round. Anyhow, the scientific institutions, private sectors, civil societies, and NGOs of the member states who are interested may contribute to the award.

Chair as the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan referred to the ECO Award program which is organized by the ECO Secretariat and pointed out some difficulties regarding nominations from the member states which came up during the implementation of the award.

Also, he made the following inquiries: whether the award ceremony would be held by the Institute for the first time or not.

Whether nominations are possible from the other ECO member states who are not full members to the ECI.

If the awards would be presented in person, expenses like boarding and lodging and so on should be taken into account. Therefore, ten thousand dollars would not be sufficient for the award program and the modality and required budget need to be revised and that a larger amount of money should be allocated for the award.

Whether each member state would be entitled to have only one nomination or more nomination are possible and the ECI will shortlist the nominees and select the final winner.

ECI Executive Director replied that ECI had studied the ECO Award, but it is not a special award for the youth.

He emphasized that this is a new opportunity for young individuals to be acquainted with other cultures as well as the ECO goals and objectives.

He further reminded that the award program had already been submitted to the last meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council and the fund earmarked for the award had received approval.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran supported the idea of the award which would be presented not only to the ECI member states but also all the ECO member states.

He proposed that the award modality would be shared with the relevant Ministries for youth affairs of the member states. The ECI may consult with the ECO Secretariat as well to benefit from their experience. Also, there could be a possibility that the ECO Secretariat may delegate the responsibility of a specific category of the ECO Award to the ECI. Subsequently, the modality may be reconsidered in the next meeting of the ECI-CPR.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan welcomed the idea of the award and voiced the complete support of his country. The Ambassador proposed that the award could be presented only to the full member states of the ECI in the first years. The award may be developed in the future and be offered to the other ECO member states who ratify the ECI's Charter. Hence, the number of nominees can be reduced and the amount of the prize may be increased to 2,000 or 2,500 USD.

He further referred to the issues concerning the ECO Award, and stressed that the selection process of the nominees should be reconsidered and best method be adopted.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan also supported the Award and emphasized on the selection process so that the most deserved nominees should be selected.

ECI Executive Director reasoned that the amount of award has been earmarked on the Institute's tight budget. However, as mentioned in the award modality, public institutions or private sector of the esteemed member states are welcome to extend their contributions.

He noted that consultations with various relevant organization had been made with respect to the youth award.

He discussed that the award provides an opportunity for the young talents for wider recognition.

Furthermore, he added that it would be a cultural gesture which is expected to create vibrancy among the youth of the ECO region.

With regards to the observation by the Republic of Tajikistan, he expressed that limiting the award only to the ECI member states would not result in intended outcomes. Therefore, ECI' activities, including the youth award, would involve all the ten ECO member states.

ECI Executive Director clarified that ECI would inform the relevant ministries of the ECO member states about the modality of the youth award.

After submission of entries, the relevant ministries would be invited to organize the specialized selection committee. Every member state may submit three nominations. Then, another committee would be formed involving the representatives of the embassies of the ECO member states in Tehran as well as the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would consider the proposed nominations and draw up a shortlist of winners, one from each member state.

Chair of the meeting noted that generally all representatives agree to the idea but the modality needs to be refined with the and after it is finalized, it should be submitted to the Culture and Youth Ministries.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that there should be a defined and clear criteria for selection of the winners. Also, selection must be conducted by competent, qualified professionals as juries, not a committee comprised of representatives of the member states.

He also proposed that the award program could be held biennially and one youth would be selected from the whole ECO region.

ECI Executive Director explained that the award is planned to be presented to ten youths from the ten ECO member states to assure that each country would be entitled to have one winner.

because the ECI does not intend to provoke inter-ECO-countries competition, considering the reality of the academic and cultural differences among the countries. He further clarified that the aim is to have positive discrimination.

Regarding the competency of the selection committee, he clarified that the relevant organizations of the member states submit three nominations at the initial stage. Anyhow, in case a member state does not submit nominations within the set deadline, then ECI in cooperation with its partner universities would select three persons based on the entries submitted personally by the youths of that country.

**The Council supported the ECO Youth Award but the modality of the award needs to be refined. ECI would circulate the refined modality among the embassies of the ECO member states to be forwarded to their respective ministries of culture/relevant authority for their views/recommendations. Subsequently, the ECI-CPR will decide on the ECO Youth Award.**

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## **Agenda item 5**

### Budgetary issues:

- Latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states

The ECI Accounts Officer briefed the meeting on the latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states.

He noted that although only 4 months left before the end of the year, the due annual contribution of no member states, excluding the Republic of Tajikistan, has been received. He further stressed that delayed payment of the annual contributions would hamper the implementation of ECI activities and requested the esteemed member states to expedite their payment.

According to him, over the last five years from 2018 to 2022, Afghanistan for two years and Iran for one year were in arrears. In addition, the annual contribution of Pakistan for the years 2018, 2021 and 2022 have not been received.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that the country's annual contribution for one year would be paid in a couple of months.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan clarified the outstanding arrears of the country relates to the years before 2014 and that his country has fully paid its due annual contribution since 2014 onward. He further proposed that the member state would be willing to increase the amount of its annual contribution by a specified percent providing that the Council agrees to write off the outstanding arrears of the country.

He noted that the member state had requested the ECI to provide the Embassy with the details of Tajikistan's outstanding arrears year by year but no information had been received yet. But the fact is that they have no information of the amount of money which needs to be paid due to the fact that the country has little activity in the ECI. He noted that it has been six months that they have been waiting to see how much their voluntary contribution would be.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran supported the proposal to write off the arrears of Tajikistan and expressed that the proposal could be considered positively to be submitted to the next meeting of ECI's Board of Trustees.

ECI President explained that the details of the arrears and due annual contributions of Tajikistan for some years were not available to the ECI. In this regard, ECI has communicated with the ECO Secretariat to seek relevant details and documents. Also, a self-explanatory Note Verbal containing



the details of the arrears of Tajikistan, based on available documents, would be conveyed to the esteemed Embassy. He assured that ECI will make every effort to complete the related details.

ECI Executive Director inquired about the remittance of annual contribution by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the year 2017 which had not been received by the ECI.

Taking into consideration that the remitted amount has been blocked in a Turkish bank, he proposed that ECI may make new efforts in this regard, seeking assistance from the Republic of Türkiye which is supposed to join ECI as its new member state

The Executive Director made a similar inquiry about annual contribution of Pakistan for the same year.

Chair, as the representative of Pakistan, clarified that there was no clear status of the concerned payment. However, the member state had endeavored to contact the bank and check the status of its remittance. However, due to some requirement of swift system as well as sanctions, the remittance got stuck. Anyway, the Embassy is following up the issue with the Pakistani concerned authorities.

Representative of the Republic of Afghanistan explained that since the bank account in Halk Bank of Türkiye belongs to ECO, the embassy wrote a Note Verbale on July 27, 2021, to the ECO Secretariat, to check whether the remittance had been received or not. However, no response has been received yet.

He clarified that the amount had been withdrawn from bank accounts of the Government of Afghanistan and is considered paid by the country. Anyway, Afghanistan is willing to cooperate with ECI to solve the problem.

Regarding the arrears of Afghanistan for the years 2021 and 2022, he noted that due to the recent developments in the Afghanistan, the Embassy had not been able to communicate with the concerned authorities. Therefore, delayed payment of Afghanistan's annual contribution to ECI would be expected.

ECI Executive Director requested the two member states to put in more efforts to find a solution for releasing their remittance.

## **Agenda item 6**

### Consideration of report of Cultural Donation in ECO Cultural Institute

ECI Executive Director briefed the Council on the issue and made the following explanation:

Taking into account that the ECO Cultural Institute have always been meeting the problem of untimely payment of due annual contributions by the member states, ECI plans to use "Other sources" as stipulated in Article-VII of its Charter and Article 10.2 of its Financial Regulations.

He further noted that during the three decades since the Institute's inception, funds obtained from "Other sources" have been used for better implementation of ECI's programs.

He added that ECI had received many requests from the embassies other than ECO member states as well as international organizations who are willing to donate to ECI for organizing their cultural events at ECI. He stressed that such events would improve visibility and public image of ECI and the donated funds would be used for maintenance of ECI's facilities and equipment.

He declared that the ECO member states may hold their events at ECI at no charge.

The Executive Director assured that the funds obtained from donations will be kept in a separate account.

Chair, as representative of Pakistan emphasized that the evaluation process of the requests and granting permission for using ECI's facilities should be conducted with clarity and the member states be informed about it. Also, relevant sensitivities and observations of the member states should be taken into consideration by the Institute.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed that ECI may provide the diplomatic missions with its facilities on an ad-hoc basis until its financial conditions would be back to normal situation. He also noted that ECI must provide the ECI-CPR with regular reports on the earnings and the spending of fund which would be available to the Institute through donations.

*The ECI-CPR authorized the Institute to offer its facilities to the diplomatic missions and receive their cultural donations. This shall be considered a temporary authorization until return to normal financial conditions.*

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**Agenda item 6**

Any other business

No matter raised under this agenda item.

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**Agenda item 7**

- Date and venue of the next meeting

ECI will inform the member states of the exact date and venue of the next ECI-CPR meeting through circular Note Verbale.

**Annex-I**

**The 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

**List of Participants**

**Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:**

- Abdul Qayum Soleimani, Chargé d'Affaires,
- Mr. Abdul Ghani Farahi, Second Secretary and in charge of ECO and Economic Affairs

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:**

- Dr. Seyed Jalaleddin Alavi Sabzevari, Director General, Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation
- Mr. Khavari, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Azarsa, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

**Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:**

- Mr. Mian Azmat Farooq, First Secretary

**Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:**

- H.E. Dr. Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador
- Mr. Bahrom Azimov, Second Secretary

**ECO Cultural Institute:**

- H.E. Mr. Murodjun Buriboev, President
- H.E. Dr. Esmaeil fard, Executive Director
- Ms. Mirbagheri, External Relations
- Mr. Sayed Javad Mirkazemian, Accounts Officer
- Mr. Shah Mansur Khojeov, Tajikistan's Desk Officer
- Ms. Mahtab Sahel, Afghanistan's Desk Officer
- Mr. Mehdi Omraninejad, Expert

**ECO Secretariat, Tehran:**

Mr. Amir Mohammad Javaheri, Translator