



**6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of
ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)**

21-22 March, 2015

Khujand – Republic of Tajikistan

Report

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Report

of the 6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees(BoT) of The ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)

(22 March 2015-Khujand, Republic of Tajikistan)

1. The 6th meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) was held on 22 March 2015 in Khujand, Republic of Tajikistan. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan. Delegations from the Member States including the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan attended the Meeting. The list of participants is placed at *Annex-1*.
2. The meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) was preceded by the Fifth High Level Expert Group Meeting (HLEG) on 21 March 2015 and was held under the chairmanship of Mr. Jahangir Sadirov, Director General for International Affairs in Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Agenda Item 1

Inauguration/Opening of the Meeting

3. In his Opening Statement, **His Excellency Mr. Taimur Shah Eshaqzai**, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in his capacity as the incumbent Chairman of Board of Trustees (BoT), expressed his gratitude to the government and people of the Republic of Tajikistan for hosting the meeting. He highlighted the importance of ECI in promoting cultural cooperation among the Member States. He also appreciated the quality of tremendous amount of work done by the Institute and its positive impact on advancing cultural objectives and cooperation in the region during the last few years.

Agenda Item 2

Election of the Chairman

4. **H.E. Mr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda, Honorable Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan**, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Meeting, as per the rules and regulations of the ECO and ECI. The Honorable Minister thanked the delegations upon his election and the confidence reposed in him. The newly elected Chairman also expressed his confidence for holding a successful BoT Meeting with the cooperation of delegations. **Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan** in his speech initially welcomed the participants to Tajikistan, the land of poetry and literature, and honored their

participation to Nowruz World Festival and congratulated Nowruz to all the participating delegations.

He alluded to strengthening and consolidating cultural and artistic ties between the countries as the main goal of the Institute and all Member States while emphasized on the commitments of the Member States in this respect. He viewed that disregarding culture by societies has been the underlying cause of extremism and violence and stressed on the necessity of strengthening and enhancing cultural relations as prerequisite for eradicating this dangerous phenomenon. Minister of Culture of Tajikistan went on to state that the support of and collaboration among international organizations such as international and regional Institutions in field of culture has always been underscored by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and the long-lasting membership of Tajikistan in ECO and ECI is the outcome of such a thinking. Hence, providing full support to the Institute and developing its activities are the main concerns of the Republic of Tajikistan. Copy of the statement delivered by the Minister is placed at *Annex-II*.

Agenda Item 3

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The agenda of the Meeting was adopted as under:

Draft Agenda

1. *Inauguration,*
2. *Election of the Chairman,*
3. *Inaugural Statement by the Chairman of the 6thBoT Meeting,*
4. *Adoption of the Agenda,*
5. *Statement by ECI President,*
6. *Statements by the Ministers/Heads of Delegation,*
7. *Statement by the Representative of ECO Secretary General,*
8. *Consideration of the Report of ECI President,*
9. *Review and Approval of ECO activities,*
10. *Financial and Budgetary Issues:*
 - *The ECI's Budget for 2014*
 - *The ECI's Budget for 2015*
 - *The ECI's Audit Reports for 2011-2013,*
 - *Increasing ECI Budget up to 25 percent*
11. *Any other business,*
12. *Date and Venue of the Next Meeting,*
13. *Adoption of Khujand Declaration,*
14. *Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the 6th Meeting of BoT, prepared by 5th HLEG,*
15. *Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting.*

Agenda Item 4

Appointment of Drafting Committee

6. The ECI Secretariat was requested by the Member States to prepare the final report of BoT while incorporating the observations/recommendations as adopted by the Sixth BoT Session.

Agenda Item 5

Statement by the president of ECI

7. President of the Institute, Mr. Iftikhar Hussein Arif in his statement highlighted the major activities and programs initiated and being implemented by the Institute during the recent period. He also presented a report on the policies, programs and activities as well as the major challenges currently being faced by the Institute. He specifically requested the Member States to extend all necessary support to the Institute for its activities and programs in the relevant areas. He requested the Member States to consider and adopt the recommendations contained in his report. A copy of his statement is placed at *Annex-III*.

Agenda Item 6

Statements by the Ministers/ Heads of the Delegations

8. The Chairman of the 6th BoT invited the heads of delegations to deliver their statements.
 - A. **H.E. Mr. Taimoor Shah Eshaqzai the Deputy Minister for Youth Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** in his speech referred to one of the goals of ECO as bringing peoples in the region closer together and *promoting* more solidarity among the Member States in the field of culture. While appreciating ECI's extensive activities throughout the past years and expressing thanks to ECI president and Secretariat for making arrangements to hold ECI Board of Trustees Meeting, he announced that the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will provide all support to the Secretariat and for the programs implemented.

H.E. Mr. Eshaqzai also called for further expansion of ECI programs outside its headquarters in Tehran in other Member Countries like Afghanistan and even in Non-Member countries to introduce the rich culture of the region.
 - B. **H.E. Mr. Hojatollah Ayoubi, Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Islamic Republic of Iran, for Cinematic Affairs**, pointed out that culture is not bound to borders. He elaborated on the rich common cultural heritage of ECO region as an asset for ECI and highlighted the fact that ECO region, compared to the European countries, is free from warmongering and

violence. Relying on such glorious background, ECO region more than Europe, can provide the ground for unity and consolidation.

He expressed hope that ECI would take big steps forward towards the creation of sympathy and unity among the Member States. He added that his country is of the view that ECI activities should not necessarily be concentrated in Iran but they should take place in other ECO Member States to encourage them to further expand their cultural cooperation in the region and to become ECI full member. He suggested that in view of ECI budgetary constraints, ECI embark on using the capacities of cultural artistic festivals in Member Countries such as the national and international festivals in Iran. In regard with the premise of ECI headquarters, he stated that Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is committed to provide ECI with an appropriate building for its activities and will do so. He also said that the institute's insistence to be located in the current building is not accepted by the Ministry of Culture. The current building of ECI headquarters with an area of over 3800 square meters has an amphitheater which actively hosts two programs each day. If such activities are believed to impede the functioning of the Institute, the Ministry of Culture will provide another building for ECI headquarters. A copy of the statement is placed at *Annex IV*.

- C. **H.E. Mr. Tariq Iqbal SOOMRO, Head of Delegation and Ambassador of Pakistan in Tajikistan** said in his statement: meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) marks an important milestone for the Organization as it would formally give effect to one of the core objectives of ECO in the field of Culture. He stated one of foremost priorities of ECI must be to launch appropriate programs of regional dimension to promote its activities at all levels and the Institute's goal must also be to identify challenges to be overcome at the national and regional level. He reaffirmed that in addition to the political support, it is imperative that the Member States extend adequate financial assistance to the Institute through mandatory as well as voluntary contributions so that the Institute could take practical steps in line with its mandate. In this regard, he urged the ratifying member States to make generous voluntary contributions to the Institute. Appreciating the offer made by the government of Iran to provide a new building to ECI, he proposed the issue of premises delegate to the concerned stakeholders to reach a decision in this regard. In line with the practice followed by the ECO Secretariat and its specialized agencies, he also proposed ECI and the concerned host authorities to initiate the necessary procedure for concluding a Host Country Agreement for this purpose. A copy of the statement is placed at *Annex-V*.

Agenda Item 7

Statement by Representative of ECO Secretariat

9. Mr. Jehanzeb Khan, Representative of ECO Secretariat conveyed the sincere regards of ECO Secretary General who could not participate in the BoT meeting for another necessary engagement. Mentioning ECI is one of the most important

ECO Specialized Agencies, expressed the confidence of ECO Secretariat that based on the initiatives has been taken during last years the Institute is able to promote further its scope of its activities in various field as well as culture, literature, poetry, art and recently sport in the future. Referring to the ECO reform process which is now under the consideration of the Organization, based on the recommendation of Eminent Person Group (EPG), he emphasized the role of the Special Agencies in this regard that has been raised by Member States in 25th RPC meeting early March 2015. Regarding the role of ECO Member States in the strengthening of ECI, he mentioned the importance of accession of non-ratifying states. In this regard Turkey in 25th RPC meeting briefed that internal process for its accession would be completed in the near future.

Agenda Item 8

Consideration of the Report of the President of ECI

10. The Board of Trustees appreciated and commended the comprehensive report presented by the President as an unprecedented, useful and helpful approach and tools towards better understanding of ECI policies, activities and challenges. Thus, the Board adopted the recommendations made in the Report and rendered its full support for their implementation. BoT also appreciated the activities made by the Institute since the last BoT meeting. The BoT commented that the Report by the President represents strategies, policies and activities of the Institute and other relevant issues of the ECI in a comprehensive manner.
11. The Board of Trustees while considering the report of the President, requested the ECI Secretariat to incorporate the following points in the final report:
 - With regard to the issue of the ECI premises, BoT meeting appreciated the support provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran and taking into account the recommendation of the 25th RPC meeting requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to favorably consider this issue. The meeting further requested ECI to finalize its deliberations with the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to solve this issue as soon as possible.
 - The meeting also asked the ECI Secretariat and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to consider initiating work on the host country agreement which can be signed by the two sides in the coming time period.

Agenda Item 9

Review and Approval of Strategies, Policies and Programs for the Years 2015-16

12. The Board of trustees appreciated the work of ECI-CPR and advised holding regular meetings of ECI-CPR for approval/consideration of policies and programs.
13. The Board appreciated the Institute for implementing the proposals of the previous RPC meetings during the recent years and emphasized on carrying out its activities under the general guidelines of RPC.

14. The BoT also took note of the decisions of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) regarding the ECI activities in its previous meetings. The Member States were also encouraged to implement the recommendations of the last RPC meeting and stressed on the importance of cooperation among the national cultural institutes.
15. The Board considered the Activity Reports of the Institute of the years 2011-2014 and adopted the work program for the year 2015 and 2016.
16. Delegation of Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its readiness for collaboration with ECI and Member States for holding workshops, seminars and festivals in the field of Cinema.

Agenda Item 10

Financial and Budgetary Issues

17. The ECI Budget for the year 2014 and its revised budget for 2015 have been adopted unanimously. BoT also adopted 10% increase in salaries of ECI staff for the years 2014 and 2015 and beyond.
18. The ECI Audit Report for 2013 also was adopted unanimously.
19. The Board considered with concern the severe financial problems of the Institute due to non-payment/delay of mandatory contributions by the member states. The BoT requested the concerned member states to pay their annual mandatory contributions along with arrears at the earliest.
20. With regard to the issue of budget increase in the annual mandatory contributions by the Member States, as proposed by ECI, the meeting requests the Member States to consider an increase of 15% of annual contributions starting first January 2016.
21. The Representative of Pakistan announced that his country will pay the remaining of its share for the year 2014 amounting to 110894\$ before 30 June 2015. He also added that due to the fact that the fiscal year of Pakistan begins by 1 July, therefore, Pakistan contribution for the year 2015 for an amount of 171500\$ will be paid after 1 July 2015.

Agenda Item 11

Any other Business

22. No other issue was raised by the participants.

Agenda Item 12

Date and Venue of the next BoT Meeting:

23. The meeting invited the Member States to volunteer for hosting the next BoT meeting and requested them to convey the response in this regard not later than the first quarter of 2016. The ECI Secretariat proposed that in the absence of any volunteer, the 7th BoT meeting will be held at the ECI Headquarters, Tehran.

Also, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed readiness to host the next meeting in the absence of any other volunteer.

Agenda Item 13

Adoption of the Khujand Declaration

24. The BoT commended and appreciated the ECI secretariat for preparing the draft Khujand Declaration in a comprehensive manner and adopted unanimously the Khujand Declaration containing BoT aspirations, decisions and recommendations.

Agenda Item 14

Adoption of the Report of the 6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees Prepared by HLEG

25. The meeting adopted unanimously its report which was prepared by HLEG meeting on 21 March 2015.

Agenda Item 15

Vote of Thanks and Closing of the Meeting

26. The 6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees was concluded with votes of thanks by the Heads of Delegations. The BoT expressed its profound gratitude to His Excellency Dr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda, Honorable Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Government and People of Tajikistan for their commendable contribution in successful organization of the Meeting, excellent arrangements and for their warm hospitality.

In the name of ALLAH, the Almighty

**Khujand Declaration
Cultural Cooperation among ECO Member States
Republic of Tajikistan, Khujand, March 22, 2015**

The 6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) was held in Dushanbe on 22 March 2015. Delegations from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Tajikistan participated in the meeting. The delegations of the ECO Cultural Institute as well as the ECO Secretariat also attended the meeting.

The Board of Trustees,

Expressing gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and in particular to H.E. Dr. Shamsidin Orombic Zoda, Honorable Minister of Information and Culture of Tajikistan for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations and the excellent arrangements made for the successful meeting;

Welcoming the nominations of Professor Iftikhar Husein Arrif, as the ECI President and, Ambassador, Dr. Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, as the Executive Director, and wishing them success in their new functions;

Stressing the importance of fortifying cultural cooperation and exchanges amongst the nations of the ECO region based on their historical, civilizational and cultural commonalities and, the contribution made by this region to the development of modern contemporary culture;

Emphasizing the importance of benefiting from the experience, expertise and financial assistance of relevant international and regional organizations;

Appreciating the voluntary contribution made by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for supporting the Institute's activities and programmes during the past two years;

Expressing concern over the financial problems being faced by the Institute affecting its functioning;

Appreciating the overall progress made by the Institute since its last Board of Trustees Meeting, as well as those initiatives and measures taken by the ECI Secretariat for improving ECI's effectiveness and efficiency.

Appreciates the Institute for successfully organizing a broad range of events in the fields of culture, literature, arts and sports during the last few years and for expanding its scope of activities by giving them a more regional character, and also, Reaffirms its support for all such future initiatives aimed at promoting greater cultural cooperation among the Member States of this region;

Takes note with appreciation of the recommendations pertaining to the Institute's strategies, policies and programmes, contained in the report of the ECI President;

Reiterates the recommendations made by the 25th meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC), held on 1-5 March 2015; and also, requests the Institute to develop further proposals and take necessary measures aimed at realizing the goals and objectives enshrined in ECI Charter;

Appreciates the Institute for successfully organizing the first ECO Chess Tournament which was attended by players from all ten ECO Member States as well as the first ECO Poetry Night and encourages the ECO Member States to organize similar events in 2015 in collaboration with the Institute;

Takes note of the recommendations made by the Institute on long-term projects based on two decades experience of the Institute, including, among those pertaining to, online ECI Cultural News Network and ECO international TV channel and also, requests the member states to make all efforts to realize these projects;

Reiterates the importance of developing institutional linkages among the national libraries in the ECO region and appreciates the efforts made by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey for hosting previous meetings of the Heads of National Libraries of the ECO region and encourages the ECO Member States to host the fourth meeting of the Heads of National Libraries of the ECO region;

Requests the ECO member states that have not yet ratified the Charter of the Institute to do so at the earliest and also requests the Institute to actively follow-up the matter for expanding its membership;

Takes note with appreciation of the nomination of national focal points to the Institute by its Member States and encourages other ECO member states to enhance coordination with the Institute for future activities and programmes in the field of culture;

Appreciates the Institute for holding the meetings of its Executive Committee including meetings with cultural representatives and experts of the ECO Member States based in Tehran on regular basis; also appreciates the Institute for holding consultations with eminent scholars and literati from across the region and requests the ECI President to take necessary measures for disseminating the ideas expressed in these meetings for public benefit;

Appreciates the establishment of the Institute's library which is now accessible online and encourages the Member States to extend all necessary support to the library, specifically through providing books and publications;

Appreciates the Tehran Municipality for the construction of the ECO Park and reiterating the recommendation of the 25th Meeting of the Regional Planning Council, encourages the ECO Member States to furnish proposals to showcase their cultural and national heritage at the ECO Park;

Takes note of the financial problems being faced by the Institute and, requests the concerned Member States to pay their annual mandatory contributions to the Institute as per the agreed scale of assessment currently being implemented and also encourages them to generously support the activities and programmes of the Institute through voluntary contributions;

Takes note of the enhanced activities of the Institute and, urges the member states to consider increasing their existing annual contributions by 15% in order to support the Institute in realizing the broad objectives mentioned in its Charter and enable ECI to fulfill its mandate and annual programs and also, requests the ECI to communicate the correspondent new shares to the members for the year 2016;

Also requests the member states to review the existing scale of assessment during the eighth meeting of the Board of Trustees;

Invites the member states to collaborate with and benefit from the capacities and capabilities of the Institute while organizing their important national cultural events and to benefit from its experience and expertise in projecting the regional cultural heritage at the international level;

Reiterates the recommendations made by the Regional Planning Council in its meetings and also, requests the Institute to establish cooperative relationships with the relevant international and regional organizations in the cultural field, including UNESCO and ISESCO;

Appreciates the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for generously supporting the Institute, specifically for providing the premises for the Institute and making extra budgetary contributions for supporting its programmes and activities; and reiterating the recommendations of the 24th and 25th Meetings of the Regional Planning Council, requests the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to favorably consider the issue of the Institute's premises.

**Report of
the President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)
Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif,
to the 6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Khujand, Tajikistan, 21 March 2015**

Executive Summary:

After two years of my tenure as the first non-Iranian president of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), now I have the honor to submit my first comprehensive report on the strategies, policies and programs of the ECO Cultural Institute over the past two years and the planned programs and objectives for the upcoming year to the Board of Trustees, comprised of the honorable Ministers of culture of the Member States. At the conclusion of the report, I have presented a number of proposals to expedite and facilitate the achievement of the significant objectives as stipulated in the Charter of the Institute. It seems that such a report by the President of the Institute has not been customary in the past. Nevertheless, I hope this initiative and document, as concise as it is, may provide the honorable Ministers with a full view of the past, present and future of the Institute to have more accurate assessment on the impact of the Institute and extend their insightful practical recommendations for promotion of the ECI's role and Impact.

The ECO Cultural Institute, despite all ups and downs in addition to financial and logistical constraints during the past two years, has conducted a wide variety of activities of greater importance in terms of quantity and quality, comparable to all has been done in the past years.

The Background

ECO Cultural Institute is the successor to the Cultural Institute of Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), with headquarters in Tehran, which was established by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in June 1966 to realize the objectives set forth in Article II of the Treaty of Izmir.

The RCD was terminated in 1983 and the Economic Cooperation Organization came into existence in 1985. The members of the Organization were expanded from three to ten countries in 1992 when Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan joined it. The Charter of the ECO Cultural Institute, as the successor to the Cultural Institute of RCD, was endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of eight ECO Member States in 1995 in Islamabad and began its operation in Tehran. Currently, only four countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan and Pakistan are members of the ECO Cultural Institute.

The key objectives, stipulated in the ECI's Charter:

- Strengthening cultural commonalities as well as spiritual and fraternal ties binding the people of the region;
- Promoting public awareness of the common cultural heritage;
- Fostering and developing cooperation in all areas in the region;
- Deep understanding and closer ties between the people of the region.

ECI's missions stipulated in the ECI's Charter:

- To promote partnerships between the public, media, academics, artists, etc.;
- To enhance research and cooperation in the field of common cultural heritage;
- to publish books, periodicals and quarterlies;
- To teach the local languages of the Region;
- To coordinate exchange programs in the fields of culture, arts and sports;
- To collaborate with universities and cultural centers;
- To organize events and exhibitions in the fields of arts, culture, literature and films about the social life of the people of the region;
- ECO Awards in literature and art;
- To establish network connection among cultural centers, libraries and museums of the region;
- To promote cooperation pertaining to the sports;
- To strengthen ties between the news agencies.

Strategies and Policies:

Over the past two years, the Institute, has formulated and implemented a major part of the following strategies and policies under the auspices of its Council of Permanent Representatives (ECI-CPR) and will endeavor to realize all of them:

- **To expand the number of the ECI's Member States**
 - To take advantage of the opportunities to encourage signatory Member States in various ways to become full members of the Institute;
 - To make arrangements for the participation of all ten ECO Member States in the Institute's programs and publications without incurring expenses associated with non-member states to the member states of the Institute;
 - To cooperate with non-member states' embassies in Tehran;
 - To endeavor to establish coordination offices/national focal points in the Ministries of Culture of the Member and non-member states.
- **To promote the regional characteristic of the Institute**
 - To strengthen relations with the Member States and embassies and to organize their cultural events in ECI Headquarters;
 - To activate the Executive Committee of the Institute;
 - To develop multilateral programs and activities;
 - To take appropriate measures to include all 10 ECO Member Countries in ECI programs;
 - To organize programs in the Member states.

- **To enhance regional and international relations of the Institute**

- To develop relations with regional bodies such as UNESCO and ISESCO in cooperation with the ECO Secretariat;
- To introduce the common cultural heritage as well as ECO objectives and missions to the people of the region and beyond;
- To organize commemorations of cultural figures at the ECI's headquarters and in the Member States;
- To hold festivals, exhibitions and sporting events at the regional level;
- To adopt a thematic approach for the Institute's publications, including the ECO Heritage, the quarterly published by the Institute.

- **Effectiveness, Efficiency and Performance of the organization**

- To reduce the staff;
- To recruit efficient local and auxiliary staff;
- To reform organizational methods and approaches;
- To manage financial resources in a more efficient manner.

Key challenges:

The Institute is facing the following key challenges in conducting the missions stipulated in the Charter:

- **Limited membership:**

The nations of the ECO region share an interconnected rich common cultural and historical heritage.

As envisaged in the Treaty of Izmir, expansion and promotion of the cultural cooperation is considered a pivotal objective and program for ECO. However, addressing the various aspects of this matter as the six member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) are not member of the Institute yet, has created legal, financial and relational obstacles.

Expansion of the membership will help further increase the capacity of the ECO Cultural Institute for the promotion of cultural relations in the region and for achieving goals set out in the Treaty of Izmir. Therefore, it is essential that the four signatory members and the remaining two countries also join the ECO Cultural Institute at earliest possible.

It is noteworthy that the ECO Science Foundation and the ECO Educational Institute, in Pakistan and Turkey respectively, despite being young, have more members and receive greater amount of annual contributions. Considering the historical position of cultural institute in RCD and ECO as well as the key and universal role of culture and its importance in the ECO region, makes it essential that the ECO Cultural Institute enjoys at least equal treatment like the two newly established institutions.

- **Late Payments of Annual Contributions**

Late payments have created uncertainty in terms of available resources which has made impossible long and medium term planning. Arrears are also accumulated attaining the sum of more than 600,000\$ up to the end of 2014 and more than one million dollars up to the end of 2015. It is noteworthy that the total amount of assessed annual contributions of members is about 450,000 dollars. Consequently, it is always trapped in an uncertain budgetary situation.

This happens when the annual contribution of the three founding member states of ECO, i.e. Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Foundation is about 250,000 dollars.

The Institute has been dependent on the Trust Fund and voluntary contributions both of them offered by Iran to relief budget deficit during the first 17 years of ECI existence. Reduction of the voluntary contributions during the last two years has limited this possibility of budgetary rectification. However, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a voluntary contribution of about 200,000 dollars during my office in 2013-2014.

After five years, the Institute is now requesting the Member States to increase their share for only 25 percent which is still much less than members' shares in the two other ECI sister specialized agencies.

A summary report on Institutes' activities in the last two years

Despite the two above-mentioned challenges, the problems relating to the Institute's premises and the lack of serious cooperation on the part of the cultural institutions in the region, ECI has shown a good performance through remarkable achievements. The complete list of all activities from the fifth BoT up to now, especially during the last two years, has been submitted in a separate document. A summary is also provided on organizational, financial and program aspects as follows:

A) Organizational matters:

Management: on the basis of a decision taken by ECO Council of Ministers (ECO-CoM) as well as the alphabetical order, the ECI presidency has been assumed by Mr. Iftikhar Husein Arif from Pakistan since April 2013. Simultaneously, the Member States appointed Ambassador Mr. Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari as Executive Director. This new management team has adopted a proactive approach for the full implementation of the Charter and holds constant dialogue and consultations with the Member States as the main ECI stakeholders.

Staff: The members of the staff in every organization, particularly international organizations, are strategic assets. According to the ECI Charter, the Institute's staff consists of the two main groups of official and Auxiliary. The official staff is officially nominated by the Member States and the auxiliary and local staff is recruited on temporary basis according to the needs of the institute. The Institute hopes that the staff designated by the Member States will have the required knowledge of cultural affairs in the region and other capabilities mentioned in the staff regulations, including English proficiency.

Subject to the approval of ECI president, the Institute may recruit local staff as it may consider necessary. Given the relatively high number of the local staff, the Institute, has downsized the auxiliary/local staff three times by 55 % over the past two years. This reduction in staff number has not decreased the activities of the Institute; instead, it has increased the effectiveness and efficiency.

Building: According to the report of the 5th meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT), the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in a worthwhile action, generously granted a luxury building in one of the best locations in Tehran to ECI Headquarters in 2011. Accordingly, from the voluntary contributions of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to the revitalization of the gallery, a grand amphitheater was also constructed to serve as a venue for ECI's art and cultural programs. Unfortunately, since April 2013 ECI's

access to the amphitheater, gallery and a part of the office space (70% of total space) has been unofficially limited which has instead been allocated to an Iranian cultural non-governmental organization (NGO). This restriction has brought about problems in legal status (diplomatic immunity), security and protection, planning the ceremonies, activities, daily management and operations including imposing financial charges on the Institute. In the 25th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held in 2015, all the Member States called for assistance from the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard. ECI has expressed its concerns over this case on many occasions and in different fora including in the ECI-CPR meetings comprising the esteemed ambassadors of the Member States in Tehran and the representative of the Islamic republic of Iran`s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Logistics facilities and equipment: over the period under review, very adequate office equipment, furniture, even consumable items and other supplies needed were purchased on the budget ECI allocated for the purpose and from the voluntary contributions of the host government. As a result, fortunately, over the past two years, the Institute required no substantial budgetary allocation for the provision of the equipment and even a part of consumable items.

Car: over the past two years, to reduce costs, an old car belonging to the Institute was sold and a luxury car which has been purchased from the voluntary contributions of Islamic Republic of Iran three years ago, has been used this year. Thus, at the moment, the Institute has taken the possession of four cars.

B) Financial issues:

Limited financial resources have been the most important and complicated challenges the institute has encountered during the past two years.

Contributions of Member States: the total contribution of Member States to ECI budget is determined \$ 457,330 which has remained unchanged from 2009 to 2015.

At the same time, ECI faced a high amount of arrears of the Member States. The payments and debits of the Member States are outlined in the attached table. As it is indicated, during the time, Tajikistan`s total debit amounted to \$387,513, it was \$84,748 for Afghanistan, \$22,087 for Iran, and \$110,900 for Pakistan by the end of 2014. During this period, with the consent of the Member States due to the flood event in Pakistan, the country paid only \$120,000 for four consecutive years from 2009 to 2012, the share of Pakistan being 171,500\$.

The Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran stated vide a note in March 2015 that in order to implement economic austerity policies, the government of Pakistan has proposed a decline in its share from \$171,500 to \$90,000 for 2014, 2015 and the years after. This is while the year 2014 and the first three months of year 2015 have already passed.

Pakistan`s proposal was discussed in detail in the 25th meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC). ECO Secretariat officially stated that only BoT shall have the authority to make decisions on issues like the shares of the Member States and that the Member States have no authority to reduce their shares unilaterally. Therefore, it was agreed in RPC meeting that the issue should be discussed in BoT. Considering the emergency of the decisions adopted in BoT on the issue as well as the financial commitments met by ECI in the year 2014, it is evident that Pakistan`s proposal may not include the year 2014 and 2015. The country has only paid \$60,000 of its share for the year 2014.

Reduction of Pakistan`s share at a rate close to 50%, as one of the two ECI`s founders, will virtually paralyze the Institute`s functioning. Whereas, the institute after years, has currently demanded a 25% increase of the shares. The Institute hopes that Member States will have at

least an equal view to ECI in comparison with ECO Science Foundation and ECO Educational Institute which have been newly established in Pakistan and Turkey respectively.

The budget for the year 2015: The ECI annual budget proposed for the year 2015 is amounted to 517,600\$ that shows an estimated amount of \$60,000 deficit to the total shares. To avoid increasing the shares of Member States, the Institute has offered to provide this amount from the General Reserved Fund. I am pleased to announce that the Institute`s program budget during the past two years has increased from nearly \$18,000 to \$43,000; and relatively the same amount of expenditures have been anticipated to be of program nature. Furthermore, ECI has allotted around \$100,000 from \$200,000 amount of Iran`s voluntary contribution for the year 2014 to its cultural programs and activities.

Lack of timely payment of contributions by Member States and the arrears has created major obstacle in the way of ECI medium term planning for cultural activities. For the implementation of its proposed activities in 2015 and 2016, the Institute will require at least 25% increase on its annual budget. The Institute ensures that its program budget increase will exceed the aforementioned amount.

Voluntary contributions: local staff salaries, current expenditures and maintenance costs, particularly the charges of some activities and cultural programs have been provided from the voluntary contributions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past years. The costs of reconstructions of the building, furniture, the equipment of galley and the construction of amphitheater at ECI Headquarters in the years 2011 and 2012, the local staff salaries for the past 17 years and partly for the years 2013 and 2014 have been provided from the voluntary contributions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The last contribution of the government was an amount of \$200,000 equal to 5,000,000,000 Iranian Rials which was made during my tenure in early 2014.

The Institute hopes to benefit from the voluntary contributions of other Member States. The Institute is committed to use voluntary contributions of Member States to carry out cultural activities preferably in the donor country itself.

The Institute for sustainable management of its financial affairs, through reformation, saving costs and enhancing its efficiency, has managed to minimize its reliance on voluntary contributions as much as possible (up to 80%). In the same vain, the current expenditures have decreased considerably by 75% while the programs have been executed at optimum level with regard to quality and quantity in the past two years comparing to the past while the regional nature of the programs has also been enhanced considerably.

C) Programs:

To meet the expectations of the Member States comprising the decisions of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and Regional Planning Council (RPC), in particular, ECI has planned to inform all Member States of the activities carried out by the Institute in a timely manner.

Diversification: the Institute has aimed to diversify the its cultural activities as much as possible in the areas of poetry, literature, art, sports, etc. In the same vein, the Institute has put forth new initiatives in the field of sports, an instance of which is the first ECO Chess Cup which was held in 2014 in Tehran with the presence of chess masters from all 10 ECO countries.

Regional nature: Due to the regional nature of the Institute, ECI is expected by the Member States to focus, more than ever, on activities with regional nature. In this regard, during the past two years, the calligraphy festival of Bismillah, the 1st ECO Poetry Night, the 1st ECO Sport Cup, venerating Allama Iqbal in Pakistan, and issuing a *stamp* to commemorate the *20th anniversary of the ECO* and tens of other various programs are but some of the activities

carried out by the Institute with a regional character. Moreover, the suspended recommendation of BoT and RPC regarding the construction of ECO Park in Tehran was officially realized last year through an opening ceremony with the presence of the Foreign Ministers of ECO Countries and the mayor of Tehran on the sidelines of a meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (CoM) in cooperation with the Municipality of Tehran. The park is located in the best touristic site in Tehran with a suitable public space to venue the art and cultural activities of Member States.

In regard with publications, in addition to publishing books with a focus on poetry and literature in the region, architecture and figures, ECI has aimed to release ECO Heritage Quarterly in a new thematic makeup with articles devoted to topics related to all Member States. Thus, the two previous issues were released on the titles "Culture and Civilization" and "Poetry and Literature" with articles about all 10 Member States and the next issues are to be released on architecture, music, handicrafts, and folklore in the region.

In case of availability of funds, ECI will have the sufficient capacity and capability to run large-scale regional activities or with massive effectiveness in the region.

Activities at ECI Headquarters: some of ECI activities are carried out at the Headquarters of the Institute. These programs aim to introduce ECI and cultural heritage of the Member States to the elites, diplomats and the public in the host country. The Institute's priority in this regard is the regional nature of art and cultural activities. Fruitful activities have been carried out including meetings with cultural figures, holding poetry nights with the participation of the poets from ECO Member Countries residing in Iran, historical cities cultural weeks, honoring the cultural figures of the region, one-day cultural seminars, art and cultural exhibitions in the fields of carpet, painting, photography, handicrafts, music and Qawwali performances, meetings of the Executive Committee and the like. These activities are mostly implemented on the financial contributions made by private and governmental organizations in Iran.

Recommendations:

The work program of the Institute for the next two years is provided in a separate document. In line with the full implementation of this program, the followings are deemed worthy of consideration:

1. Cultural Ministers of Member States urge their counterparts to accede to ECI as full members as early as possible;
2. Encouraging cultural institutes of Member Countries in collaboration with ECI for cultural programs in their respective countries;
3. The introduction of an official to ECI by all ECO members as a national reference / focal point to cooperate with the Institute to expedite the implementation of cultural activities and projects;
4. Facilitating and accelerating cooperation with international organizations such as UNESCO and ISESCO by ECO Secretariat in Tehran;
5. Financial and logistical contributions to the Institute for the creation of a network and cooperation among cultural institutes in the region including national libraries, literary associations, agencies, and institutions about women, youth and cultural heritage and others;
6. A 25% increase of the annual budget by prioritizing the expansion of ECI's activities in Member States;
7. Solving the problem regarding the building of ECI Headquarters through the relevant authorities of the host country;
8. Introducing competent and capable cultural experts to complement and reinforce the required official staff of the Institute;

9. Appreciating the meeting of the Heads of ECO National Libraries in previous years which was hosted by Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkey while encouraging other Member States for hosting the next meeting.

List of Participants

The 6th Meeting of ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)

(March 22, 2015 Khujand, Tajikistan)

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

H. E. Mr. Taimur Shah Eshaqzai, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information,

The Islamic Republic of Iran:

1. H.E. Mr Hojatollah AUUOBI, Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance,
2. Mr. Seyed Mustafa ABTAHI, Director General, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance,
3. Mr. Shahruz FALAHAT PISHEH, Director General for International Affairs, Organization for Culture and Islamic relations
4. 3- Mr. Moslem CHENARI, ECO Senior Expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

H.E. MR. Tariq Iqbal SOOMRO, Ambassador in Dushanbe,

The Republic of Tajikistan:

1. H.E. Mr. Shamsidin ORUMBEEKZODA, Minister of Culture,
2. Mr. Jahongir, SADIROV, Director General for International Affairs, Ministry of Culture,

ECO Cultural Institute (ECI):

1. H.E. Mr. Iftikhar Hussein ARIF, President,
2. H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Reza HAJI KARIM JABBARI, Executive Director,
3. Mr. Seyed Majid GHAFELEH BASHI, External Relations,
4. Mr. Shahmansoor KHAJEV, Cultural Expert,

ECO Secretariat:

Mr. Jehanzeb KHAN, Assistant Director, International Relations.

سخنرانی جناب آقای شمس الدین آرومبیک زاده، وزیر فرهنگ جمهوری تاجیکستان
در مراسم افتتاح جلسه ششم وزرای فرهنگ مؤسسه فرهنگی اکو در شهر خجند
۲۲ مارس سال ۲۰۱۵

مهمانان و دوستان عزیز! هیئت‌ها و نماینده‌های محترم کشورهای عضو مؤسسه فرهنگی اکو!

ابتدا شما را به سرزمین شعر و ادب - تاجیکستان عزیز خیرمقدم می‌گویم و همه شما را به فرا رسیدن نوروز عالم افروز صمیمانه تبریک و شادباش می‌نمایم. بگذار امسال و همه سال برایتان سال پر از شادی و سرور باشد و خانه‌اتان از فرح و نشاط لبریز باشد.

برگزاری ششمین جلسه وزرای فرهنگ مؤسسه فرهنگی اکو در ایام نوروز بسی رمزی است، چون نوروز این جشن شادمانی زمین و آسمان در همه کشورهای عضو این مؤسسه با شکوه و شهامت خاص تجلیل می‌گردد و این گواه آن است، که ما چه اندازه از مشترکات فرهنگی، تاریخی و گذشته درخشان برخورداریم.

هدف مؤسسه فرهنگی و کشورهای عضو آن - افغانستان، جمهوری اسلامی ایران، پاکستان و تاجیکستان نیز تقویت و تحکیم همین روابط فرهنگی و هنری است.

تاجیکستان نیز مانند هر عضو دیگر این مؤسسه، در همین راستا گام‌های جدی بر می‌دارد و همواره تلاش نموده‌است در پیوند ملت‌های منطقه و رشد همکاری‌های سازنده فرهنگی نقش مؤثر و مفید انجام دهد.

سرور دولت ما جناب عالی محترم امام‌علی رحمان نیز در سخنرانی و پیام‌های خود همیشه بر همکاری‌های سودمند، بویژه در سازمان‌های بین‌المللی تاکید نموده‌اند. ما از فعالیت‌های درخشان مؤسسه فرهنگی اکو در طول ۲۳ سال پیوستن کشورمان به این مؤسسه بانفوذ قناعت‌مندیم و خواستار باز هم توسعه و گسترش یافتن این همکاری‌ها در سطح منطقه ای و بین‌المللی هستیم. کشور ما در سال جاری تصمیم دارد چندین برنامه مفصل فرهنگی، از جمله ۷۰۰ سالگی میرسید علی همدانی، شاعر و متفکر برجسته عالم شرق، ۳۰۰۰ سالگی حصار شادمان و غیره را در سطح وسیع و گسترده برگزار نماید و از حالا از کشورهای عضو دعوت به عمل می‌آرم در این زمینه همکاری عمیق را با کشور ما داشته باشند. زیرا برای ما ثابت شده‌است، که ارزش و اهمیت چنین برنامه‌های ماندگار در گرو همکاری و مشارکت همه جانبه کشورهای همفکر و هم فرهنگ می‌باشد.

به قول شاعر:

یک گل مقصود در این بوستان،

چیده نشد بی مدد دوستان!

از این رو، با استفاده از این فرصت مساعد و مغتنم از اعضای محترم مؤسسه فرهنگی اکو خواهش می‌کنم در این سمت اگر پیشنهاد و نظر تازه‌ای دارند، در امر پررونق برگزار شدن چنین برنامه‌ها به طور کتبی به ما اعلام نمایند.

در روزگار ما بیش از هر زمان دیگر ثابت شده‌است، که محض پیشرفت هر جامعه به سطح فرهنگی آن مربوط است و تنها فرهنگ است، که موجب رواج و رونق هر جامعه می‌گردد. تاریخ نیز به ما آموخته‌است، که بیشتر خشونت و درگیری‌ها و افزایش افراط‌گری و جریان‌های ناسالم محض نتیجه بی‌توجهی و نادیده گرفتن ارزش‌های فرهنگی بوده‌است. با توجه به این نقطه ضروری است، که ما بار دیگر جهت ارتقای سطح دانش و فرهنگ مردمان منطقه دست بر دست یکدیگر دهیم و پیش راه هر گونه خشونت و افراط را از طریق گسترش فرهنگ دیرینه سال و جاویدانه شرق بگیریم.

دوستان محترم!

تاجیکستان از هر گونه اقدام سازنده و سازگار، که به پیشرفت جامعه‌ها مساعدت نماید، استقبال می‌کند و هم اکنون که ریاست هئیت امنای موسسه فرهنگی اکو بر عهده کشور ما واگذار شد، مایه افتخار و شادمانی ماست و از نام خود به عنوان وزیر فرهنگ تاجیکستان قول می‌دهم، که هر تلاش و ابتکار را در راستای این هدف مقدس به خرج دهیم.

بار دیگر از شرکت شما، عزیزان اظهار تشکر می‌نمایم و امیدوارم روزهای اقامت در کشور ما و بازدید از مراسم‌های نوروزی و منظره‌های زیبای آن نهایت استفاده را ببرید.

تشکر!

In the Name of ALLAH, the Almighty

**Statement by
Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif
President of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)
The 6th Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECI (BoT)
22 March, 2015, Khujand**

Excellency Mr. Chairman,

H.E. Dr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan

**Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives of ECI Member States,
Ladies & Gentlemen,**

It is a distinct honor for me to participate, in this meeting as president of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI). I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, in particular, to the Ministry of Culture for making excellent arrangements for the meeting and extending their traditional warm hospitality. I hope that today we would be able to achieve our envisaged goals and objectives.

Excellencies,

In pursuance of these objectives, the ECO Cultural Institute is making its humble efforts to further the cooperation among the member states in areas including literature, arts, culture, poetry and sports. It gives me great pride in mentioning that ECI now represents one of the most important and experienced Specialized Agency of the ECO system promoting cooperation in this important area.

Over the past few years, ECI has aimed to realize its objectives and goals outlined in the Treaty of Izmir and ECI Charter by organizing a variety of cultural activities in the Member States. The valuable cultural and artistic projects and activities carried out so far have had significant

impact on the enhancement of cultural relations among the peoples of the region particularly scholars, artists and intellectuals.

In the fields of poetry and literature, a number of important literary programs have been held with the participation of prominent poets and literary figures of the region, including: the first ECO Poetry Night, ECO Winter Poetry Night, Ashura Poetry Night and others.

Among other activities of the Institute, the ECI has held cultural seminars and events for developing interaction among the scholars and researchers in ECO region. Exhibitions of photography, paintings, calligraphy and handicrafts were also held with the participation of the member states. Events like Mahfele-e Sama, Qawwali performance, conferences on Mowlana Jallal-eddin Balkhi and Allama Muhammad Iqbal were also held successfully. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, specifically H.E. Pervaiz Rasheed, the esteemed Minister for extending necessary support to ECI for holding the Iqbal Day in Lahore in 2014.

In an attempt to diversify its programs, the Institute has pursued new initiatives in other fields including sports, which had been repeatedly addressed in Regional Planning Council meetings. An instance of such initiatives is the first ECO Chess Cup which was held in Tehran in collaboration with the Chess Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The event was held with the participation of chess masters from all ten ECO countries and was acknowledged at international level as well.

The Institute has also produced publications with a focus on regional civilization, literature, architecture, music and handicrafts. To this end, the two previous issues of ECO Heritage Quarterly were respectively dedicated to culture and civilization, poetry and literature, and the next is to be released on architecture. Additionally, with the cooperation of the scholars from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan, the Institute published three books on literature during the last two years which unveiled at the Tehran International Book Fair. "The Architecture of ECO Member States", "The Afghan Figures", "biography of Alama Iqbal translated in to Persian" and, "anthology of Iranian contemporary poets english translation" are the other books that will soon be published by ECI.

In order to promote public awareness about the regional culture and heritage, the ECI published a unified stamp on the occasion of the two decades of expanded cooperation in ECO region in collaboration with post offices of Iran and Pakistan. The ECO Park in Tehran was also inaugurated with the help of Tehran municipality.

The 25th RPC meeting held on 1-5 March 2015 appreciated the activities of the ECI and encouraged the Institute to enhance its effectiveness in other areas as well.

A detailed report on ECI activities during previous years is provided to the member states as well.

Excellencies,

Despite all these achievements, the ECI now faces a number of daunting challenges ahead of it. The financial problems being faced by the ECI have greatly hampered its programmes and activities. In order to further enhance and diversify the Institute's activities, the political and financial support of all the member states is crucial. I take this opportunity to request the member states to pay their annual mandatory contribution at the earliest. I also encourage the remaining member states to ratify the ECI Charter and support its activities.

Excellencies

I would like to conclude my remarks expressing my sincere gratitude towards the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its assistance in the arrangement of ECI's previous year programs as well as the allocation of two of voluntary contributions (amounting USD 200,000). We are also confident that the Government of Iran would favourably consider the issue of the ECI premises as recommended by the 25th RPC meeting.

In the end, I would like to again thank the government of the Republic of Tajikistan, especially the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan and the honorable Minister, Dr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda for the warm hospitality extended to the delegations and offering full support for the meeting.

I thank you very much.

باسمه تعالی

سخنرانی نمایندگان دولت جمهوری اسلامی ایران در هیأت امنای موسسه فرهنگی اکو
فروردین ۱۳۹۴ در شهر خجند

عالیجنابان، آقای رئیس، آقای وزیر نمایندگان محترم کشورهای عضو؛

پیش از هرچیز فرارسیدن نوروز را به شما تبریک می گویم و سالی سرشار از موفقیت و شادی برایتان آرزو می کنم. از میهمان نوازی دولت تاجیکستان و توجه و پذیرایی گرم و صمیمانه آقای وزیر و همکاران محترمشان بسیار سپاسگزارم. از اینکه برگزاری اجلاس هیأت امنای موسسه فرهنگی اکو همراه شده است با برگزاری جشن باشکوه نوروز در کشور تاجیکستان بسیار خرسندیم. برای همه ما افتخار بزرگی است که نوروز را با مردم فرهنگ دوست تاجیکستان جشن گرفته ایم.

آقای رئیس بنده حامل سلام گرم و صمیمانه جناب آقای جنتی وزیر محترم فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی کشورمان می باشم. ایشان به دلیل سفر مهم دیگری که از مدتها پیش برنامه ریزی شده بود امکان حضور در این نشست را پیدا نکرد. سلام ویژه و سپاسشان را تقدیم می کنم به دولت و ملت تاجیکستان و به ویژه وزیر فرهیخته فرهنگ این کشور.

موسسه فرهنگی اکو موسسه ای است که ریشه در تاریخ دارد. این موسسه ریشه در اتحاد بزرگ فرهنگی کشورهای نوروزی دارد. طلایه داران این وحدت و یکی بودن، قرنهای پیش مرزهای فرهنگی ما را به خوبی تعیین کرده اند. نظامی گنجوی در گنجه، مولانا در قونیه، اقبال لاهوری در پاکستان، مختوم قلی در ترکمنستان، و فارابی در فاراب و پیرهرات و سنایی در هرات و غزنی فردوسی و حافظ و سعدی و... در ایران بزرگ مرزداران سرزمین خورشیدند. موسسه فرهنگی اکو با چنین پشتوانه ای رسالت سنگینی را بر عهده دارد. ما برخلاف اروپایی ها که جنگهای جهانی اول و دوم و جنگهای صد ساله و سی ساله و دهها جنگ و کشتار را در تاریخ خود دارند، تاریخی مآلما از اتحاد و یکدلی و صمیمیت و دوستی را پشت سر داریم. اما آنها با چنین سابقه تاریک و ظلمانی اینک با تشکل اتحادیه های فرهنگی و سیاسی و اقتصادی و نظامی در حال یکی شدن هستند.

آقای رئیس بنده از تلاشهای آقای افتخار عارف که از چهره های فرهنگی پاکستان هستند تشکر می کنم. و همانگونه که بارها در جلسات مختلف به ایشان اعلام نموده ام برای هر نوع همکاری برای موفقیت ایشان دریغ نداریم. جمهوری اسلامی ایران به عنوان کشور میزبان با دقت مسائل موسسه فرهنگی اکو را رصد می کند و برای موفقیت آن تلاش می کند.

برای موفقیت هرچه بیشتر توصیه اکید می کنیم که از ظرفیت نوروز استفاده شود. برنامه ریزی های با شکوه برای نوروز با ابتکار موسسه می تواند باعث ارتباط هرچه بهتر هنرمندان این کشورها شود. استفاده از زبان هنر یکی از بهترین راهها برای تقویت و توسعه موسسه فرهنگی اکو می باشد.

موسسه فرهنگی اکو سالهاست که تنها چهار عضو دارد. اقدامات خوبی برای متقاعد کردن دیگر کشورها برای عضویت در موسسه انجام شده بود که لازم است پی گیری شود. دولت ترکیه در سال ۱۳۹۱ طی مکاتباتی برای عضویت اعلام آمادگی کرده بود. افزوده شدن ترکیه به موسسه می تواند کمک شایانی برای توسعه فعالیتهای فرهنگی موسسه باشد. کشور قرقیزستان گامهای خوبی برای پیوستن به این اتحادیه برداشته بود و رئیس محترم جمهوری ترکمنستان هم در ملاقات با رئیس وقت موسسه این آمادگی را اعلام کرده بود. بنابراین افزودن اعضای جدید اگر چه دشوار ولی ناممکن نیست.

همچنین پیشنهاد می کنم چون سالهای گذشته از ظرفیت جشنواره های ملی و بین المللی کشورهای عضو برای موسسه فرهنگی اکو بهره برداری شود. در ایران چندین جشنواره بزرگ برگزار می شود. در گذشته در بیشتر این جشنواره ها موسسه فرهنگی اکو با دهها هنرمند منطقه و با استفاده از بودجه و امکانات جشنواره شرکت می نمود. غیبت دو سال گذشته در جشنواره سینمایی، تئاتر و تجسمی ایران کاملا مشهود است. همچنین در کشورهای عضو از جمله تاجیکستان جشنواره هایی مانند دیدار در سینما و جشنواره های مهمی در موسیقی برگزار می شود که جای خالی موسسه فرهنگی اکو در آنها احساس می شود.

در سالهای گذشته بنای برخی فعالیتهای فرهنگی گذاشته شد که توصیه می کنم حتما پی گیری شود. برخی از این فعالیتهای را تنها برای یادآوری متذکر می شوم.

بر اساس مصوبه هیات امنای کشورهای عضو باید دفاتری را برای هماهنگی بین کشوری تاسیس می نمودند. به همین دلیل دفتر موسسه در افغانستان و تاجیکستان تاسیس و دفاتر بسیار فعال بودند. متأسفانه این دفاترها تعطیل و در دو سال گذشته فعالیت ندارند.

در سه سال پیش اجلاس بسیار مهم وزاری جوانان ده کشور عضو بوسیله موسسه فرهنگی اکو تاسیس و نخستین اجلاس با حضور وزار و عالیترین مقامات و با حضور معاون اول رئیس جمهور وقت و دیدار با رئیس جمهور در ایران تشکیل و قرار بود اجلاس بعدی در پاکستان تشکیل شود. برگزاری این اجلاس هم لازم است پی گیری جدی شود.

دبیرخانه دایمی نمایشگاه صنایع دستی در شهر بجنورد در سال ۱۳۹۰ تاسیس و نمایشگاه باشکوهی در این شهر با حضور وزرا ، دبیرکل و شرکت ده کشور عضو اکو و دو کشور عراق و گرجستان به عنوان میهمان و استقبال گسترده برگزار شد. با توجه به اینکه مقرر شده بود هر دو سال این نمایشگاه برگزار شود امیدوارم این موضوع پی گیری شود.

نمایشگاه بزرگ پکو که سه بار در مشهد برگزار و مورد استقبال همه کشورهای عضو قرار می گرفت پیشنهاد می کنم حتما ادامه یابد. این نمایشگاه در مشهد برگزار می شد و فرصت خوبی برای تبادل اندیشه و همکاری های سازنده در عرصه چاپ و نشر بود. استقبال بخش خصوصی از این نمایشگاه هزینه ای را متوجه موسسه فرهنگی اکو نمی کرد. تا کنون سه بار این نمایشگاه برگزار شده است و امیدواریم در آینده نزدیک شاهد از سرگیری فعالیت پکو باشیم.

در پایان یادآوری دو نکته را ضروری می دانم. نخست اینکه برخلاف تمام دوره های گذشته ارتباط تشکیلاتی وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی به عنوان اصلی ترین وزارتخانه مربوط به موسسه فرهنگی اکو با این موسسه به کلی قطع شده است. از بدو تاسیس تا کنون ریاست موسسه را وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی تعیین می کرد. همچنین علاوه بر پست

معاون اجرایی که در اختیار پاکستان بود پست معاون فرهنگی هم در اختیار یکی از چهره های فرهنگی مورد قبول وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی بود. اما اکنون که به اصرار دولت پاکستان ریاست دوره ای است و معاون اجرایی از سوی وزارت امور خارجه تعیین می شود، هیچ نماینده ای از سوی وزارت فرهنگ جمهوری اسلامی ایران در این موسسه حضور ندارد و ارتباط وزارتخانه اصلی ایران با این موسسه به کلی قطع شده است.

دوم آنکه بارها از سوی ریاست موسسه فرهنگی اگو نسبت به محل موسسه ابراز نگرانی شده و همجواری موسسه با آمفی تئاتر مورد اعتراض واقع شده است. یادآوری می کنم که دولت ایران به عنوان میزبان موظف است محل متناسب با حجم فعالیتها و پرسنل در اختیار موسسه قرار دهد. محل کنونی یکی از ساختمانهای مهم فرهنگی وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی است. فعالیتهای فرهنگی تالار غیر قابل تعطیل و مجموعه ساختمان با ۳۸۰۰ متر مربع و متراژ بسیار بالای بنا برای موسسه ای با این حجم فعالیت و شمار اندک نیرو به هیچ وجه سازگاری ندارد. دولت جمهوری اسلامی ایران آمادگی دارد بهره برداری ساختمان مناسب دیگری را در اختیار موسسه قرار دهد و وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی نهایت همکاری را برای این منظور خواهد نمود. این موضوع مسئله ای دو جانبه است و طرح آن در اجلاسهای مختلف خلاف رویه های متداول می باشد.

در پایان یک بار دیگر از میزبانی شایسته دولت جمهوری تاجیکستان به ویژه وزیر محترم فرهنگ این کشور نهایت سپاس را دارم.

**6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of the ECO Cultural Institute,
(Khujand – 22-23 March, 2015)**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. TARIQ IQBAL SOOMRO,
AMBASSADOR OF PAKISTAN**

**His Excellency, Dr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda,
Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan
Excellencies, Representatives of the Member States,
Distinguished Delegates**

I congratulate H.E. Dr. Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda for assuming Chairmanship of the meeting. I would like to express my profound thanks to the Ministry of Culture for affording us an excellent venue with remarkable arrangements as well as extending traditional warm hospitality.

This meeting of the Board of Trustees marks an important milestone for the Organization as it would formally give effect to one of the core objectives of ECO in the field of Culture.

Excellencies

The cultural diversity is a manifestation of the world civilization and ECO region has a rich cultural heritage and diversity, particularly in the field of arts and craft. The difference in culture and traditions of various regions has resulted in a wide range of arts and crafts that reflect the indigenous skills and cultural environment. ECO Cultural Institute is well aware of the enormous potential of creative industry.

Excellencies

With the establishment of ECO Cultural Institute, the Organization has certainly crossed an extraordinary milestone. Nevertheless, our journey to realize our agenda in practical and measurable terms has just begun. In the months and years to come, our collective efforts must be geared to make it a dynamic and successful entity. Towards that end, on its part, the Institute

would be expected to promote highest standards of educational excellence for the benefit of the region and beyond. One of its foremost priorities must be to launch appropriate programmes of regional dimension to promote its activities at all levels. The Institute must focus on establishing lasting linkages among the educational institutions of the region, identify and follow the latest trends and developments in the field of education and provide guidance to the member States for the application of new techniques as well as promote exchange programmes and visits of scholars, academicians, teachers and students. The Institute's goal must also be to identify challenges to be overcome at the national and regional level to promote quality education. In short, it would be required to work out a strategic roadmap setting specific goals and benchmarks to realize the goals envisaged in the Charter.

Excellencies

In the coming months and years, we must pledge our continued support to the ECO Cultural Institute to enable it flourish as a success story. In order for our efforts to yield desired results, it is imperative to strengthen and harmonize our national policies aligning national priorities with regional goals. On this front too, the ECO Cultural Institute would be expected to play a proactive role. In addition to the political support, it is imperative that the Member States extend adequate financial assistance to the Institute through mandatory as well as voluntary contributions so that the Institute could take practical steps in line with its mandate. In this regard, I would urge the ratifying member States to make generous voluntary contributions to the Institute which shall be utilized to initiate regional projects for realization of its aims and objectives.

Excellencies

At today's and yesterday's sessions, issue of the premises of ECI was raised. I would like to take this opportunity to appreciate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for supporting the Institute over the past many years, specifically by providing the premises and extra budgetary contributions for its programmes and activities. We also appreciate the offer made by the delegation of Iran to provide a new building to ECI. However, we would like to delegate this issue to the concerned stakeholders to reach a decision in this regard. Moreover, in line with the practice followed by the ECO Secretariat and its specialized agencies, we encourage the ECI and the concerned host authorities to initiate the necessary procedure for concluding a Host Country Agreement for this purpose.

Excellencies

I express my sincere thanks, once again, to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan especially the Ministry of Culture for their keen interest and commitment to support ECO Cultural Institute. I thank the Heads of Delegations/Representatives of the Member States for being part of this historic event.

Thank You.
