

Draft Report
of the 13th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(ECI Headquarters, 6th October, 2013)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 13th meeting at the ECO Headquarters on 6th October 2013, under the Chairmanship of the representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan as well as delegation of the ECO Cultural Institute. (List of Participants is enclosed as Annex. I).

Agenda item 1

Adoption of the Agenda

The annotated draft agenda of the Meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/796 dated 1st October 2013, was adopted unanimously.

Agenda item 2

Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Report of the Previous ECI-CPR Meeting

The draft report of the previous ECI-CPR meeting was adopted unanimously. The Council also adopted the Audit Report of the year 2012 together with ECI comments.

Agenda item 3

Report by ECI president on the ECI Activities

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to distinguished Ambassador of Tajikistan for his efforts to realize and organize the 6th meeting of the Board of Trustees on 22 to 23 October 2013 in Dushanbe.

It would be appreciated if he would kindly communicate to the ECI Secretariat as soon as possible the arrangements made for the meeting and specially, the issue the initiation of the honorable minister of culture of Tajikistan for his counterparts in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

On the documents,

We prepared the load of documents we need for Dushanbe meeting, It would be appreciated if you would send them as soon as possible to your delegations for their consideration and making them able making their comments during the Dushanbe Meeting. In addition to these documents, we, of course, will have two more documents namely Dushanbe Ministerial Declaration and Dushanbe BoT Report which will be prepared in the course of meeting in Dushanbe.

On the financial situation,

We continue to be gravely concerned in this regard. Last week and because of financial constraints, we unfortunately dismissed 6 more members of the staff. With this, the number of staff we reduced since my arrival attains the figure of 9 staff members.

As to our budget, we have resources for less than 4 month of the Institute expenditures. Furthermore, there is three month that we are totally out of Rial Money.

We hope that members be able to pay their arrears and their 2013 share before Dushanbe meeting.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Last week, I had a very constructive and encouraging meeting with Mr. Janati, Minister of Culture. During this meeting we talked about all mutually interested issues. Mr. Janati assured me that Iran supports by all means ECI activities. He promised that the extra budgetary contribution of Iran will reach ECI very soon. He also confirmed his participation in Dushanbe meeting. On the ECI Premises, he promised that he will send one of his competent, neutral and trustworthy colleagues to study the issue and report him back and that based on that report, he will make his decision on this particular matter.

Agenda item 4

Budgetary matters:

- Current financial situation in ECI

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that an amount of 5 billion Iranian Rials, equivalent to 200 thousand US dollars will be soon available to the ECI which is part of extra budgetary contribution by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

ECI President extended his thanks to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for this generous voluntary contribution and for pursuing the Institute's issues with relevant authorities.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan raised a number of questions and comments and requested explanations and clarifications on outstanding arrears of the Member States, General Reserve Fund, emoluments of the staff, annual savings, staff strength, voluntary contributions, and official budget of the last three years, savings, and practice on expenditures under budget items.

Executive Director ECI referring to and reminding the deliberations in the last two ECI-CPR meetings, relevant articles of ECI staff and financial regulations, Audit reports, and the pertinent table in which the arrears of the member states up to 31 December 2013 have been indicated, presented a comprehensive picture of financial status of the ECI, staff strength, savings of the past years, status of the official budget in 2013, voluntary contributions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the last 3 to 4 years, the status of General Reserve Fund, the draft budget for the year 2014, and other relevant issues and concluded administrative and budgetary issues are exactly in conformity with and according to the ECI rules and regulations and there is absolutely no diversion from them.

He added that the deficit of the last three years was recovered by 325,000 dollars from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the trust fund. He again clarified that if the Institute receives all arrears and pays all these debts to the Iranian Ministry, the Institute will have around 500,000 dollars at the end of 2013 as general reserve fund.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan noted that the ECI is not a charity organization. It should be clarified that the mandate of the Institute is to promote culture not to support people.

Executive Director of ECI stressed that ECI charter and financial regulations request the President to do all efforts possible to generate funds from other possible resources. Voluntary contribution is one of the main sources not only for ECI but also for any other international and regional organization.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran clarified that ECI has used the trust fund money to remedy its budgetary deficit. Regarding the extra budgetary contribution of Iran, he clarified that it is not fair to undermine the contributions of the host government to the Institute in the last 17 years. He reminded that extra budgetary is not mandatory. He also proposed to ECI to bring a concrete proposal to the ministerial session in Dushanbe and get authorization from it to increase the annual contribution or to use the reserve fund money.

Executive Director of ECI welcomed this proposal and stated that the Institute's concrete proposal to the next BoT meeting would be to increase the annual budget of the Institute by 20 percent, while much of it will go to program budget.

Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan expressed his gratitude for ECI activities and hoped his countries arrears will be paid in the near future. He further voiced his support for the proposal made by the representative of Iran. He declared that the extra budgetary contribution by Iran should not be undermined and should not be called a charity fund.

Representative of Iran explained that there are two contributions by the government of Iran, one is in Rial and the other is in dollar which is a grant available to the ECI in form of the trust fund which is 325,000 dollars to use when there is a deficit. It has nothing to do with the annual share or the extra budgetary contribution.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan asserted that if there is any deficit and a member state pays extra budgetary contribution, it cannot be merged with the regular budget. He emphasized that in his opinion, it is of no legal value if it is merged and considered as saving.

Executive Director of ECI explained that the official budget of the Institute has never been merged with the voluntary contributions. As we have repeatedly explained, there is a separate account for each kind of contribution.

He stressed that the Institute cannot always depend on the trust fund and the voluntary contribution. Therefore, we are trying to see all expenditures, including emoluments of staff in the context of annual official budget in the future.

Representative of Pakistan voiced his strong dissatisfaction with the function of the Institute over the past 17 years.

Representative of Iran welcomed the proposal of the Institute for increasing the program budget. Regarding the allocation of funds for the annual budget, he proposed two methods. One is to earmark the same budget as 2013 and in addition to that to authorize to the Institute to spend an extra amount of 90,000 dollars from savings, the other is to approve an appropriation of 500,000 dollars and it would be divided into the annual contributions of the member states.

Executive Director of ECI expressed the Institute's full support for both proposals, particularly the second proposal made by Iran's representative if it is accepted by the member states. He concluded that according to the proposal, the changes in annual contributions will follow the inflation rate and the expenditures of the Institute.

President of ECI proposed that there should be some organizations in the member states as the ECI focal point to support and coordinate organization of ECI programs there. The management of the ECO can have no impact in the region without the contribution of member countries. He referred to the poetry night was recently organized by the ECI, and explained that unfortunately no member states, except the host country, financially contributed to the function. He declared that the Institute intends to organize impactful cultural events in all ECI member states. He assured that all the activities of the Institute will be informed to the member states.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan stated that the ECI is a large scale organization with around 25 staff while its sole function is the coordination. There are cultural

attachés in the embassies of the member states. If coordination is required, cultural attaché can do that in a more professional way. He averred that unfortunately we haven't witnessed anything culturally tangible in Pakistan for the past 17 years. He emphasized that since such an organization has no any impact, so we don't need it.

Executive Director of ECI declared that this matter is about the philosophy of the existence and establishment of the Institute which should be referred to the heads of states of the member countries who decided to establish the Institute 17 years ago. This is not fair to say that during the past 17 years, the Institute has left no impact or did not organize any activity in Pakistan. Records indicate that many events and activities have been organized over the past 17 years in member states.

Representative of Iran stated that there is conceptual difference between the activities of a cultural attaché and the ECI. The cultural attaché coordinates the matters between two countries in a bilateral context only, but regional organizations like ECI coordinates cultural matters between all the ECI member states at the regional level and these two different concepts. If the representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan considers the Institute not useful then he can refer the matter to the higher authorities for making appropriate decision.

Agenda item 5

Preparation for the next BoT meeting:

- Consideration of Proposed Draft Agenda

No matter was raised under this agenda item. The proposed draft agenda was adopted unanimously.

- Confirmation of participation

President of ECI informed the meeting that the Honorable Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Jannati has already confirmed his participation in the upcoming BoT meeting. The Honorable Minister of Culture and Information of the Republic of Tajikistan will be certainly present at the meeting as the host authority. He requested the confirmation of the participation from the two other member states, i.e. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: assured that the confirmation of the participation of his Minister will soon be informed by the Ministry of Culture and Information.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: requested the representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to specify the terms and conditions of hospitality and the number of the delegates to accompany the Ministers.

In response, Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan stated that his Minister is awaiting the confirmation of the proposed date by the ECI-CPR and then the formal invitations will be circulated to the Ministers. He requested the ECI to convey the confirmation of the proposed date of the upcoming BoT meeting vide a formal note to the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan. Then the terms and conditions of hospitality and the number of the delegates will be informed to the member states.

Executive Director of ECI expressed his sincere gratitude to distinguished representative of the Republic of Tajikistan and declared that in the ECI's view, the proposed date for the forthcoming BoT meeting, 22-23 October, 2013, is confirmed. The composition and the level of the participating delegations from the member states will be circulated as soon as received

from Member States. He requested the representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to convey the matter to the concerned authorities to circulate the formal invitations to the Ministers.

Representative of Iran requested the representative of Tajikistan to examine the possibility of inviting the ECI non-member states, yet the ECO member states, to the forthcoming BoT as the observers as a means to encourage them to join ECI.

Representative of Tajikistan: welcomed the idea floated by the representative of Iran. He declared that he would convey the proposal to the host authorities in Tajikistan.

Regarding the proposal made by the representative of Iran, representative of ECI noted that there had been representatives of the non-member states as observers in all previous BoT meetings.

Executive Director of ECI proposed that the two ECO member states, i.e. Kazakhstan and Turkey will be invited to participate in the upcoming BoT meeting. He explained that as far as the ECI is informed, the accession of Turkey is in process. Also he referred to Kazakhstan as a significant ECO member state where will be hosting the next meeting of the Heads of ECO National Libraries.

Agenda item 6

Any other business

No matter was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda item 7

Date and venue of the next meeting

The council decided to convene its next meeting on Sunday 1 December 2013 at the ECI Secretariat.

The 13th Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Asadullah Amiri, Cultural Councillor

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- Dr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi, Director, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Mr. AliReza Ghanavi, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed, Counsellor

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- Mr. Ekramoldin Nematov, Deputy Ambassador

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif, President
- H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, Executive Director
- Mr. Seyed Majid Ghafelebashi, External Relations
- Mr. Hossein Ali Samadi, Financial Officer