

Draft Report
of the 15th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(ECI Headquarters, 24th April, 2014)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 15th meeting at the ECO Headquarters on 24th April, 2014 under the Chairmanship of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan as well as delegations of the ECO Secretariat and ECO Cultural Institute. (List of Participants is enclosed as *Annex. I*).

Agenda Item No.1

Adoption of the Agenda:

- Draft agenda of the Meeting was circulated to the Member States vide No. ECI/524/914 dated 14 April 2013.
- The President of ECI stating the Institute have discussed the issue of its premises with the authorities of Ministry of foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and they have assured that they will sort it out; therefore he proposed this issue remove from the Agenda of this meeting.
- The Council adopted the agenda of the meeting unanimously as follows:
 1. *Adoption of the Agenda,*
 2. *Adoption of Draft Report of the 14th Meeting of ECI-CPR,*
 3. *Report by ECI President on ECI's situation and activities,*
 4. *Budgetary matters:*
 - *Annual Contributions and arrears of Member States,*
 - *Voluntary Contributions*
 - *ECI's draft Budget for 2014,*
 5. *Administrative Matters:*
 - *Staff Recruitment,*
 6. *6. Any other Business,*
 7. *7. Date and venue of the next meeting*

Agenda Item No. 2

Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Reports of the 14th ECI-CPR:

- The Draft Report of the 14th ECI-CPR meeting which was circulated vide Note No. ECI/524/914 dated 21st November 2013 was adopted by the council.

Agenda Item No. 3

Report by the President of ECI on ECI's situation and activities:

- Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif, the president of ECI at the outset congratulated the assuming of Ambassador Alikhani, the new head of ECO Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Narzichan Zoirov, Charge d' affaire of Republic of Tajikistan and Mr. Rahbin new Cultural Attaché of Afghanistan in Tehran and welcomed their participation in the meeting.
- The President of ECI later briefed the meeting on current situation and activities of the Institute as follows:

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

First of all, according to the official calendar of Iran, as the host country, I wish you all, a happy new year. I would also like to thank you for your valuable participation in and contribution to this important meeting. Allow me just to make a few points and suggestions regarding the various items on our Agenda as well as other businesses.

1. *Regarding the budget, I would like to thank Afghanistan for the payment of its share of the year 2013. We have just been informed by the accounting department of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the rest of the share of 2013 is ready in cash and we can touch it just on next Saturday. I would also like to thank Pakistan and Tajikistan for the payment of a part of their share for the year 2013. Again, I would like to express my gratitude to Iran for its generous voluntary contribution of an amount of 5 billion Iranian Rials, equivalent of more than US\$200,000 in local official exchange rate.*

However, as you are all aware, our financial situation continues to be critical. It would be appreciated if you could take necessary appropriate measures to convince your respective governments to pay the current year's share as well as arrears as soon as possible.

Since we have already started the second quarter of the year and final approval of the budget is still pending the approval of the government of Pakistan, we have a lot of problems for the application of the budget. As I explained in our previous meeting, we are not asking for increasing members' share as compared to the previous years. Therefore, logically there should not be any particular concern on the part of delegations to approve the budget as proposed. On the other hand, based on the existing procedure, I suppose that the permanent representatives have the authority to approve the budget without having a need to consult their respective governments on

this particular issue, especially because we are not asking for increasing contributions.

2. *As to the ECI staff members, we continue to reduce as much as possible the number of auxiliary and local personnel in the context of reducing current expenditures and in favor of program budget. In this context, I would like to raise once again the case of Dr. Zaidi, a Pakistani national, member of the staff whose situation is still unclear. According to the Staff regulations, officials are those who have been nominated by the member states and in that case, their emoluments will be payable from the official budget. Since he has not been nominated officially by Pakistani authorities yet, therefore the Institute should consider him as a local staff. However, we continue to pay his salary from official budget with an amount higher than all other members of local staff and provide him with some advantages of official staff. It would be appreciated if the distinguished representative of Pakistan would kindly take necessary measures urgently to clarify and stabilize his situation. I take this opportunity to encourage; once again, all esteemed member countries to reconsider their nominations in order to not only assist and strengthen the capacities of ECI secretariat but also to better serve their own countries' cultural objectives through more qualified personnel of ECI.*
3. *On other business, we are waiting our friends from Tajikistan to determine a date for convening the BoT meeting since we have certain important issues which should be examined and adopted by BoT. If, for any reason, Tajikistan does not wish to organize this meeting in near future, then as an alternative, this could be done here in ECI headquarters with cooperation of Iranian Ministry of Culture.*

I thank you very much.

Agenda Item No. 4

Budgetary Matters:

- Annual Contributions and Arrears of Member States,

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed that the contribution for two recent years (2012& 2013) has been paid and hopefully the arrears for the previous years will be settled soon.

- Representative of Republic of Tajikistan also stated that the Embassy has followed up the payment of outstanding arrears, rest of the annual contribution for the year 2013 and the contribution for the year 2014.

-President of ECI stated that despite ECI has been informed that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has already dispatched remaining part of its annual contribution for the year 2013; the Institute has not received it yet.

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan requested the status of outstanding arrears of the member states. Executive Director of ECI gave a comprehensive explanation to the Council.

- Voluntary Contributions:

- President of ECI appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for its voluntary contribution which is an amount of 5 billion Rials (about US\$ 200,000) and assured that the voluntary contribution of Iran will be spent on ECI's programs. He further declared that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been providing the Institute with a great voluntary contribution.

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran commented on Voluntary Contribution that the official budget of ECI is inadequate for activities of the Institute, as an ECO regional and cultural body, and encouraged the other Member states in this regard.

- Executive Director of ECI stated that the program budget of the Institute is too limited to undertake large activities. He clarified, although the Institute, as stipulated in its Charter, is a coordinating and not funding agency, the Institute has successfully mobilized financial support from some Iranian public organizations and ,due to lack of enough resources, made efforts to convert its programs to the smaller activities to be implemented.

- ECI's Draft Budget for 2014,

- Executive Director of ECI further briefed the council on the advantages and specifications of the Draft Budget for 2014 which was discussed in details in previous ECI-CPR meeting. Responding to enquiry of Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on consents of the countries which is still awaited, Executive Director of ECI explained that two member states have adopted the budget proposed by ECI on previous ECI-CPR meeting and official consent of Afghanistan received later. And now the consent of Pakistan is still waiting.

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan announced that the news is very positive and the Embassy is following up the issue. As in the meantime, the function of the Institute cannot be stopped; there is some provisional procedure under which the budget can be utilized as being approved. So if in the period, the secretariat can think of using or adopting the same procedure, I think it will solve the problem to some extent.

Agenda Item No.5

Administrative Matters (Staff Recruitment),

- President of ECI, referring to his speech, raised the case of Dr. Sikandar Abbas Zaidi, a Pakistani member of ECI staff, saying that his situation is still unclear. He explained that according to the rules of procedure of ECI, those members of staff who have been nominated by their esteemed government, their emolument will be paid from official budget of ECI. Since he has not been nominated by Pakistani authorities yet, the Institute has to consider him as a local staff. The Institute, however, continues to pay him from official budget in dollar. President of ECI requested the Representative of

the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to kindly take the necessary measures to clarify and stabilize his situation. He also explained that there are desks of all ECI member states in the Institute and those individual that represent these desks, should be nominated by their distinguished governments. The representative of Pakistan, Dr. Zaidi, who holds a Ph.D. in Persian language from the University of Tehran, was recruited seven years ago as recommended by the then Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The Embassy of Pakistan never objected his recruitment till now but not accepted him as its official nominee. The representatives of the other Member States receive emoluments of a P2 post while he does not. He requested a clarification on this case by Embassy of Pakistan. He declared that Pakistan should have a representative in the Institute as the other member states do.

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan explained that when Mr. Zaidi application for recruitment was forwarded to the Embassy of Pakistan, the Embassy did not request ECI to recruit him as the representative of Pakistan. Then he was appointed as English translator not a cultural expert. If the case is taken up by the government of Pakistan for appointment of a proper cultural expert, it is not clear that how much time it would take. If the rules of procedure of ECI authorizes the ECI-CPR to decide on this case and the council approves to appoint Mr. Zaidi as a cultural expert in ECI, Pakistan has no objection. Pakistan Embassy do not intend to push the other member states or the Institute for anything beyond the rules. If Mr. President wants, since his expediency that he can continue, if there is a provision, instead of wasting the time, a fellow who has been working here for 7 years, he can continue.

Since last year this problem was raised, he has been working in the Institute as a local staff not as the official nomination of the embassy of Pakistan. The Embassy doesn't have the authority to decide on this case. He has to be nominated by the Ministry of Culture in Islamabad. He requested ECI to send the embassy a formal proposal that this position is vacant and explains about its emoluments, and then the Embassy will forward it to the Ministry of Culture in Islamabad. Mr. Zaidi can apply for the post as well. Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan further declared that the Desk of Member States was highlighted by ECI itself. If more than one representative from the other Member States is working in the Institute, Pakistan wishes to be treated in the same way. He proposed that the issue to be revisited.

President of ECI stated it has also been the fault of the ECI to hire a man without the approval of his country's embassy. But at the same time, embassy was the member of this council. The officials in the embassy should have looked into that a man from Pakistan is not officially nominated and he is working for an international organization. Furthermore, you willingly or unwillingly destroyed the career of a man for seven years, because when a man who had been working here in Iran goes back to Pakistan, he might get a job or not. Now he is 52. You are well aware that nobody gets a job in at this age.

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran asked whether the said desks are in accordance with the rules of procedure and staff regulation of ECI. He proposed that the Member States may nominate more representatives for the posts which are defined in the rules of procedure of the Institute. It will help the Institute to function more smoothly. He proposed this issue may be discussed in the next ECI-CPR meeting in the presence of the legal adviser of the ECO Secretariat.
- Executive Director of ECI clarified that according to the rules of procedure of ECI, there is no position, titled 'the desk of Member States'. This is only an internal procedure in the Institute. He proposed that the Member States may second more representatives to ECI who are paid by their respective government.

Agenda Item No.6

Any Other Business,

- Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed ECI to provide a calendar of its events and programs. Welcoming the proposal, Executive Director of ECI notified that the Institute has sent several notes to member states to encourage them to initiate cultural activities in Member States and proposed to fund some part of expenditures but did not receive any proposal in this regard. Executive Director of ECI briefed the meeting on the events which is organized by ECI in the next two months, including Sama exhibition, ECI and Iranian Institute for National Heritage MoU signature ceremony and exhibition of Iranian prestigious handicrafts, ECI Chess Cup, Makhtoum-Gholi ceremony organized by the Embassy of Turkmenistan in ECI Hall and Gallery.
- President of ECI proposed that the Institute must have focal points in the member states to coordinate and follow up ECI activities with concerned authorities smoothly and quickly. Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran officially appointed his deputy, Mr. Saffari as the ECI Focal point.

Agenda Item No.7

The date and venue of the next meeting

- As the President of ECI briefed the meeting that the Municipality of Kashan has offered to host one of the ECI-CPR meetings. So, we are in touch with Kashan municipality to organize a meeting of ECI-CPR in that city in 2014.

Annex-I

**The 15th Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (ECI-CPR)**

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H.E. Dr. Naseer Ahmad Noor, Ambassador,
- Mr. Rahbin, Cultural Attaché',

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E.Ambassador Abolfazl Mohammad Alikhani, Director,ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Mr. Saffari, Deputy 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. Narzichan Zoirov, charge d' affaire,

ECO Secretariat:

- Mr. Jehanzeb Khan,Assistant Director, IR

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Prof. Iftikhar Husain Arif, President,
- H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, Executive Director,
- Dr. Seyed Majid Ghafelebashi, External Relations,
- Mr. Hussein Ali Samadi, Financial Officer,
- Mr. Mehdi Omraninejad, Public Relation,
- Mrs. Parisa Firozkohi, English Translator.