

Draft Report
of the 19th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)

(Kashan, May 11, 2015)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 19th meeting at the University of Kashan on May 11, 2015, under the Chairmanship of the distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as well as delegation of the ECO Secretariat and the ECO Cultural Institute. (List of Participants is enclosed as Annex. I).

The Meeting was held back to back with the 202nd ECO-CPR Meeting. The Chairman of the ECO-CPR Meeting at the conclusion of the meeting requested all the representatives of the ECO Member States to listen to the short speech of the President of ECO Cultural Institute. H.E. Iftikhar Husain Arif, ECI President, appreciating the Mayor of Kashan for its warm hospitality, briefed the council on the 6th Meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) of ECI, held on 22 March 2015 in Khujand, Tajikistan. He also appreciated the efforts of the Government of Tajikistan, as well as Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan in this regard. He further appreciated the outstanding performance of H.E. Dr. Nasir Ahmad Noor, distinguished Ambassador of Afghanistan during his chairmanship of ECI-CPR Meetings and welcomed Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, distinguished Ambassador of Tajikistan as the new chairman of the meeting.

Further the ECI-CPR continued its meeting, attended by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan, as well as delegation of the ECO Secretariat and the ECO Cultural Institute. (List of Participants is enclosed as **Annex. I**).

Agenda item 1

Adoption of the Agenda

The draft agenda of the Meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/192 dated April 20, 2015 was adopted unanimously as follows:

- 1. Adoption of the Agenda,*
- 2. Consideration and Adoption of Draft Report of the 18th ECI-CPR meeting,*
- 3. Statement by ECI President,*
- 4. Deliberation on 6th BoT Meeting and operationalization of its decisions.*
- 5. Any other Business,*
- 6. Date and Venue of the Next Meeting.*

Agenda item 2

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

The council unanimously agreed that the consideration and adoption of draft report of the 18th ECI-CPR meeting will be conducted in the next ECI-CPR meeting.

Agenda item 3

Report by ECI president

H.E Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif, ECI President made the following statement before the council:

Mr. Chairman

H.E. ECO Secretary General

Honorable Ambassadors,

First, I would like to express my welcome and extend my congratulations to H.E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, the esteemed Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan on his appointment as the new chairman of ECI-CPR. The Secretariat of ECO Cultural Institute as always is ready to provide him all the support to further enhance holding successful and fruitful ECI- CPR meetings. Also, on behalf of my colleagues in ECO Cultural Institute, I would like to extend my deep and sincere gratitude to H.E. Dr. Nasir Ahmad Noor, the esteemed Ambassador of the Republic of Afghanistan for his patience and his erudite chairmanship of the ECI-CPR Meetings over the past years.

The initiative of holding ECI-CPR Meeting concurrently with ECO-CPR Meeting in the historic city of Kashan hosting by the art and culture enthusiasts of this ancient and civilized city is worthy of appreciations to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kashan Municipality. During the past two years, ECO Cultural Institute has collaborated in various fields with the cultural institutions of this city. Now the Institute has announced its readiness to hold programs in 'The House of Nations' which will be opened tomorrow where ECI has launched an exhibition featuring the works by artists of the ECO region. We hope that arranging such meetings and the presence of the esteemed Ambassadors will ensure further presence of the countries of the region in culture and art fields in this city.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me seize this opportunity to draw the attention of the esteemed Members of the Council to one of the most important events which has been carried out in recent months. Fortunately, ECO Cultural Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan held the 6th Board of Trustees (BoT) Meeting in 22nd March 2015 in the ancient city of Khujand, Tajikistan. It was the careful planning and excellent organization of the government of the Republic of Tajikistan which made the summit a success that is worthy of appreciation.

Senior representatives of ECO Member Countries during the two meetings of High Level Exoert Group (HLEG) and the BoT Meeting carefully examined all strategies, policies, programs and activities of the Institute over the past years and also the planned activities for the next two years. ECO Cultural Institute presented, for the first time, a comprehensive report to the Board of Trustees on all the issues that was of interest to the Member States.

At the meeting, the outlines of the programs and activities of the Institute over the next two years was approved and valuable suggestions and recommendations put forward by the delegates which will be considered and followed by the Institute. The detailed report of the BoT meeting including Khujand Declaration which entails the guidelines and recommendations of the Members States, has been circulated separately to all ECO Member States. Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, Executive Director of the Institute will provide you with more details on the report today.

Excellencies,

As you know, like any other international organizations, one of the challenges of the Institute is finance and contributions of the members. Any delay in the payment of the annual contributions will

prevent the Institute from long-term planning. ECI is not in favorable financial condition and after more than four months from the beginning of the year, no member has ever paid its contribution. Fortunately, at Khujand meeting, the senior representatives of Member States reiterated on the necessity of this issue and the determination of their countries for timely payment of their contributions, including the delayed arrears and debits. The Institute hopes that the Member States immediately pay at least their contribution for the year 2015. The distinguished ambassadors are highly requested to urgently pursue this issue in their respective countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Institute during nearly two decades of his activity as a professional cultural organization of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has been indebted to the support of the host government. The voluntary financial contributions of host government in past has been compensated, to a large extent, the delay or postponement of the mandatory contributions of other Member States. The government of Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to solve the problem of frequent moving of the ECI Secretariat, allotted generously a premise to ECI headquarter in the year 2010 in a diplomatic area in Tehran which includes a gallery and a hall for the ceremonies. This generous action was openly raised in the 5th BoT meeting in Kabul and appreciated by the Member States. Obviously this was impossible without the efforts of the former ECI president. I've reported on several meetings to the Member States that upon the termination of the tenure of the former ECI president the bulk of the building where the ECI headquarters is placed was separated and the Institute has been prohibited from exercising its legal rights which is resulting into the limitations on ECI programs, incurring financial charges, diplomatic immunity violation, and ambiguity in the security and safety of the Institute headquarter. I have so far adopted the policy of pursuing the issue in a friendly manner with the host government at all levels for which, unfortunately, no response has ever been received.

At the recent meeting of ECI BoT in Khujand, Dr. Hojatollah Ayoubi, the former president of the Institute, who had participated in the meeting as the Senior Representative of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, in his awesome remarks expressly stated that "the area of the building is too much for ECI activities and the Institute cannot claim on separating part of the premise; hence, in case ECI is displeased with the current situation, the Ministry will allot another building to the institute". Unfortunately, his recent statement about this matter is in obvious contradiction to the statements he used to express as ECI president in previous Board of Trustees and other formal meetings of the ECO and ECI. While so far no official correspondences from I.R. Iran's Ministry of Culture regarding the regaining of the building has been received.

Recently I wrote a personal letter to H.E. Dr. Mohamad Javad Zarif, Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran about the challenges facing ECI, including the occupation of 80% of ECI building, violation of diplomatic immunity and security, imposition of consumable charges; and denial of organizing cultural events in ECI Diplomatic Hall and Gallery.

Furthermore, Dr. Ayoubi as the Director of Shams Foundation, which is a NGO, officially wrote to us that the ECO Diplomatic Gallery and Hall are no more available. I responded officially that the Institute has not received any official note from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to take back the building; therefore I consider his letter as not being legally binding to ECI.

ECI has planned various activities to be carried out within the current months, which was officially announced to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran that failed to be implemented due to this restrictions and presence of some NGO's in ECI Headquarters.

I again request the esteemed representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to implement the decisions made at BoT, to do their best to resolve the existing issue about ECI premise

between the Institute and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and endorsing the headquarters agreement, and thereby assist the Institute in carrying out its cultural programs.

The Council unanimously declared that they will follow up the timely payment of financial contribution of the Member States which was highlighted by the ECI President.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: clarified that the issue of the Institute's premises is being followed up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Agenda item 4

Deliberation on 6th BoT Meeting and operationalization of its decisions:

Executive Director of ECI, briefed the council on main outcomes of the Board of Trustees (BoT) Meeting in Khujand. He explained that ECI for the first time prepared and submitted a general and comprehensive report on ECI's activities including objectives, strategies, policies, main financial and administrative challenges and programs for the next two years to the BoT meeting. He further mentioned that three main documents, i.e. report of the ECI President, report of the BoT Meeting and Kujand Declaration on Cultural cooperation among ECO Member States are the main outcomes of the BoT Meeting which have been circulated earlier to all the Embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran. Also unofficial Persian and Russian translation of the Khujand declaration were circulated to the participating delegates. Executive Director of ECI also reiterated that all the Member States in the BoT Meeting expressed their concerns on alarming financial situation of the Institute in 2015, which should be seriously considered by related authorities in the Member States.

Ambassador of Tajikistan as the Chairman: appreciated the great efforts of ECI for excellent arrangements of the BoT Meeting in Kujand, while the government of Tajikistan expected higher level of participation of ECI Member States in the BoT Meeting. He also expressed the hope that the important decisions of BoT will be implemented by ECI with cooperation of related authorities of the Member States.

The Member States also appreciated the ECI and Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan for organization of the BoT Meeting of the Institute and stated that they will pursue main decisions of the BoT Meeting as well as their annual contributions and outstanding arrears.

Agenda item 5

Any other business

No issue was raised under this item.

Agenda item 7

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

The council unanimously agreed with the proposal of Representative of Pakistan that the next meeting of the ECI-CPR to be held in two weeks after holy month of Ramadan. The exact date and venue of the meeting will be communicated to the Member States by the ECI Secretariat.

Annex-I

**The 19th Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (ECI-CPR)**

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Mohammad Afsar 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. Nezafat, Senior Expert , ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed, Counsellor

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- H.E. Nematullo Emomzoda, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan,
- Ms. Faranghis Bekzoda, Cultural Attaché

ECO Secretariat:

- Mr. Jehanzeb Khan, Assistant director, International Affairs,

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif, President
- H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, Executive Director
- Mr. Seyed Majid Ghafele Bashi, External Relations