

Draft Report
of the 20th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(Lahijan, 27 September 2015)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 20th meeting in the city of Lahijan on 27 September 2015 under the Chairmanship of the distinguished ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan. The Meeting was attended by the honourable Ambassadors of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 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 draft agenda of the Meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/730 dated 16 September 2015 was adopted unanimously as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda,
2. Consideration and Adoption of Draft Reports of the 18th and 19th ECI-CPR meetings,
3. Statement by ECI President,
4. Deliberation on Future Activities of the Institute till end of 2015,
5. Budgetary and Administrative Matters:
 - Financial Affairs of the Institute,
 - Deliberation on the Nomination of the Next ECI President,
6. Any other Business,
7. Date and Venue of the Next Meeting.

Before the formal meeting of ECI-CPR, the session began with the speeches of the honourable Governor General of Gilan Province, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Ali Najafi, the distinguished Mayor of Lahijan, H.E. Mr. Saeed Ageshteh and the President of ECO Cultural Institute and possibility of cooperation among the ECO Member States and Gilan Province in different fields was discussed. Further, the meeting decided that due to time shortage, agenda items 4 and second part of item 5 will be deliberated in the next meeting of the council.

Agenda item 2

Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Reports of the 18th and 19th ECI-CPR meetings

The draft reports of the 18th and 19th ECI-CPR meetings were adopted unanimously.

The draft reports of the meetings were circulated vide Note No. ECI/524/632 dated 16 August 2015 and Note No. ECI/524/358 dated 26 May 2015, respectively. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan had proposed some amendments to the draft report of the 18th meeting. The proposed amendments have been added to the text of the 18th ECI-CPR draft report.

Agenda item 3

Statement by ECI president

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

Mr. Chairman, H. E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, Honorable Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan, Excellencies, Ambassadors and Representatives of ECI Member States, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I would like to extend welcome and gratitude to all ECI Member States for their participation, and to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for arranging the meeting, as well as the Municipality of Lahijan for facilitating the required arrangements for holding the session.

I am very embarrassed and concerned to begin with the issue of ECI building. It commenced with the beginning of my tenure and the issue is still there while my tenure is soon to be ended. I don't doubt the intentions but the fact of the matter is that the issue has remained unresolved after so many assurances from the level of Minister of Foreign Affairs and other subordinate officials. In spite of strong recommendation of ECI Board of Trustees (BoT) and Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) meetings, nothing has changed, in fact, deteriorated, and now there are two other organizations: Shams Foundation and Iran's National School of Cinema.

I also appreciate the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for expediting settlement of their arrears and contribution for the year 2014, but the fact of the matter is despite of verbal commitment, annual contribution of no Member state has been received. You can understand this is

not a very acceptable situation. Besides, no proposal for hosting cultural programs has been conveyed to the institute as well.

I am delighted to say that the audit process of ECI financial records for the year 2014 has been completed and except for few minor observations, there had been no critical discrepancy.

Another issue to be deliberated is the nomination for the posts of ECI President and Executive Director. The aforesaid positions' tenure will be expired next year. Here is a confusion to be resolved. It is mentioned in the Foreign Office letter No. 2308634 dated August 13, 2013 that the tenure of the Executive Director is 3 years while the amended charter of ECI says that the term of Executive Director is four years and could be extended to one more year. The rationale of this difference of tenures for the position is not understandable to us. But a situation crops up after the Pakistani President goes away there will be not a single Pakistani representative left in ECI.

I have also noticed that there are anomalies and ambiguities in some parts of the ECI Charter which should be addressed at an appropriate level and I request you, excellencies, to guide us as to how these issues be resolved.

I would like to sincerely appreciate the cooperation from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in particular, H.E. Mr. Bizmark, H.E. Mr. Alikhani, H. E. Mr. Naseer Ahmad Noor, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Noor Muhammad Jadmani, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H. E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Jahanzib, distinguished representative of ECO Secretariat, for the way CPR meetings took place during these years. I must thank for their contribution and guidance. I also want to put this on record that my team in ECI worked with very great commitment, dedication and efficiency. However, I am of the opinion that there should be a sensible balance of staff to the satisfaction of all Member states.

I'm delighted that the distinguished Member States have appointed focal points in their countries for ECI's activities coordination with the authorities concerned. But more active communication and contribution on their part could promote the smooth functioning of the Institute.

Since the last CPR the most important event that took place was the International Iqbal Congress in Tehran and Isfahan in collaboration with Hozae Hunari. It has been appreciated not only in Iran but also in Pakistan. Mr. Rahbeen's translation of Bale Jibreel was a tremendous success. The finest translation of Iqbal's Urdu poetry by the famous poet/scholar of Afghanistan. The commemorative stamp to mark the event was a great gesture by the Postal Authorities of Iran.

The fourth issue of ECO Heritage, focusing on handicrafts of ECO countries has been recently published, the two next issues will be dedicated to music and folk heritage and performing arts of the region. The publication has already

addressed culture and civilization, architecture and literature in ECO region in the 4 past issues.

I'll go back to Pakistan at the end of the tenure as a satisfied man. People of Iran in general, and heads of cultural organizations, media, academia have been kind to me personally. Not a single day I felt that I am alone or in a foreign country. I wish the great Iranian nation every success and prosperity in the future and I'm also satisfied that in spite of the limitations I would be leaving this institute with a definite positive image and a better shaped organization. Thank you

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: appreciated the great performance of ECI under the leadership of its incumbent President.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: also thanked ECI President for his brilliant performance during his tenure.

H.E. Mr. Alikhani, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: proposed that in view of the program prepared by the Mayor of Lahijan, delegations may consider postponing some of the agenda items to be discussed by the next ECI-CPR, adding that for the same reason his delegation would respond to some of the issues raised in the President's statement in the next meeting. This proposal was adopted unanimously.

Agenda item 5

Budgetary and Administrative Matters

- Financial Affairs of the Institute

The Chairman noted that the future of the Institute depends on the timely payment of annual contributions by the ECI Member States. He announced that payment of the annual contribution of the Republic of Tajikistan is in process and informed the meeting that his country will pay a portion of arrears before the end of 2015.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: informed that the payment of the annual contribution of 2015 as well as all remaining arrears, amounting to more than 141,000 \$, has been approved by the ministry of Culture and orders have been given to the Ministry of financial affairs of Afghanistan for immediate payment. He hoped that the contribution will be paid in the very near future.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: also informed that the sanctioning of the country's annual contribution for the year 2015 is in process. He noted that ECI will be totally paralyzed if the current financial situation goes on. It will make the Institute unable to undertake its activities or even pay for the salaries of its staff. He requested all the Member States to urge their capitals to consider the current financial problems of the Institute.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: stated that the administrative process has already been done and only a few technical issues are to be settled. He declared that the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid an amount of 200,000 \$ to ECI as voluntary contribution over the past two years. He proposed that other Member States may also make voluntary contribution to ECI to expand its activities.

Agenda item 6

Any Other Business

With respect to the point mentioned in the ECI President's speech on anomalies and ambiguities in ECI Charter, the meeting unanimously decided that a working group should be established to scrutinize the ECI Charter, comprising of one representative from each member state in addition to ECI and ECO Secretariat representatives plus the legal advisor of ECO. The working group will convene its meeting/meetings at the ECI Headquarters, presided over by the distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Vote of Thanks

All the members of the Council extended their gratitude to the officials of Lahijan, especially the distinguished Mayor of the city and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for meeting.

Agenda item 7

Date and Venue of the next Meeting

The next ECI-CPR meeting will be held on a date to be informed later but not before the aforesaid working group session. The venue will be conveyed to the Member States as well.

Annex-I

The 20th Meeting of the ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H. E. Dr. Naseer Ahmad Noor, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Ambassador Mr. Abolfazl Mohammad Alikhani, Director, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Mr. Nezafat, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Mr. Chenari, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- H. E. Mr. Noor Muhammad Jadmani, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed, Counsellor

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

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

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif, President
- H.E. Ambassador Mr. Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, Executive Director
- Mr. Seyed Majid Ghafelebashi, External Relations
- Mr. Shahmansoor Khajev, Expert
- Mr. Mehdi Omraninejad, Public Relations
- Mr. Ahmad Reza Nasrollahi, Public Relations