

Draft Report
of the 23rd Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(ECI Headquarters, 29 May 2016)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 23rd meeting at the ECO Headquarters on 29 May 2016 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan. The Meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Pakistan and 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 draft agenda of the meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/214 dated 8 May 2016 was adopted unanimously as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda,
2. Consideration and adoption of the Draft Report of the 22nd ECI-CPR meeting,
3. Statement by ECI President,
4. Budgetary and administrative matters:
 - Consideration on ECI's budget for 2016
 - premises
5. Any other Business,
6. Date and Venue of the Next Meeting.

Agenda item 2

Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Report of the 22nd ECI-CPR meeting

- The draft report of the 22nd ECI-CPR meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/110 dated 10 April 2016 was adopted.

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, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan,

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Representatives of ECI Member States,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to express my profound gratitude to you Excellencies and honorable representatives of the ECI Member States, for the confidence you bestowed upon me by extending my tenure for another six months. I hope that with assistance and support of the esteemed ECI Member States and my colleagues, we could further realize ECI's aims and objectives in the months to come. On behalf of ECO Cultural Institute, I also appreciate your satisfaction on the performance of ECI during my tenure despite some financial and functional issues.

However, with a heavy heart, we bid farewell to H.E. Noor Mohammad Jadmani, the honorable ambassador of Pakistan, whose tenure is coming to an end in June. He made illustrious efforts and his positive and onsite contribution for ECO Cultural Institute will always be remembered. We wish him all the best in his future careers.

Excellencies,

Regarding ECI's recent activities, I have the honor to inform the forum that ECI, in collaboration with the Central Eurasian Research Group of University of Tehran, organized the seminar "Globalization and its economic, cultural impacts on ECO Region" in the premises of Tehran University attended by the honorable ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Naseer Ahmad Noor, representatives of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a group of scholars of the field.

Moreover, ECI concluded a MoU with Al-Zahra University for conducting joint research programs, organizing workshops, seminars, etc. on arts and culture and producing a joint scholarly magazine on the subject.

ECI has also negotiated MoUs with Toliat Shams Tabrizi of Khoy and Farhang Saray Niawaran for future cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

As for future programs, ECI has the pleasure to host a conference on the publication of university text books in ECO Region and a display of books published by the Organization for Researching and Composing University textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT) for Afghanistan universities at the International Conference Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on May 30, 2016. We are also venerating the great contribution made by the distinguished scholar Mr. Ahmad Ahmadi, head of SAMT.

The next day, on May 31, 2016, ECI shall host, in cooperation with the Center for International Research & Education of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 1st Seminar on the Common Culture and History of ECO Region to be attended by the deputy foreign Ministers of ECI Member States as well as high-ranking officials and prominent university professors at the International Conference Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ECI has also on its agenda, holding a conference to introduce the features of various ethnic costumes of Afghanistan and a display of respective attires after the holy month of Ramadan.

Excellencies,

A matter of high importance for ECI is the approval of its proposed budget for the year 2016. In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan have not approved the said budget. The Islamic Republic of Iran has announced its formal consent with the proposed budget while no response has been received from the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Although five months have passed since the beginning of the new fiscal year, the prevailing situation has delayed the approval of the 2016 budget and consequently, ECI has not received

any contribution from the Member States except \$24990 from the Republic of Tajikistan which is highly appreciated. However, this situation shall put the Institute in critical financial difficulties in the months to come.

This is worth mentioning that considering the increase in ECI program budget, the growing inflation rate and the regular, legal, annual increments in the salaries of staff members prescribed by the ECI Charter, the Institute submitted to the BOT its proposed 2016 budget with %25 increase.

However, ECI Board of Trustees, in its statement released following the meeting organize in March 2016 "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".

Considering the abovementioned points and the support of the BoT in increasing the annual budget, ECI would like to once again request the esteemed Members to agree with %15 increase in the Institute's annual budget as well as the Member States contributions to enable the Institute continue realizing the programs envisaged.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the institute's premises, the honorable representative of the host government announced at the 21st ECI-CPR that a new headquarters with appropriate facilities for organizing cultural programs will be provided for ECI.

In this regard, I submitted a report for the perusal of the honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, copies of which have already been circulated among the esteemed embassies of ECI member states.

While appreciating the help and support of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I would like to reiterate that resolving the issue of the premises, that has have been lying dormant for the past three years of my tenure, is crucial to the smooth running of the Institute.

As your Excellencies have noticed, ECI activities have decreased significantly due to the uncalled for situation that particularly occurred at ECI premises during the holidays without any kind of prior notice.

I would like to once again request the esteemed host country to look into the matter at the earliest.

Thank you.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: expressed his gratitude to ECI President and honorable representatives of the Member States for their great support. He admired the Institute's continuous efforts and patience despite all the difficulties faced in organizing its activities and praised the performance of ECI President. Also he appreciated Iranian delegation for their efforts to convene ECI-CPR meetings in cities other than Tehran.

Chairman: emphasized that ECI is of great significance for the Member States. He hoped that with the assistance and contribution of the Member States, the Institute continue its programs and activities. While appreciating the performance of the incumbent President of ECI, he hoped that ECI will organize more and better cultural events under the leadership of its new president.

President of ECI extended his gratitude to all the Member States for their unequivocal support over his tenure and their valuable contributions in ECI activities.

Agenda item 4

Budgetary and administrative matters:

- Consideration and Adoption of the ECI's Draft Budget for 2016,

The Meeting requested the Institute to kindly circulate the revised draft budget for the year 2016 with details of increment in each head of accounts to all the Member States to be sent to the relevant authorities for approval.

The Meeting also approved that on the basis of last year's budget, ECI may continue to operate until the formal observation/approval of the Member States with the ECI's revised budget for 2016 is conveyed.

Agenda item 5

ECI premises:

President of ECI noted that it is an unpleasant situation that ECI has to hold its programs in other halls while the Institute used to organize a variety of events inside its own premises.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: expressed concern over the situation and stated that Pakistan Delegation will be monitoring this subject with a view to find out if there was an element of discrimination towards a Pakistani Head of the Institute.

He further noted that: “I would like to flag one point for the health of the organization. If you recall, I have been time and again raising my voice on the unfortunate disconnect between the head of the Institute and some members of staff. That was one of the reasons that despite best efforts of the President and the members of staff, we had not fulfilled the objectives as we would have. One of the key elements, with a heavyhearted I use this word, non-existence of support with regard to the premises of the Institute. I want to place on record despite his best efforts, having tried to reach to the highest office where he could from the protocol point of view, he did all his best. I want to admire his continuous efforts and patience despite all the difficulties he was able to deal with, to our satisfaction and activities managed to come forward. We have reached to a stage on this issue that from now onwards, probably we may not be raising the issue of the ECI premises. We would like to remain what we have been given and where we have ended up right this moment. I hope where we stand, we will continue in the same direction, the same spirit with the new president also.”

Chairman: hoped that the situation would be improved soon by support of the host country. He requested all the Member States to keep supporting the incumbent President of ECI to fulfil his responsibilities till end of his tenure.

Agenda item 6

Any other Business

The members of the council expressed their deep condolences over the demise of the former President of ECI, the late Mr. Mohammad Ali Shoa'ee.

Agenda item 7

Date and Venue of the Next Meeting

The date and venue of the next meeting of the ECI-CPR will be communicated to the Member States by the ECI Secretariat.

Annex-I

The 23rd Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Ahmad Haroon Najmpoor, Minister-Counsellor
- Ms. Zahra Bodaghi, Administrative Assistant

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- H. E. Noor Muhammad Jadmani, Ambassador 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. Farangis Bekzoda, Cultural Attaché

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. Seyed Saeed Neghabat, Accounts Officer
- Mr. Shahmansour Khajeov, Cultural Expert