

**Draft Report**  
**of the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the**  
**Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)**  
**(ECI Headquarters, 24 April 2017)**

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 25<sup>th</sup> meeting at the ECO Headquarters on 24 April 2017 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Nematullo Emomzoda, distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan. The Meeting was attended by Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri, ECI President, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the ECO Secretariat. (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/524/184 dated 23 April 2017 was adopted unanimously as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda,
2. Adoption of the Draft Report of the previous ECI-CPR meeting,
3. Statement by ECI President,
4. Budgetary issues:
  - Status of the payment of the Member States' arrears,
  - Adoption of ECI's draft budget for the year 2017,
5. Adoption of the proposed ECI Work Program for 2017,
6. The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)
7. Schedule of upcoming ECI- CPR meetings in 2017,
8. Any Other Business.

**Agenda item 2**

**Adoption of the Draft Report of the 24<sup>th</sup> ECI-CPR meeting**

- The draft report of the 24<sup>th</sup> ECI-CPR meeting which had been circulated among the Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/556 dated October 6, 2016 was adopted.

**Agenda item 3**

## Statement by ECI President

H.E. Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri, ECI President made the following statement:

*Mr. Chairman,*

*Honorable Ambassadors and Representatives of the ECO Member States,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*It is a great pleasure to convene the 25<sup>th</sup> ECI-CPR meeting in conjunction with the distinguished delegations of the Member States. I hope that with the assistance and support of the esteemed Member States, we could further realize ECI's aims and objectives in the months to come.*

*Excellencies,*

*During the past few months since the beginning of my tenure, ECI has organized several programs including the extensive renovation of ECI premises and opening of the ECO Diplomatic Gallery and Conference Center, furnishing and setting up ECI specialized library and prayer chamber, as well as broad refurbishing of the yard and building with greenery.*

*In order to develop and strengthen interactions with other cultural, research and international organizations, continuous meetings have been held with the honorable ambassadors of ECO Member States, heads of universities as well as officials of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization.*

*Moreover, aiming to raise public awareness across the ECO Region, the Institute has recently obtained the publication permission for books as well as monthly magazines in five languages of the region (Persian, Russian, Urdu, Turkish and English) and thus welcomes the cooperation of the esteemed scholars of the region to provide scholarly material for the said publications.*

*Promotion of interactions in the area of sports across the region, emphasized upon in the text of ECI Charter, is another object ECI seeks to realize. In this regard, ECI has organized several meetings with local and foreign federations such as Taekwondo, Handball, chogan and chess for organizing ECO Cup and contacting other federations are also on the agenda.*

*As for the programs implanted, ECI has organized the 3<sup>rd</sup> ECO Winter Poetry Night in collaboration with Embassy of Afghanistan in Tehran, Bayati Molavi music performance in*

*collaboration with Yunus Emreh Institute, The first International Training Workshop on the Museum Environment and Preventive Conservation, holding ECI Executive Committee meeting with the participation of cultural attaches of ECI member states and the esteemed cultural attaché of the Republic of Turkey, Exhibition of 'Transcendent Art, a collection of artworks by Masters of Iranian traditional arts', opening a coordination unit in the city of Abadan, Khouzestan province due to the loads of ancient cultural heritage of the province and great capacities for organizing cultural programs and events. Opening Coordination Units in other cities is also foreseen. Additionally, ECI is willing to inaugurate Coordination Units in other Member States as well.*

*Also, the Institute actively participated in the 22<sup>nd</sup> ECO Council of Ministers and the 13<sup>th</sup> Summit meetings which were excellently arranged by the esteemed Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The meetings took note of ECI's wide range of recent activities and instructed the Member States to actively participate in the cultural programs/events organized by the Institute.*

*We are pleased to announce that through the negotiations made with the esteemed embassies of the Member States, we have been informed that some countries of the region have shown interest in accession to the Institute's Charter as full members and are taking serious measures in this regard. Obviously, contribution of the region's states is essential for the Institute's success in fulfilling its mandates and enhancement of regional cooperation in the area of culture.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Regarding ECI's future programs, an overview of ECI's Work Program for the year 2017, which was already circulated at the 27<sup>th</sup> ECO-RPC meeting, indicates main initiatives hierarchically arranged and implementation of which requires in time budget provision as well as collaboration of the cultural authorities of the Member States.*

*Among the most important programs on ECI's agenda is holding the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Heads of ECO National Museums, the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Heads of National Libraries, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Heads of ECO Art Universities as well as granting High ECO Award to the prominent personalities of the region in the areas of literature, culture and research. Award Modalities will be devised and circulated in due time.*

*Since Abadan is the only city, besides Tehran, to host a museum of contemporary arts, ECI intends to soon establish the headquarters of the Union of ECO National Museums there.*

*Furthermore, to maximize the contribution of the ECO Member States and their luminaries, the Institute plans to establish councils in areas of arts, culture, literature and research to enhance the Institute's performance with their consultancy.*

*Tourism promotion, as the most important cultural mechanism for sustainable development, is another objective to be seriously pursued by the Institute.*

*The appointment of ECI Executive Director is another issue to be looked into.*

*Excellencies;*

*However, as you are well aware, the expansion of scope and continuation of such programs, as requested by the Member States, next to the necessity of our collective will and cooperation to organize them, is subject to the availability of stable sources of funds. Such funds shall be procured through three resources:*

- Annual contribution of the esteemed member states*
- General Reserve Fund*
- Extra budgetary funds donated by the esteemed member states or other organizations*

*Regarding the financial status of the Institute, I deem it necessary to inform you that while I appreciate receiving full payment of annual shares of the member states for the year 2016, unfortunately no measure has so far been taken for the endorsement of ECI budget for the year 2017 and the consequent payment of the annual shares for the same year. Likewise, some countries are in arrears from previous years and all these elements have led ECI towards a difficult financial situation. I would like to request such members to inform the respective officials in their esteemed countries of the significance and urgency of the issue and take necessary measures for the payment of their arrears at their earliest possible time to enable ECI continue its activities.*

*Regarding the General Reserve Fund, referred to in ECI draft budget, it is worth mentioning that the figure indicated is not available right now and shall only be obtained through the payment of arrears of some member states from previous years and therefore, till then, the implementation of some cultural programs intended to be financed through this Fund will be impossible. For that reason, I would like to request those esteemed member states in arrears to inform their respective countries and take urgent measures for the payment of the amount. Besides, it would be highly*

*appreciated if this honorable forum could approve ECI's entitlement to use such Fund whenever received.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen;*

*Over the years, the ECO Cultural Institute has not been able to make any changes in the annual contribution of its member states while annual inflation growth and rising costs are global phenomenon, always making difficulties in organizing cultural activities. However, despite financial constraints and a budget remained unchanged for years, ECO Cultural Institute has always made efforts to bring together, through its activities, a large gathering of eminent personalities of the region in areas of culture, art and literature.*

*That is why the 6<sup>th</sup> ECI BoT Meeting held in Tajikistan urged 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. Hence, it would be highly appreciated if the esteemed member states could review and reconsider the existing scale of assessment and their annual contributions to the ECI budget.*

*Excellencies*

*ECO Cultural Institute has set spectacular goals for the upcoming years to be achieved in partnership with the states in the region. With your support as the ECO Member States and based on collective wisdom, we strive to prepare the ground for the realization of a united regional cultural diplomacy.*

*Thank you.*

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan expressed hope that under leadership of H.E. Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri, the Institute would organize successful cultural events and appreciated the contributions made by Mr. Iftikhar Arif, the previous president of the Institute.

Also, the Chairman stated that it's very important that the Institute now owns the whole premises and admired the wide range of activities conducted by the ECI under the leadership of Dr. Mazaheri. He emphasized that the opening of ECI's Coordination Unit in the city of Abadan, was a breakthrough and hoped that more units will be established in other cities and Member States.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran also praised the recent development of ECI's premises and expansion of its cultural programs. He also thanked Mr. Arif's contributions. He expressed hope that during the tenure of Dr. Mazaheri, the other ECO Member States will join

ECI to further diversify its activities and more coordination units of the Institute will be established in the future.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: welcomed the new President of ECI and expressed hope that under his leadership, the Institute will reach great achievements. He assured that Pakistan welcomes ECI programs and hope they are very fruitful.

Regarding ECI activities in the area of sport, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: appreciated ECI President and proposed that a sports competition among the embassies of the ECO Member States in Tehran. The proposal was welcomed by the Chairman as well.

#### **Agenda item 4**

##### Budgetary matters:

- Status of the payment of the Member States' arrears,

On the outstanding arrears of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Chairman (Ambassador of Tajikistan) clarified that his state will make every effort to settle the amount in the near future. He also encouraged timely payment of the annual contributions by the Member States to help the Institute's smooth functioning and organizing its cultural programs.

- Adoption of ECI's draft budget for the year 2017,

Financial Adviser of ECI: briefed the meeting on the ECI's proposed budget for the year 2017 and clarified that the annual contributions of the Member States have not been increased in the said budget while the deficit in the budget will be covered through the Institute's General Reserve Fund and voluntary contributions of the Member States. He highlighted the fact that the budget for cultural activities of the Institute, compared to the year 2016, is more than doubled. He further clarified that the considerable rise in Consumable and Temporary Services, is due to the costs of the extensive renovation of ECI premises and opening of the ECO Diplomatic Gallery and Conference Center. He explained that ECI used to own only 20% of the area in the premises while it currently owns the whole premises, leading to a large increase in maintaining expenses.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: informed that Iran's annual contribution for the year 2017 will soon be paid. He also proposed a 10% increase in the ECI's annual budget as recommended by the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of ECI Board of Trustees (22 March 2015, Khujand, Tajikistan). He declared that if the outstanding arrears are not timely received, ECI will face financial constraints and that's why the budget should not depend on arrears.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: welcomed the proposal raised by the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and added that the General Reserve Fund is not a realistic option. He also noted that the government of the Member States should be informed of proposed increase in annual contribution.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: supported the proposal for increment in ECI's budget. He pointed that covering the deficit in ECI's Budget from the General Reserve Fund is a contemporary solution. The increment in the Budget should be realized through a comprehensive

plan. He stressed that guidance from the governments of the Member States on the issue should be sought.

President of ECI: endorsed the proposal for increasing ECI's annual budget and referred to the recommendation of the 6<sup>th</sup> ECI BoT meeting that requested the member states to consider increasing their existing annual contributions by 15%. He further requested the authorization of the Council for covering the budget deficit from the Institute's General Reserve Fund. He emphasized that the proposed budget for the year 2017 has been drafted before his tenure of office and due to time constraints, we put our trust in it. He stated that a more detailed budget for the year ahead will be provided.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: proposed that the ongoing session of the ECI-CPR may agree with the increase in ECI's annual budget for the year 2018 as an initial step and the increment proposal would be forwarded subsequently to the concerned authorities in the government of the Member States to be approved.

The council concluded the following:

- 1- The budget as proposed by ECI equivalent to \$ 802,644 was approved.
- 2- The budget deficit will be covered through the Institute's General Reserve Fund and voluntary contributions of the Member States.
- 3- ECI-CPR supports the proposal for increasing ECI's annual budget and requested ECI to prepare and circulate its proposed annual budget for the year 2018 (including the annual increment) among the Member States to be forwarded to the decision-making bodies in the government of the Member States for official sanction.
- 4- Arrears need to be cleared at the earliest.

## **Agenda item 5**

### Adoption of the proposed ECI Work Program for 2017

President of ECI: stated that despite the proposed program for the year 2017 had been pre-arranged before the beginning of his tenure of office and it doesn't fully reflect his views in this regard, the Institute will endeavour to conduct all planned activities subject to the availability of fund. He declared that a better planned program for the year 2018 will be provided by the Institute. The President announced that ECI has carried out major renovation to its premises involving specialized library, diplomatic conference center and gallery to furnish the distinguished ECO Member States with a great venue to promote their culture, arts and literature.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: referred to the ECI's coordination unit in Abadan and asked how the coordination unit is being funded.

President of ECI: declared that ECI will just involve in the policymaking and supervision of the performance of the Coordination Units and no financial burden is posed on the Institute. He added that more coordination units in other cities will be established in the future.

Chairman: speaking on the promotion of ECI website, requested the Institute to offer the website content in Tajiki script as well.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: also requested ECI to add Pashto language to its website because it is a national language in Afghanistan. He pointed that publicizing ECI activities in common languages of the region will increase public awareness in the Member States.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: encouraged the Member States to contribute to the translation of ECI website in their national language.

The Council adopted the proposed ECI Work Program for 2017.

The Council also supported the scheme of establishing ECI coordination units and requested ECI to make a relevant proposal to the Member States vide a formal note verbale.

## **Agenda item 6**

### The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: briefed the meeting that the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran has informed the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the issue and their comment is awaited. The decision of the concerned authorities will be conveyed to ECI vide a note verbale.

## **Agenda item 7**

### Schedule of upcoming ECI- CPR meetings in 2017

ECI will communicate the schedule of upcoming ECI- CPR meetings in 2017 to the Member States.

## **Agenda item 8**

### Any Other Business

No issue was raised under this agenda item.

**Annex-I**

**The 25<sup>th</sup> 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
- Mr. Ahmad Haroon Najmpoor, Minister-Counsellor
- Mr. Mohammad Afsar Rahbin, Cultural Attaché
- Ms. Bodaghi, Staff Member, ECO Affairs Department

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:**

- H.E. Abdolfazl Mohammad Alikhani, Deputy Director General, International Environmental and Sustainable Development Affairs General Directorate, MFA
- Mr. Nezafat, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Ms. Fatemeh Mirbagheri, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA

**Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:**

- H.E. Imran Heidar, Deputy Head of Mission
- Mr. Ghulam Hussain, Third Secretary

**Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:**

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

**ECO Secretariat:**

- Mr. Muqet Asim Shah, Assistant Director, International Relations

**ECO Cultural Institute:**

- H.E. Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri, President
- Dr. Ramin Etehad Mozaffar, International Relations Adviser
- Mr. Shah Mansur Khojeov, Tajikistan's Desk Officer
- Mr. Mohammad Ali Hejazi, Chief Communications Officer
- Mr. Seyed Saeed Neghabat, Accounts Officer
- Mr. Amin Nazari, Financial Adviser
- Mr. Mehdi Omraninejad, Cultural Expert
- Ms. Firouzkouhi, Cultural Expert
- Dr. Nosratzadegan, Interpreter