

Draft Report
of the 28th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(ECI Headquarters, April 24, 2018)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 28th meeting at the ECO Headquarters on April 24, 2018 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, and representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic Republic of Pakistan 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 meeting decided to amend the draft agenda of the meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/166 dated April 16, 2018 as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda,
2. Adoption of the Draft Report of the 26th and 27th ECI-CPR meetings,
3. Statement by ECI President,
4. Final approval of ECI's draft budget for the year 2018,
5. A review on the 23rd CoM meeting,
6. The 7th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)
7. Report of Working Group for examination of ECI's draft budget 2018
8. State of affairs concerned with Afghanistan Desk Officer in ECI and Assistant Director from Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the Draft Report of the 26th and 27th ECI-CPR meetings

The meeting adopted the reports of the 26th and 27th ECI-CPR meeting with inclusion of observations of all member states.

Agenda item 3

Statement by ECI President

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

*Honorable Ambassadors and Representatives of the Member States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure to convene the 28th ECI-CPR meeting in the company of the distinguished delegations of the Member States. I hope that with assistance and support of the esteemed Member States, we would further realize ECI's aims and objectives in the months to come.

Excellencies,

During 5 past months, the ECO Cultural Institute has organized several programs, but before elaborating on the report of ECI's recent activities, I would like to make some points on ECI's budget for the year 2018 and lack of liquidity. ECO Cultural Institute is facing with unprecedented financial crisis and lack of liquidity and is even unable to provide its staff salaries which is due to non-payment or long delayed payment of due annual contributions and outstanding arrears of member states. However, EC's programs have never stopped and current expenses of the Institute have been covered through non-budgetary financial contributions of the organization with them, ECI has entered into agreement during current tenure. organizations.

During 2017, we received only annual contribution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and part of annual contribution of the Republic of Tajikistan, the remaining part was settled in 2018. In other word, we received 200 thousand dollars as annual contributions of the member states and the arrears of the other member states for the same year equals to USD 257,330. In fact, only 40 percent of the annual contributions for the year 2017 was received from the member states while the Institute conducted almost 86 percent of its approved work program for the said year.

Altogether, the total amount of outstanding arrears is to the tune of about USD 403,000. Programs of the Institute will be carried out more smoothly by cooperation with the member states and payment of annual contributions. Seeking a remedy for its financial situation, ECI has endeavored to encourage new member states to accede to ECI.

Regarding the scale of ECO Cultural Institute activities, increasing inflation rate and the great goals and objectives planned for the Institute, the esteemed member states may kindly reconsider their contributions to the annual budget of ECO Cultural Institute.

With respect to our activities, ECO Cultural Institute participated in Senior Officials Meeting(SOM) and 23rd Council of Ministers(CoM) meeting. The arrangements by the Government of Tajikistan was good. The Council took note with appreciation of the expansion in the activities of the Institute in areas of culture, arts and literature. on the sidelines of the event, an exhibition of handicrafts and embroidery of the ECO member states was jointly organized by ECI and Government of Tajikistan. Also, meetings with some participating delegations from ECO affiliated bodies were held in which mutual collaboration was emphasized. I would like to appreciate the government of Tajikistan for holding of CoM meeting.

Among the significant events during the last year, was the 4th meeting of the Heads of the National Libraries of the ECO Member States held on 27-29 November 2017 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, seven years

after the last meeting. At the event, ECI President proposed that the year 2018 be proclaimed as "Year of Reading Culture" in the ECO region which was welcomed by the member states. on the sidelines of the event, meetings with honorable Ministers of Culture, Sciences, Foreign Affairs, Director of Academy of Sciences, Director of National Library and Assistant to President of Tajikistan held in which partnership in areas of culture, arts and literature was discussed.

Considering accession of new member states to ECI, we have fostered cooperation with Republic of Azerbaijan and Republic of Turkey. As informed by the honorable ECO Secretary General, the Republic of Turkey plans to ratify ECO Cultural Institute charter by its parliament.

In area of music, a folk music ensemble from Kazakhstan, titled Saryarka, put on a concert at the Niavaran Artistic Creations Foundation in Tehran in cooperation with ECO Cultural Institute and Iran's Institute for Promotion of Contemporary Visual Art.

Also, at the invitation and support of ECO Cultural Institute and Republic of Turkey's Yunus Emre Cultural Institute in Tehran, a concert of traditional Turkish music was staged in Tehran on December 21, 2017. It was the fifth joint program of both Institutes. In this regard, ECI is willing to cooperate with music ensembles from all the member states.

Considering literature, ECI has organized sessions of lecture series on prominent literary figures of ECO region including Hafez, Rumi and Shams Tabrizi. We thank participation of representatives from the member states, Tajikistan, in particular. I would like to announce that International Standard Serial Number has been obtained for ECO Cultural Institute's journals. Authors and researchers from all ECO member states are welcome to forward their articles on tourism, literature, arts, culture, history, women studies and peace.

One of our key priorities is cooperation with the academia in areas of culture, arts and literature. In this spirit, we have inked MoUs with leading universities of the region. Based on these MoUs, Allameh Tabatabaee University has granted 40 scholarships in BA and Masters levels and 5 PhD scholarship were granted by University of Tehran for the students of ECO Member States.

Also, ECI in collaboration with Al-Zahra University of the Islamic Republic of Iran held an international conference on "Theoretical Foundations of Iranian Visual Arts with an Environmental Approach" on 22 February 2018. Furthermore, in area of visual arts, the International Exhibition of Paintings and Illustrations in the ECO region was held at diplomatic art gallery of ECO Cultural Institute in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts of the said University and the Iranian Academy of Visual Arts in April 2018. More than 50 artworks from 12 countries were on display at the exhibition.

The research section of the 33rd Fajr International Music Festival was organized at ECO Cultural Institute which was unprecedented in the history of the Institute. Besides, the international section of the 10th Fajr International Visual Arts Festival was also organized at ECO Cultural Institute, in which 68 artworks by 39 artists competed.

In area of international charitable activities, ECI took part in charity bazaar organized by Diplomatic Ladies Association. Also, in this spirit, a one-day trip to city of Qazvin was arranged in February 2018 for female members of embassies and spouses of ambassadors and diplomats. Soon there would be another trip for the same group to city of Kashan.

Within the framework of mutual cooperation with Iranian radio station titled "Farhang", ECI arranged an opportunity for the embassies of member states to have an interview on Norouz. The first conference and workshop on the authenticity of historical, cultural and artistic objects was held on 13-15 February 2018, at the Institute for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Works of the National Museum of Iran. In cooperation with UNESCO Cluster Office in Tehran, an exhibition of paintings on the theme of world peace was held in ECI art gallery.

As envisaged in its charter, sports are among ECI's areas of activities which was not seriously addressed before. ECI has arranged 2 sports tournaments of table tennis and billiards for the members of diplomatic corps in Tehran. The Institute plans to organize in 2018 futsal tournament and competitions of traditional sports of ECO region such as polo.

Despite all financial problems, at the 28th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) held in Pakistan on December 11-14, 2017, ECO Cultural Institute was appreciated for its effective management in implementing a wide spectrum of activities in the past year.

Overall, 5 exhibitions in areas of arts and culture including painting and photos, 7 sessions of lecture series on prominent literary figures of ECO region, 2 sports tournaments, 12 MoUs, 6 international workshops, 2 expert training workshops have been arranged by ECI within the said span of time.

To pay homage to the luminaries of ECO region, ECO Cultural Institute and the Embassy of Tajikistan in Tehran jointly organized commemoration of Mirzo Torsonzoda, the Tajik national hero in May 2017. ECI is willing to hold similar events for cultural figures of all member states.

Finally, during the program organized on the occasion of anniversary of the establishment of the ECO Cultural Institute. ECO Apparel for Peace was unveiled. The dress is a joint product of Afghan women's embroidery on a textile hand-made by Pakistani women. The drawings and colors of this dress have been made by women of Tajikistan and designs and sewing done by Iranian women. The program was followed by unveiling of ECO Cultural Institute exclusive stamp. The ECO Apparel for Peace is now on display in Rome, Italy. It would be showcased in member states as well subject to their willingness.

ECO Cultural Institute intends to organize the following events in 2018 which would be realized in cooperation with the member states and upon the availability of funds, including the 2nd meeting of heads of Arts Universities of ECO member states, the 1st meeting of museums of ECO member states, the 1st meeting of heads of national archives of ECO member states the 1st meeting of heads of the encyclopedia centers of ECO member states. I hope we make strides in cultural diplomacy by means of the aforesaid programs.

Thank you

All the member states expressed their gratitude to ECI and its President for the very comprehensive range of activities.

Agenda item 4

Final approval of ECI Budget for the year 2018

Accounts Officer of ECI: explained that the meeting of Working Group for examination of ECI's draft budget 2018 convened with the participation of the member states and the Institute has introduced

amendments to some parts of the draft budget and has circulated the revised budget among the member states vide Note Verbale No. ECI/402/112 dated 8 April 2018 and no observation in writing was received from the member states. The esteemed member states are requested to kindly approve the proposed budget with inclusion of 10% increment in the due annual contribution as discussed before.

She further elaborated that a saving of 35% in expenditures of the Institute has been made in budget estimate for the year 2018 in comparison with the year 2017. Part of the saving was made through partnership with the other cultural organizations. However, ECI will encounter a budget deficit of 42% even if all the due contributions for the year 2018, in addition to 10 % increment, would be realized. She stressed that if the Institute's annual budget will not be increased, it will be in dire straits through the year 2018.

Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan: clarified that the partial payment of its annual contribution for the year 2017 had been released by the Government of Tajikistan in December 2017 but due to technical banking problems, it was received by ECI in 2018.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: proposed that ECI may bring up its liquidity problem at the ECO Council of Permanent Representative in ECO Secretariat and share it with all the ECO member states to find a remedy. In this regard, ECO member states may get involved in the issue for providing some kind of loan for ECI to resolve the problem temporarily. He also proposed that ECI may request for an advance payment from the ECO Secretariat as it has been done in the past.

He explained that the annual contribution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the year 2017 has already been released twice but bounced back due to banking hitches. He informed that Pakistan will soon remit once again its annual contribution to ECI's budget.

regarding request for an advance payment from the ECO Secretariat, President of ECI explained that the ECO Secretariat has informed that the Secretariat is lacking liquidity and is unable to make such payment unless the remittance of annual contributions of the ECI member states to the Secretariat's account is secured. He also informed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran is willing to receive the annual contributions of the member states in cash from Istanbul bank.

The chairman requested for timely payment of annual contributions by the member states.

Agenda item 5

A review on the 23rd CoM meeting

The Chairman briefed the forum that the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and 23rd Council of Ministers(CoM) meeting were successfully held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and attended by delegations of the ECO member states.

Agenda item 6

The 7th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that the issue has already been conveyed to the relevant authorities in Pakistan and ECI will be informed of the outcome upon the receipt of response.

Agenda item 7

Report of Working Group for examination of ECI's draft budget 2018

Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan regarding ECI's draft budget 2018 explained that the Working Group has convened its first session in March 2018 and it was decided that the proposed budget be revised and along with list of ECI staff members including relevant details be circulated among the member states. The revised budget was received but still needs amendments in salaries and emoluments of staff.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan informed that the annual contribution of the country for the year 2017 will be received at the earliest. He further noted that the approval of ECI budget for the year 2018 is subject to incorporation of amendments in the proposed budget.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: proposed that the Council may approve ECI draft budget for the year 2018 partially (one third) on a provisional basis until it is sanctioned by the relevant authorities in the government of member states. He noted that a number of proposed activities for the year 2018 has already been funded and carried out since almost 4 months of the same year has elapsed. He emphasized that the issue of ECI budget is better to be addressed by the current forum instead of referring it to the abovementioned Working Group.

Representative of ECI: explained that the salary and emoluments of official members of ECI staff is in compliance with ECI's staff regulations and for the local staff who get paid in Iranian Rial, the labor rules of the host country is observed. He also clarified that all points/observations raised at the meeting of the Working Group have been incorporated in the revised version of the budget 2018 and circulated among the member states.

President of ECI: clarified that all overdue salaries by the end of 2017 has been paid to the Tajik member of ECI staff. Also, he reiterated that all ECI staff have been informed of the financial problems of the Institute and the fact that they have to go through hardship and probably not get paid. He further noted that other ECI staff has not received their salaries in recent months as well. Regarding ECI programs, he noted that all member states had been requested to forward their proposed programs before drafting ECI Work Program 2018.

The Council approved ECI proposed budget 2018 for the limited span of 5 months without increment in annual contribution of the member states, same as the year 2017. The Council will begin in June consideration of the proposed budget including a 10% increment. However, some member states informed that they must seek approval by the relevant authorities in their respective government regarding ECI proposed budget for the year 2018.

Also, it was agreed that the 2nd meeting of the Working Group for examination of ECI's draft budget 2018 be convened to reach a consensus and the upcoming ECI-CPR meeting shall make the final decision on ECI budget 2018 upon the outcome of the Working Group meeting.

Agenda item 8

State of affairs concerned with Afghanistan Desk Officer in ECI and Assistant Director from Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: explained that appointment of Assistant Director from Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at ECO Cultural Institute has already been approved by extraordinary meeting of Council of Ministers (23 September 2016) and requested that relevant comments be incorporated into the report of 27th meeting of ECI-CPR. He added that Afghanistan Desk Officer in ECI should have been officially informed that the Institute is not able to pay her salary due to lack of liquidity, so that she could make a proper decision.

Regarding the issues of members of staff from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, President of ECI noted that ECI has always announced its readiness for joining of members of staff from member states but the Institute is facing problems for payment of their salaries. He further reminded that during the 27th ECI-CPR meeting, distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan stated that the member states will find a solution for the salary issue of ECI staff. All ECI staff, including Afghanistan Desk Officer, have been informed of the financial problems of the Institute and the fact that they have to go through hardship and probably not get paid.

Annex-I

**The 28th Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- Mr. Sayed Nader Pajohesh, Second Secretary
- Mr. Yaqoub Houshmand, Deputy Cultural Attaché
- Ms. Bodaghi, Staff Member, ECO Affairs Department

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Majid Bizmark, Director General of the Multilateral Economic and International Cooperation
- Mr. Aziz Hoseini Tabar, Senior Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. 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
- Mr. Mirzosharif Kabirov, Third Secretary

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mazaheri, President
- Ms. Fatemeh Mirbagheri, External Affairs
- Mr. Hamidreza Javadi
- Mr. Shah Mansur Khojeov, Tajikistan's Desk Officer
- Ms. Parvin Khalesi, Accounting Officer
- Ms. Firouzkouhi, Cultural Expert
- Mr. Mehdi Omranejad, Cultural Expert