

Draft Report
of the 32nd Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(ECI Headquarters, 8 March 2021)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 32nd meeting at the ECO Headquarters on 8 March 2021 under the Chairpersonship of H.E. Dr. Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan. The Meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the Republic of Tajikistan as well as a 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/524/808 dated 23 February 2021, was unanimously adopted with addition of the sub-item "Consideration and Adoption of ECI's Proposed Budget for the year 2021" under the Agenda item 4: Budgetary issues. The adopted agenda is as follows:
 1. Adoption of the Agenda,
 2. Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the previous ECI-CPR meeting,
 3. Statement by ECI President on the ECI activities,
 4. Budgetary issues:
 - Consideration and Adoption of ECI's Proposed Budget for the year 2021
 - Latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states
 5. Administrative matters:
 - Seeking authorization of ECI-CPR for commencement of the procedure for attaining Host Country Agreement
 6. Consideration and adoption of ECI's proposed/planned activities/programs (List enclosed as *Annex II*)
 7. Any other Business,
 8. Date and venue of the next meeting.

Agenda item 2

Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the previous ECI-CPR meeting

- The draft report of the 31st ECI-CPR meeting which had been circulated among the Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/118 dated 6 May 2020 was adopted.

Agenda item 3

Statement by ECI President

H.E. Sarvar Bakhti, ECI President made the following statement:

***Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Ambassadors and Representatives of the ECO Member States ,
Ladies and Gentlemen ,***

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for your attendance in this meeting.

Excellencies,

Since the last ECI-CPR meeting we have made every effort to continue our activities online.

I have the honor to inform that the First Joint Symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member-State Universities was held virtually on 04 March 2021. It is considered a milestone in the partnership between the ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Educational Institute, ECO science Foundation and Allameh Tabataba'i University. ECI made every effort and constantly followed up the issue with the invited university rectors to ensure that the webinar will be successfully organized. Thus, we managed to attract participation of the major universities of all the ten ECO member states. The most important result of the meeting will be the establishment of a network connection among the universities of the region for conducting academic exchanges and joint projects.

Also, the 5th Meeting of Heads of National Libraries of ECO Member States is scheduled to be virtually held by ECI and the National Library and Archive of the Islamic Republic of Iran in April 2021. The exact date and further details will be circulated. We request the esteemed member states to follow up the issue with the concerned authorities so that the meeting will be participated by all the member states.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the initiative of ECI, the Consultation Meeting of the ECO Specialized Agencies on "The Role of Culture, Education and Science and in Sustainable Development" was virtually held in January 2021. All three presidents of the Specialized Agencies, i.e. ECO Cultural Institute, ECO Educational Institute, ECO Science Foundation, as well as the Deputy Secretary General for the International Relations Section and ECO Science Foundation President-designate participated in the meeting. At the meeting, proposal for joint activities were discussed. Also, the Presidents of the ECO Specialized Agencies agreed to convene such meetings regularly.

Dear colleagues,

To pay tribute to the cultural and literary figures of the ECO region, ECI holds commemoration ceremonies. Our priority in holding such events is the participation of scholar and researchers from various ECO member states.

To this end, on the occasion of the 143th birth anniversary of Allama Iqbal, the great poet, politician and philosopher of Pakistan, a virtual meeting was held by ECO Cultural Institute in cooperation with Pakistan Embassy in Tehran in November 2020. The meeting was graced by the presence of Senator Walid Iqbal, the grandson of Allama Iqbal.

Also, we held an online commemoration for Moulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Rumi to review his thoughts and works by the scholars of the region.

In addition, we held a webinar titled ‘A Review of the Intellectual and Scholarly Legacy of Mohammad Ibn Zakariya Razi’, at which, academicians delivered their lectures on the theme of the event. Furthermore, concurrent with the Day of Persian Literature and Poetry and Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Shahriyar's Commemoration Day in Iran, ECO Cultural Institute organized an international round-table meeting titled "Shahriyar in the Horizon of Literature and Poetry of ECO Region". The meeting was attended by celebrated poets and authors of the ECO member states who discussed thoughts and poems of Shahriyar.

Furthermore, on the occasion of the 580th birth anniversary of Amir Alisher Navoi, the renowned poet and writer, ECI in partnership with the embassy of Uzbekistan in Tehran held an international webinar in February 2021, titled "Alisher Navoi's works as the cultural achievements of the ECO region". At the webinar, Ambassadors of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and prominent researchers and scholar of the ECO region discussed the personality characteristics and works of this great poet.

Besides, ECI organized an international webinar in honor of Kamal Khujandi. The event took place virtually in partnership with the embassies of Tajikistan and Afghanistan in Tehran, the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, Iran-Tajikistan Friendship Association, the governors of Sugd province, Tajikistan and East Azarbaijan province, Iran, Shahid Beheshti University, University of Tabriz and the Iran Book and Literature House.

Also, on the occasion of the 700th birth anniversary of Kamal Khujandi, Persian ghazal poet of the 14th century, a series of events and activities were arranged by ECI. Our Institute and the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO held a virtual memorial exhibition of calligraphy and illumination in December 2020 to mark the occasion. Some artworks of Iranian and Tajik calligraphers were on display in the event.

Excellencies,

The main mandate of ECI is to preserve common heritage of the ECO region. In this regard, ECI held four online courses on Written Heritage of the ECO Region in August and September 2020. The subjects of the courses were as follows:

- *Introduction to historical documents and reading primary sources*
- *Practical techniques for correcting manuscripts*
- *Study of seals*

- *Comparative literature and cultural studies*

Almost 80 participants from 11 countries joined these courses. The courses were intended for the researchers of national libraries and archives, document centers and academies of science of the ECO member states. Also, we held online courses on Persian calligraphy and illumination from September to November 2020.

Furthermore, ECI in partnership with the Embassy of Afghanistan in Tehran and Baysunghur Research Institute organized a virtual event titled "A Review of Herat Inscriptions" for introducing and recognizing the art of inscription and surviving inscriptions from different periods, especially the Timurid and Safavid periods.

In addition, ECI held a webinar on "The History of Painting in Afghanistan" in which scholars reviewed and discussed the relevant history from the ancient times to the present day.

Also, ECI and the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO have jointly held an online exhibition of Iranian Gilding in September 2020. Twenty seven exquisite artworks were showcased at this exhibition.

To preserve common intangible heritage of the ECO region, on the occasion of "Yalda Night" (Winter Solstice), the international webinar on 'Yalda, Regional Solidarity' held in December 2020. The webinar was attended by President of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature and Saadi Foundation, Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan, and Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic. At the webinar the speakers elaborated on Yalda rituals in their respective countries .

Distinguished colleagues,

You are all well aware of the impacts of Covid-19 on our countries. To address this significant issues, ECI and Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute of Iran held an international webinar on the cultural impact of Corona in Afghanistan. Present at the meeting were Director of Archaeology Institute of Afghanistan and Acting Director, Tourism Directorate, Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan, examined the impact of the corona on Afghanistan cultural heritage and tourism industry.

In addition, ECI and the Women and Peace Research Center at Allameh Tabataba'i University held the webinar "Women and the Peaceful Possibilities of Being in the World" on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. At the webinar, university professors and women's rights activists from Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Kazakhstan marked the day expressing their views and lived experiences.

Excellencies,

In order to take advantage of the existing capacity of cultural authorities of the member states, especially the host country, to facilitate organizing programs and events, ECI has concluded a number of agreements.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between ECI and the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) in January 2021. This MoU will provide ECI with the contribution of the ICRO in its activities for the ECO member states throughout the ECO region. The Organization is the Iranian authority which supports cultural exchange programs with other countries.

Also, ECI has recently inked a MoU with Niavaran Cultural Center, one of the top ten cultural centers in Tehran for conducting joint arts and cultural activities in the areas of literature, poetry, music, drama and visual arts.

Furthermore, to foster links with academia, ECI has concluded an agreement with Shahid Beheshti University for promotion of cultural exchanges within ECO region.

Another MoU has been signed with Farabi Cinema Foundation to plan production of joint movies by the ECO member states, to organize film festival and to hold webinars and training workshops for the cinema enthusiast.

In addition, ECI has recently entered into agreement with Roudaki Cultural Foundation, an affiliate of Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Based on this agreement, the two sides will collaborate in organizing concerts of music of the ECO countries, holding art training courses, facilitating the presence of art groups and artists from ECO member countries in Iran and vice versa.

To promote sports in the ECO region, ECI and Sepahan Sports Club of Isfahan city inked a MoU, hoping that joint cooperation between the Sepahan club and ECI and the other sports clubs of the ECO member states would prepare the ground for Isfahan to become the center of sports diplomacy of the ECO region.

In addition, ECI signed a MoU with Jundi-shapur University located in Dezful. The MoU will enhance the joint cooperation between the universities of the ECO member states.

Excellencies,

It is worth mentioning that none of these MoUs will not be considered an international agreement and are not governed by international law. They merely facilitate our partnerships for implementation of ECI's activities and are in compliance with envisaged objectives in the Charter of ECI. We need to accept the fact that ECI is not able to conduct its wide range of activities within its annual budget without cooperation or contribution of the other cultural organizations. Furthermore, in all the MoUs, it is cleared that the agreement does not contain extra financial obligation for ECI. We hope the ECI-CPR support the Institute in realization of its goals and objectives by endorsing the proposed MoUs.

Distinguished colleagues,

We also have the honor to inform that our new website has been launched which provides exclusive pages for promotion of culture and tourism of each ECO member states. The content of these pages has been extracted from the “ECO Tourist Guide Book”, published by ECI in 2009. So, we hope all the ECO member states help ECI to keep the exclusive page of their respective countries updated. We would like to invite the esteemed member states to visit our new website and convey their views and comments.

To elevate publicity of ECO Cultural Institute and to enhance visibility of cultural programs of the ECO member states, we have started publishing the latest daily cultural and social news of the ECO member states on our website and social networks which will enhance the public awareness throughout the ECO region. Also, we have released a paperback news bulletin containing a selection of the news of the ECO member states. The first issue of the newsletter has been already circulated among the embassies of the ECO member states and the second issue is on the way. We welcome any news of their respective countries to be published or republished on our website.

Regarding publications of ECI, since the last ECI-CPR meeting we have published 4 issues of our quarterly journal 'ECO Heritage', two of them were about the traditional foods and the rock art in the ECO region respectively. Also, based on our cooperation with the Municipality of Isfahan city, we dedicated a special issue of our quarterly journal, ECO Heritage, to Isfahan. The other esteemed ECO Member States may also propose to ECI to publish special issues of the journal on their top historic cultural cities or any other subject of their interest. Furthermore, the next issue to be published in coming days will deal with traditional clothing in the ECO region.

On this auspicious occasion of Nowruz, we have published a special issue dedicated to Nowruz traditions in the ECO member states. We have the honor to present a copy of the journal to the members of this council.

Concerning our books, to commemorate Kamal Khujandi, two books were translated and published by ECI, including "Life and Works of Kamal Khujandi", written by Dr. Badriddin Maghsudzoda and "Forty Lessons from Kamal", by Suraya Hassan Sultan. Also, a memorial album of the music tracks by Tajik singers containing poems of Kamal Khujandi was released in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Tehran.

Furthermore, ECI has published some more literary books in partnership with other publications, including:

- "Stories of Rostam Pahlavan" (11 volume set), authored by Dr. Fereydoun Joneidi the collection provides both Cyrillic and Persian scripts and is a readable volume for the youth and young adults.

- 'Letter & Letter Writing in Shahnameh, written by the late Dr. Joreh Beyk Nazari and Dr. Ali Mohammadi Khorasani

- The book 'Yar Mi-Ayad' (Here Comes the Beloved) is a collection of poems by Kutbi Kirom who is Peoples' Poet of Tajikistan and laureate of the Rudaki State Award

In addition to the said publications, we virtually held the second session of the meeting series with the Iranian publishers of the books on the ECO region or countries, in which the latest publications of 'Kheradgan' publishers were presented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Above all the aforementioned activities, ECI has contributed to and participated in a variety of programs including: online conference on the Creativity of Kamoliddin Behzod in the cross-section of artistic culture of the East and West" organized by the Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan, the international Congress "Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan - the Foundation of a New Renaissance", organized by the World Society for the Study, Preservation and Popularization of the Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan, international online conference on "Cultural Dialogue,

Peace and Development on the Silk Road", organized by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft, Municipality of Mashhad and some other cultural authorities.

Excellencies,

Regarding our plans for the future, as you see on the agenda item 6 and the annexed table, we have proposed activities for consideration and approval of the distinguished members of ECI-CPR.

Anyway, I would like to underline our plan for the first item on the aforementioned table which is "Nowruz celebration". This event will include performing pieces of music of the ECO member states, exhibition of photos on the theme of Nowruz rituals in the ECO region, handicrafts of the ECO member states and exhibition of paintings by Afghan artists.

Excellencies,

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to you for taking part in this meeting and hope you all keep safe and sound amid this coronavirus pandemic.

Thank you.

All the member states expressed their appreciation for the wide range of activities organized by ECI.

Agenda item 4

Budgetary matters:

- Consideration and Adoption of ECI's Proposed Budget for the year 2021

To secure the smooth functioning of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), on behalf of the Board of Trustees (BoT), the CPR adopted the ECI's proposed budget for the year 2021 by silent procedure providing that no objection is raised by the member states within 14 days from the date of the current ECI-CPR meeting.

- Latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states

President of ECI briefed the Council that ECI is in dire financial straits. Even worse, the Institute is still in debt to some members of its official staff for their overdue salary while they have almost completed their service and ECI has to pay their end of service gratuity and provident fund as well which is a considerable amount. The Institute has received annual contribution for the year 2020 only from Afghanistan and Tajikistan which is equal to 114,330 USD while ECI is 141,600 USD in arrears to its official staff. This means a deficit of more than 27,000 USD. In other word, ECI is not able to pay off the emoluments of its outgoing official staff, let alone the monthly salary of the remaining member of staff or even implementation of our planned activities.

ECI, however, extends its sincere gratitude to the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Republic of Tajikistan for payment of their share for the year 2020.

The esteemed member states are requested to kindly take necessary measures for acceleration in their payments.

Regarding the outstanding arrears of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Chairman (Ambassador of Tajikistan) briefed the council that the arrears are related to a period of 6 years (up to 2013) in which the Republic of Tajikistan was not very much involved in the activities of ECI. Other than that, Tajikistan has regularly paid its annual contribution to ECI every year. He stressed that the problem of the outstanding arrears of the member state should be solved in consultation with ECI.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: explained that the issue of Iran's annual contribution to the budget of ECI is being followed and the payment for the year 2020 will be made shortly. The member state will also pay its share for 2021 as soon as possible. It is hoped that the annual contributions of the member states are received by ECI before the completion of service of its outgoing staff, so that they receive all their emoluments when they are leaving the Institute. Otherwise, it is proposed that in the event that sufficient funds are not available for settlement of debts to the outgoing members of the ECI staff, they may receive a cheque for the remaining amount of their emoluments when they are leaving the Institute.

With respect to the existing banking transfer problems for payment of annual contributions by the member states, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran referred to the swap arrangement for annual contribution between ECO Cultural Institute and ECO Science Foundation (based in Pakistan) which has not been finalized yet. In this regard, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran will take the matter up with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology which is considered the national focal point of ECO Science Foundation in Iran, so that the Ministry of Science makes payment to the ECO Cultural Institute as its due contribution to the ECO Science Foundation and the relevant Pakistani Ministry makes payment to the ECO Science Foundation as its due contribution to the ECO Cultural Institute.

He emphasized that some mechanism should be developed for the problem of the outstanding arrears which have been accumulated over several years, so that the member states in debt will not encounter an overburdened financial situation.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: briefed the meeting that there had been some mistake due to lack of communication when government of Pakistan remitted its annual contribution to ECI for the year 2019. The problem relates to the Ministry of Federal Education of Pakistan and a procedural mistake has happened on the basis of previous transactions. In a nutshell, Due to sanctions on money transfer, the future of the aforesaid contribution is unclear, but the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran is endeavouring to retrieve the funds.

For this year, the budget has been approved and the Embassy is seeking a safe procedure for transferring money.

He noted that the Embassy is cooperating with the Ministry of Federal Education of Pakistan (which is ECI's focal ministry) for assignment of an officer to the post of Assistant Director at ECI. Then the Assistant should be able to directly coordinate between the Ministry and the Institute. Soon good news regarding payment of contribution will be shared with ECI.

Agenda item 5

Administrative matters:

- Seeking authorization of ECI-CPR for commencement of the procedure for attaining Host Country Agreement

ECI President declared that ECI extends its sincere gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran as the host country for providing ECI with a proper and equipped with facilities premises. However, all the other specialized agencies of ECO have recently attained or have begun the relevant process. The council may authorize ECI to commence the procedure for attaining host country agreement.

The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its full support for conclusion of the Agreement.

The ECI-CPR authorized ECI to commence the relevant procedure and conclude the Host Country Agreement with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Agenda item 6

Consideration and adoption of ECI's proposed/planned activities/programs (List enclosed as *Annex II*)

The Council considered and endorsed the ECI's proposed/planned activities/programs providing that all the following comments/views and recommendations of the member states will be taken into consideration:

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: recommended that ECI pay more attention to produce publications. Although, virtual events are considered great activities but they do not exert effect as lasting as publications do. Also, the speeches or papers presented at webinars can be printed in the format of a publication and be circulated among the member states for their perusal.

Furthermore, he pointed out the importance of rich common cultural heritage of the ECO region and proposed that ECI may organize webinars for identifying risks and dangers threatening the cultural heritage and preservation solutions.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: noted that although ECI is located in Iran, its activities should not focus mostly on Iran and cooperation with Iranian cultural authorities. ECI needs to concentrate more on regional activities and partnership with regional and international organizations.

Regarding MoUs, he declared that Iran is a member state of ECI, hence all Iranian cultural authorities are obliged to collaborate with ECI, even without MoUs. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran supports ECI activities which are within the scope of its Charter, and if needed, will request the relevant cultural authorities of Iran to cooperate with ECI. However, Government of Islamic Republic of Iran supports MoUs which are considered essential, for instance "MoU with Abbasabad Lands Rehabilitation Company" for operationalization of ECO Park.

Regarding MoU with Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), he noted that it is envisaged in ECI's Charter as an objective "To promote cooperation between the news agencies of the Region by means of establishing network connection among them." Hence, the said MoU must contain this objective or ECI should conclude with the news agencies of all the member states.

Regarding MoU with Saadi Foundation, despite Saadi is considered a prominent literary figure of the ECO region, ECI is supposed to conclude agreements with the other foundations related to the luminaries of the ECO region.

Furthermore, he referred to some provision of the ECI Charter regarding branches of the Institute, and requested ECI to place on its agenda the establishment of one branch in each member state. This will help the Institute to keep a regional profile. It is understandable that there exists financial, bureaucratic difficulties or the other member states might not be prepared for hosting ECI's branch at the present time but ECI should plan it for the future. It is proposed that ECI may request the member states with outstanding arrears to establish the Institute's branch in their respective countries and their government will fund the branch in lieu of the arrears.

There is no need that ECI establishes branches/offices across Iran in addition to its Headquarters. This is the stance of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In no other Iranian cities, any type of representative office, coordination unit, shop or the like must not be established using the title of the ECO Cultural Institute. The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will support ECI in establishing branches in the other member states.

He requested further details on the following proposed activities: "Establishment of a Network Connection between the Craft Artists of the ECO Region", "Establishing Kashan-ECO Friendship House" and "MoU with the Authority of Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Ground".

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan supported the idea that ECI needs to be represented in every member state by establishing a branch. The member states should know about this Institute and how they take advantage of its capacity.

Regarding MoUs, despite that the agreements are considered good steps for advancing ECI's goals, but the cultural authorities of all the member states are duty-bound to extend full cooperation with ECI. He requested ECI to advise the member states on how to inform their relevant authorities of the existing opportunities created by these agreements. Likewise, ECI can also underline the opportunities which are available in the member states, for instance training courses.

The Chair supported ECI's activities and recommended that one of the future objectives of ECI should be encouraging the other member states to join ECI or ratify its charter.

President of ECI thanked for the view, proposals and recommendations of all the member states regarding the activities of ECI and assured that ECI will take them into consideration for planning its future programs.

In response to the comments of Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, he further clarified that several books (as mentioned in the Annex II) will soon be published by ECI. To contribute to the preservation of common cultural heritage in the ECO region, ECI has dedicated one of these books to introduction of the intangible heritage of the ECO region.

In response to the request by the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he elaborated that establishing network connection between individuals/organizations who are

related to various elements of culture is one of most significant objectives of ECI as envisaged in the Institute's Charter. Therefore, ECI plans to establish a network connection between the craft artists of the ECO Region by opening a permanent exhibition of their products under the brand "ECO Art". The project aims to get the people of the region acquainted with the handicrafts of each member state. It also creates an opportunity for arts enthusiast to buy their favorite craftworks. Within the framework of this project, the craft artists of the region can hold joint exhibitions in all the ECO member states, hold seminars to exchange experience and expertise. The ECI-CPR is requested to authorize ECI to start the project. A solidified proposal and relevant modality will be provided shortly for consideration and approval.

“Kashan-ECO Friendship House” is a project similar to ECO Park. Based on negotiations with the Municipality of Kashan which is a tourist destination, ECI will be endowed with one of the most beautiful preserved historical houses in the city. The premises will be dedicated to ECI's future activities and proposed programs by the member states. The esteemed ECO member states may take advantage of the House for organizing their national or ceremonial events. Also, the House can provide opportunities for promotion of tourism of the ECO region. The esteemed member states may supply the House with their handicrafts, costumes, music and any other tourist attractions of their country. Again the ECI-CPR is requested to authorize ECI to start the project. A solidified proposal and relevant modality will be provided shortly for consideration and approval.

“Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Ground” is one of the largest exhibition grounds in the ECO region. Based on this MoU, a very large and stunning square, located inside Shahr Aftab exhibition ground, will be named Nowruz to symbolize and promote common cultural heritage of the ECO region. The esteemed member states may take advantage of the existing facilities, conference halls, etc in the Shahr-e Aftab complex.

Regarding MoUs, ECI agrees with the points raised by the distinguished the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and there could be a possibility for cooperation with the other cultural authorities without concluding MoUs, but it is worth mentioning that such MoUs have always been concluded by ECI in the past. As mentioned earlier, none of these MoUs are not legally binding contracts. There are just agreements to facilitate our cooperation with the other organizations but if this council which is a decision -making body for ECI considers them unnecessary, ECI will go by the Council's decision.

In response to the comments by the Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, ECI President clarified that ECI has already requested all the esteemed member states vide a circular note to convey their proposal to be included in the planned activities of ECI for the year 2021. The aforementioned Note Verbale was forwarded to the esteemed embassies of the member states before the last meeting of Regional Planning Council but we received no proposal from the esteemed member states except for Tajikistan. Under the circumstances, we had to plan our activities on our own. Anyway, we always make every effort to carry out the activities which are in conformity with the objective enshrined in our Charter. However, we welcome feedbacks or new proposals from all the member states all the time.

Regarding accession of the other ECO member states to ECI, the President elaborated that various activities have been carried out to meet this objective. For instance, ECI has

cooperated with the embassy of Uzbekistan in Tehran in a number of successful cultural programs. The Embassy has just requested the Institute to provide the relevant information about the procedure of membership and annual contribution and ECI furnished the Embassy with the required details.

Furthermore, he emphasized that ECI makes every effort to involve all the ten ECO member states in its activities. One good example is ECI's journals in which all the ECO member states are represented.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran referred to “Establishment of a Network Connection between the Craft Artists of the ECO Region”, and emphasized that the network should be directly operated by ECI and the venue of the aforementioned permanent exhibition must be the art gallery of the Institute not any other Institute, gallery or shop. This is of great importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Regarding “MoU with the Authority of Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Ground”, it should be incorporated into the MoU that an exclusive space must be reserved permanently for the complimentary use of ECO member states in every exhibition held in Shahr-e Aftab complex. It will be great for the publicity of the Institute and the member states.

He also proposed that ECI newsletter may be published in Russian language as well because it’s one of most common languages in the ECO region. This will increase the readership of the publication in the ECO member states not joined the Institute yet. The Institute may seek assistance of the ECO Secretariat or the ECO member states in this regard. Also, ECI may request the government of the Republic of Tajikistan to provide the Institute with Russian translation services in lieu of part of its arrears.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: highlighted the importance of the upcoming Nowruz and its distinguishing feature which marks the beginning of a new century in the Solar Hejri calendar. It must be celebrated more magnificently than ever and conveys a message based on our experiences over the last century. The Ambassador proposed that a regional advocacy campaign may be launched within the coming Nowruz celebrations in which people of the region are encouraged to contribute to afforestation and making positive effects on the environment.

President of ECI assured that ECI will propose an activity in the next ECI-CPR meeting on the above-mentioned theme.

Agenda item 7

Any other business

Regarding the 7th meeting of the Institute's Board of Trustees, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed that the meeting may be held virtually. A virtual meeting will provide an opportunity to invite all the culture ministers of the other non-ratifying member states to participate in the event and acquaint with the ECI’s activities. This may encourage them to become a full member to ECI.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan reminded that the event was due to be held in February 2019 by Pakistan and all preparations for the event were finalized but just a week before the meeting, some participations were not confirmed and it was postponed.

Embassy of Pakistan is ready to start over and prepare a coordinated plan in cooperation with ECI and the Ministry of Federal Education of Pakistan.

The Chair pointed out that the Republic of Tajikistan has been holding the chairpersonship of ECI-CPR since the year 2015, in which the last meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Institute was held in Tajikistan. He noted that at the time being both President of ECI and the chairperson of ECI-CPR are from Tajikistan. This has resulted in a situation which does not seem acceptable.

He requested ECI to inform the member states vide a circular Note Verbale that the chairpersonship of ECI-CPR is transferred under silent procedure from the Republic of Tajikistan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which will be hosting the upcoming meeting of BoT.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed that ECI may prepare a table in which the period of time for chairpersonship of every member state at the ECI-CPR is defined. Each member state may hold the chairpersonship for a term of two or three years. Nevertheless, the meeting of BoT may be held by the member state that is holding chairpersonship at any time during its tenure.

President of ECI emphasized that the Institute attaches particular importance to BoT meeting and ECI has already proposed to the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran vide a Note Verbale that the BoT meeting may be held virtually. ECI maintains cooperation with the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran to prepare for the upcoming BoT meeting.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan proposed that ECI may provide the member states with a Concept Note containing detailed information on its annual work program and calendar of events, explaining the method/procedure of finalization of ECI's work program, what contribution is made by ECI and what is expected from the concerned authorities of the member states.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran will soon convey to the Institute its nominations for the posts of Executive Director and Cultural Expert (P3) at ECI.

President of ECI requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to take into consideration the current financial situation being faced by ECI before finalizing nominations for the vacant posts at ECI.

Agenda item 8

Date and venue of the next meeting

The Council recommended that ECI convenes the ECI-CPR meetings regularly on a monthly basis and fix the date of the meetings after consultation with the member states.

Annex-I

**The 32nd Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H.E. Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, Ambassador
- Mr. Abdul Ghani Farahi, Second Secretary and in charge of ECO and Economic Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- Dr. Seyed Jalaleddin Alavi Sabzevari, Director General, Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation
- Mr. Abolghasem Tahmasebi, Director, ECO Affairs Bureau
- Mr. Ghaderi, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Mian Azmat Farooq, Deputy Head of Mission /First Secretary

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- H.E. Dr. Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador
- Mr. Bahrom Azimov, Second Secretary

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Sarvar Bakhti, President
- Ms. Mirbagheri, External Relations
- Mr. Sayed Javad Mirkazemian, Accounts Officer
- Mr. Shah Mansur Khojeov, Tajikistan's Desk Officer
- Ms. Masuma Nazari, Afghanistan's Desk Officer
- Mr. Mehdi Omraninejad, Expert
- Ms. Nastaran Nosratzadegan, Interpreter

*Annex II***ECI's Proposed/Planned Activities/Programs**

	Program	Date	Venue
1	Nowruz Celebration	March 2021	ECI Headquarters- invite-only event
2	Establishment of a Network Connection between the Craft Artists of the ECO Region	-	-
3	Publishing the book "Archeology of Iron Age: The Early Civilization of Afghanistan"	March 2021	-
4	Publishing the book " Intangible Heritage of the ECO Region"	March 2021	-
5	Calligraphy exhibition by Yadegar Khayyam, an Iranian artist, in ECI's gallery	March 2021	ECI Headquarters- invite-only event
6	The 5 th Meeting of Heads of National Libraries of ECO Member States	April 2021	Online
7	Publishing the book "Modern Poetry of Iran"	May 2021	-
8	Commemoration of Mirzo Tursunzoda, people's poet and national hero of Tajikistan	May 2021	Online
9	Webinar: A review of the Kufic inscriptions of Jam Ghor minaret in Afghanistan	May 2021	Online
10	webinar for unveiling Amir Alisher Navoi memorial medallion	May 2021	online
11	Establishing Kashan-ECO Friendship House	-	-
12	Continuance of publication of the ECI newsletter in English and Persian	-	-
13	MoU with Saadi Foundation	-	-
14	MoU with Abbasabad Lands Rehabilitation Company	-	-
15	MoU with Islamic Republic News Agency(IRNA)	-	-
16	MoU with the Authority of Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Ground	-	-