

38th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) of ECI

May 29, 2023

Draft Report

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 38th meeting at the ECI Headquarters on May 29, 2023. The meeting began under the chairpersonship of Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ambassadors and representatives of ECI Member States, namely the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Türkiye as well as a delegation of the ECO Cultural Institute headed by ECI President also attended the Meeting. (List of Participants is enclosed as Annex. I).

At the beginning of the Meeting, the Chairman acknowledged with appreciation the presence of the Representative of the Republic of Türkiye and welcomed membership of Türkiye in ECI.

Agenda item 1

- The draft agenda of the Meeting had been circulated among Member States via Note No. ECI/524/174 dated May 11, 2023. The agenda was unanimously adopted as follows:
 1. Adoption of the Agenda
 2. Consideration and adoption of the draft reports of the 36th and 37th ECI-CPR meetings
 3. Statement by ECI President on the ECI activities
 4. Administrative issues:
 - Latest status of nomination by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the post of President at ECI
 5. Budgetary issues:
 - Latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states
 6. Preparation for the 7th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)
 7. Finalization of “ECO Youth Award” modality
 8. Any other Business
 9. Date and venue of the next meeting

Agenda item 2

Consideration and adoption of the Draft Reports of the 36th and 37th ECI-CPR meetings

Chair noted that during the last ECI-CPR meeting, at the request by the delegation of the Republic of Türkiye, the Council suspended the adoption of the report of the 36th meeting.

The CPR may consider the adoption of the draft report of its as prepared by the Institute. The draft reports of the 36th and 37th ECI-CPR meetings which were circulated via Note No. ECI/524/626 dated January 15, 2023 and Note No. ECI/524/140 dated April 27, 2023 respectively, were unanimously adopted.

Agenda item 3

Statement by ECI President on the ECI activities

- Under this item, Mr. Murodjon Buriboev, ECI President, made his statement and briefed the Meeting on the activities of the Institute since last CPR meeting. Statement of the ECI President is attached to this report as annex II.

Chair, in the capacity as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, noted that ECI is a regional organization while most of its activities are related to the host country. The Institute should be represented in events which are held in all the ECO member states. However, it is understandable that due to financial constraints, it is not possible for ECI to be present in activities outside Iran. **To address the problem, the ECI-CPR requests the member states to invite the Institute to their relevant cultural activities and give some role to the ECI.** Also, they may invite the Institute to the ECO meetings to be held in their respective country, such as Council of Ministers (CoM) meeting to be held in October in Baku, and Summit meeting be held in November in Tashkent.

This will provide the Institute with a chance to hold a cultural event on the sidelines of the main meeting with the help of the host country and an opportunity for bilateral discussions and cooperation with the host country, as well. The ECI may share its relevant proposal with the ECO Secretariat. Also, the issue has been raised at the ECO-CPR meetings as well.

Agenda item 4

Administrative issues:

Latest status of nomination by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the post of President at ECI

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that **the process of the nomination for the post is almost finalized**, and the case has been presented before the Prime Minister of Pakistan for his final approval. So, good news is expected very soon.

Agenda item 5

Budgetary issues:

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

ECI Accounts Officer clarified that the table of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states, provided by the ECI, has been adjusted as requested by the Representative of the Republic of Türkiye in the last meeting and a separate column has been added to indicate the due annual contribution of the member states in 2023.

Representative of the Republic of Türkiye expressed that the Embassy of his country has received, the call for contribution (letter of assessment) from the ECI payment procedure is in progress. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Türkiye will be responsible for the payment. The Ministry has sought technicalities and hopefully it will be done soon. As per the practice regarding payment of contribution to the ECO Secretariat, the payment will be made to the ECI as well.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan explained that the member state has sent a Note Verbale to the ECI conveying Tajikistan's willingness **to raise its annual contribution to the ECI's budget by 10 percent provided that Tajikistan's outstanding arrears would be written off.**

The Ambassador further clarified that the arrears have been accumulated until the year 2014 and from the year onwards, Tajikistan has been paying its due annual contribution to the ECI's budget on a timely basis.

Chair, in the capacity as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed that as previously mentioned in the past meetings of the Council, **Iran supports the proposal made by Tajikistan.**

He further noted that similar practice in the ECO Secretariat had been adopted to write off the dues of Uzbekistan and it could be followed at the ECI as well. However, the ECI-CPR is not the decision-making body in this regard and it should be submitted to the ECO Council of Ministers or Summit. He emphasized that the contribution of the member states could be not only financially but also intellectually. He thanked Tajikistan for constant contribution to the ECI in cash and in kind.

Chair added that the member states need **to come up with a new scale of assessment** for the next year, because Türkiye has joined the Institute as a new member and hopefully the membership of the Institute would be increased by accession of some more members since some indications from some ECO member states have been received.

He requested the President of the ECI to approach Uzbekistan in particular because the country has showed interest to join the ECI. The country is organizing summit this year and it could be the right time to announce its accession in the Summit.

Chair, in the capacity as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed willingness to take part in the aforesaid Committee and hoped that all the other member states do so.

The ECI-CPR concluded with recommendation to the next meeting of the ECI's Board of Trustees to decide on the proposal made by the Republic of Tajikistan for writing off its outstanding arrears to the ECI's annual budget and increasing its due annual contribution to the Institute by 10 percent each year. The issue may be submitted to the ECO Council of Ministers for final approval, if needed.

Furthermore, the Council decided to establish a committee to formulate a new Scale of Assessment of Contribution by the member states to the ECI's budget for the year 2024. The Institute may seek advisory opinion from the ECO Secretariat on how to proceed with the issue. The abovementioned proposal by Tajikistan may be discussed in the Committee as well. The Scale may be reevaluated when a new member state accedes to the ECI.

Agenda item 6

Preparation for the 7th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)

Chair explained that several meetings have been held between the host authorities and the ECI plus Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The host authorities have approached all the ECO member states including the ECI members to invite them to the meeting. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance as the host authority decided to organize two separate meetings, one would be the Board of Trustees meeting for the ECI member states and the other would be a broader meeting by participation of all the ECO member states.

He further noted that some indication from at least four countries have been received that they would take part in the said meetings, three of them at ministerial level. But no indication, formal or informal, received from the ECI member states regarding their participation. A Note Verbale was received from the Republic of Türkiye indicating that because of the presidential election in the country, it is not certain who will represent the member state in the meetings. The organizing authority needs to receive confirmation of participation from the member states otherwise there would be a possibility of the postponement of the meetings due to insufficient participation at ministerial level. He reminded that full hospitality would be provided to the participating ministers.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan informed that the draft agenda of the BoT meeting and the invitation have been forwarded to the Pakistani authorities concerned and the response is awaited.

Representative of the Republic of Türkiye also explained that the relevant documents of the BoT meeting have been conveyed to the Ministry concerned. **Definitely a delegation from Türkiye would take part in the High Level Expert Group meeting**, but due to the presidential election in Türkiye, there's a possibility of a cabinet reshuffle. If the Minister of Culture and Tourism is changed, the ECI will be informed so that a new invitation will be issued.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan assured that Tajikistan will certainly take part in the BoT meeting but **the level of participation is not decided** yet because the member state plans to hold its cultural days in some other country which is coincided with the BoT meeting.

Chair clarified that the understanding is that all the member states participate in the BoT meeting so the quorum would be reached and the meeting can be convened. However, the level of participation is important.

He further informed that ministers of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and one other ECO member state have confirmed their participation. So, it's a good chance also to have some non-ECI members involved in cultural activities of the Institute which could have positive impact on enlargement of the ECI membership.

ECI Executive Director declared that the host authorities expect participation of at least two ministers for convening the BoT meeting otherwise it will be postponed some other date that would be more convenient for the ECI member states. Although some non-ECI members have confirmed their participation but presence of the ministers of the ECI member states is essential.

He noted that there are issues that need the consideration of the current meeting of ECI-CPR even if the BoT is postponed. The ECI-CPR on behalf of the ECI BoT may consider such issues and decide to adopt them under silence procedure.

He noted that although no comments were received on the agenda of the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) and BoT meetings but the ECI member states are requested to express their views and observations.

Chair expressed that if the upcoming BoT meeting would be postponed, the concerned issues can be discussed in the next meeting of the ECI-CPR and gain the approval of the member states through silence procedure. Anyway, the most significant thing is that all the ECI member states make collective effort to convene the BoT meeting after seven years since its last meeting. He noted that there would be another meeting tomorrow between Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the host authorities and ECI to make decision on organizing the BoT meeting.

Chair emphasized that the BoT meeting should not be postponed more than two months. It is a common practice regarding ECO meetings as well. He hoped that if the BoT meeting is postponed, all ministers of the ECO member states including the ECI members would participate in the meetings concerned.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan referred to draft Tehran Framework for ECO Cultural Cooperation and noted that names of some member states are missing in the Preamble of the document. He also queried about "Implementation and Cooperation Committee" (ICC) in page 3 of the draft; How it would be funded? Whether ECO will lead the Committee or the ECI?

Another issue is that although ICC consists of all ten ECO member states but its meetings will be convened only in five ECI member states.

The Ambassador declared that enlargement of the ECI's membership is a significant point but the abovementioned Draft lacks an encouraging phrase for accession of new member states to the Institute.

He also queried whether the draft documents related to the BoT meeting would be considered only in the upcoming HLEG meeting or they could be reviewed in the ECI-CPR as well?

Chair clarified that the missing names of the ECO member states are merely a technical hitch and the names will be incorporated in the text. He also elaborated on ICC expressing that because only five out of ten ECO member states are members to the ECI, ICC would be established as a mechanism and intergovernmental body to engage all the ECO member states in meetings on cultural issues to implement the said framework. The Committee will function under the leadership of the ECI and develops annual calendar of events for the Institute. The ECI is the focal point for cultural activities across all the ECO region not only its five member states. **The draft Framework could be discussed in the HLEG meeting in order to improve it if required.**

Chair noted that draft Tehran Framework for ECO Cultural Cooperation has been prepared by the host country and Tehran Declaration on Cultural Cooperation among ECO Member States has been proposed by the ECI for the BoT meeting.

ECI Executive Director referred to Tehran Framework for ECO Cultural Cooperation and noted that the ECI does not need the ICC because the Institute is able to represent all the ten ECO member states and fulfil the duties envisaged for the ICC.

Chair clarified that the ICC is an intergovernmental body with 10 member states while the ECI is an organization, a secretariat. These are different from each other. **In the other word, the ECI is the secretariat to the ICC. The ECI itself cannot invite all ten member states to convene a meeting but the ICC enables the Institute to do so. The ICC would be neither a parallel organization nor a new establishment which intervenes in responsibilities of the Institute. It would be a platform for all ten member states to gather and discuss cultural issues. However, it can be much more clarified in the text that there would be no duplication of roles or functions. It would be an intergovernmental body that the ECI provides it with secretarial services.**

ECI Executive Director in response to query raised by the Ambassador of Tajikistan regarding the meetings of ICC, proposed that all the meetings of ICC could be convened in Tehran by the ECI.

Chair proposed that Tehran Declaration **could be named Plan of Action** if in which some special projects have been envisaged.

ECI Executive Director explained that in Tehran Declaration the member states have been requested to form a committee for developing a ten-year vision for ECO Cultural Institute.

Chair noted that the text of both Tehran Declaration and Tehran Framework will be discussed in the upcoming HLEG meeting. The esteemed member states may convey their relevant comments to the ECI via Note Verbale to be circulated by the Institute.

Representative of the Republic of Türkiye queried about the deadline for conveying proposals/observation regarding Tehran Declaration. He noted that that Türkiye intends to introduce some proposals to be included in the draft Tehran Declaration. Considering that the

proposals which are received from the member states would be circulated among the other member states by the ECI, should the proposals be conveyed in writing or be discussed in the next ECI-CPR meeting before the upcoming High Level Expert Group meeting. Whether another ECI-CPR meeting will be convened by the said time or not?

He also requested the ECI to kindly add some lines to the draft Tehran Declaration regarding the accession of the Republic of Türkiye to the ECO Cultural Institute.

Chair clarified that another ECI-CPR meeting before the HLEG meeting is not very likely. There would be no decline for conveying the observations/proposals, even they could be raised at the HLEG meeting but it would be better if they are received before the said meeting.

Agenda item 7

Finalization of “ECO Youth Award” modality

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan expressed that the Modality was considered in the last ECI-CPR meeting and it was expected that the updated version of the Modality would be circulated among the member states accordingly to be forwarded to the relevant authorities but it has not been received yet. However, **Tajikistan fully supports the Award.**

ECI Executive Director clarified that the ECI didn't receive any request for updating the Modality. Anyhow, all the observations raised by the member states in the last ECI-CPR have been incorporated in the Modality. Nevertheless, no more proposals or observations were received from the member states. Therefore, the latest version of the Modality is ready for distribution.

In addition, the Institute has prepared documents indicating that the ECO Youth Award is legal and accepted by the ECO Secretariat. Furthermore, the Note Verbale for inviting sponsors from all the member states for contributing to the Award has been prepared by the ECI but was not circulated because the Modality for the Award had not been finalized yet.

The ECI-CPR requested the ECI to circulate the proposed “ECO Youth Award” modality amongst the member states and if no comments/observations received within two weeks, the Modality will be considered by the upcoming High Level Expert Group meeting and submitted to the BoT to be adopted. Otherwise, in the case of postponement of the BoT meeting, the Modality will be considered as adopted.

Agenda item 8

Any other business

ECI Accounts Officer briefed the meeting on some debts of the ECI pertinent to the tenure of the former President of the Institute. He explained that an amount of 5,582 USD has been paid and an amount of 13,267 USD is required to be paid for the end of service gratuity of former local employees. Also, an amount of 3,367 USD is required to be paid for settlement of purchase of air tickets for the Friendship Ascent program organized by the ECI in which female mountaineers of ECO member states climbed Tochal Peak in Iran in March 2022. Overall, the total amount of the Institute's debts to individuals and companies which are incurred during the tenure of the ECI's former president, equals to 22,216 USD, part of which has been paid and the remaining should be cleared.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan noted that the said dues were attributed to the former President of the Institute. Such issues do not need to be referred to the incumbent or previous president. Those costs are related to the activities and affairs of the Institute. According to the practice at the ECO Secretariat, the member states should be informed of the Institute's expenditure in advance. Furthermore, it should be clarified why the debts have not been settled during the tenure of the former president of the Institute?

ECI President endorsed the comment by the Ambassador of Tajikistan and declared that the explanation was just a general report. These debts have been incurred during the tenure of the former presidents and remain unsettled till date. He further assured the observation by the Ambassador will be taken into consideration in the future.

Chair supported the observation made by the Ambassador of Tajikistan and expressed that mention of the date of the expenditure could suffice. He emphasized that such issues should be conveyed to the member states via circular Note in advance so that they can make decision. However, some issues do not need the authorization of the ECI-CPR and could be handled at the discretion of the ECI President.

He emphasized that the ECI is authorized to spend on such issues but there should be some records in the ECI-CPR reports as well so that it could be part of the decisions of the ECI-CPR.

Agenda item 9

Date and venue of the next meeting

Chair proposed that the next meeting **may be convened in late June**. The exact date of the next meeting would be informed by the ECI after consultation with the Chair of the meeting and the Member States.

Annex-I
The 38th Meeting of
The ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

List of Participants

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- Mr. Seyed Jalaeddin Alavi Sabzevari, Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation
- Mr. Khavari, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Ahmed Shami, Counsellor

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

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

Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye:

- Mr. Mehmet Zahit Uzun, Counsellor

ECO Cultural Institute:

- Mr. Murodjon Buriboev, President
- Dr. Esmaeili Fard, Executive Director
- Ms. Mirbagheri, External Relations
- Mr. Sayed Javad Mirkazemian, Accounts Officer
- Mr. Shah Mansur Khojeov, Tajikistan's Desk Officer
- Ms. Mahtab Sahel, Afghanistan's Desk Officer
- Mr. Mehdi Omraninejad, Expert

ECO Secretariat:

- Mr. Amir Mohammad Javaheri, Translator

Annex-II

**Statement by President of ECO Cultural Institute
Mr. Murodjon Buriboev**

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

I welcome all Your Excellencies to the 38th meeting of the ECI-CPR and take this opportunity to thank you for attendance in this meeting.

I would like to brief the Council on our latest activities since the last meeting of ECI-CPR which was held in April.

Excellencies,

As you are well aware, we are fast approaching the meeting of the Institute's Board of Trustees. The whole staff members are working hard on the issue and keep in close contact with the organizing authorities of the host country to make sure that necessary arrangements are being planned and implemented properly. In this respect, a planning committee has been established consistent of delegations from the Iranian Ministry of culture and Islamic Guidance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations and the ECO Cultural Institute. The Committee has convened several meetings to scrutinize all details. My colleague will further elaborate on the issue under the relevant agenda item. The esteemed member states are requested to kindly convey the confirmation of participation of their honorable minister at the earliest possible to facilitate the planning process and hospitality arrangements. We welcome your comments and recommendations that would contribute to the success of the upcoming BoT meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ECO Cultural Institute places a high value on close cooperation with media as enshrined in its Charter. To this end, the President of the Institute delivered a speech at a ceremony to mark the 27th establishment anniversary of Farhang Radio of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting which was held on May 1. In his speech, the role of media in raising public awareness of the cultural diversity of nations was highlighted.

Also, the ECI has always used its media for covering the cultural news of the ECO region. In this respect, the website of the Institute provides exclusive pages for promotion of culture and tourism of each ECO member state. The esteemed member states are welcome to contribute to the contents of these pages.

Dear Colleagues,

Promotion of tourism and cultural tourism is another significant priority of our Institute. In this respect, the ECI took part in an event to mark Ardabil as the ECO tourism capital for the year 2023. The event held in the city of Ardabil on April 27 and graced by the presence of Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Governor General of Ardabil province, ECO Secretary General, ambassadors and diplomats based in Iran including the ECO member states. On the sideline of the event, the ECI President met with the Governor General of Ardabil Province. At the meeting, the sides discussed ways and means of promotion of tourist attractions of Ardabil and possibilities of mutual cooperation. As usual, we are planning to allocate one special issue of our journal “ECO HERITAGE” to Ardabil.

Also, following up on cooperation with Isfahan Municipality, the ECI President met with a delegation from the Municipality led by Deputy Mayor for Cultural Affairs on April 9, at the Institute’s Headquarters to plan joint cultural events for the future.

In addition, the ECI President met with the Deputy Head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations on May 9 to expand mutual cooperation for organizing cultural activities.

Excellencies,

The Institute attaches special importance to participation in the events related to culture and literature which are organized by the organization of the host country. In this regard, the Institute took part in a ceremony to commemorate Abul-Qasim Ferdowsi which was held in Tehran on May 13, in the presence of Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili, the Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and Gholamali Haddad Adel, Head of Academy of Persian Language and Literature. During the ceremony, the national medal of “Ghand Parsi” was unveiled and presented to some ambassadors including Türkiye and Tajikistan who have contributed to the promotion of Persian language.

Also, the ECI participated in an event organized by Iran’s Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries to commemorate a number of luminaries of the region. Furthermore, the Institute’s President took part in another commemoration ceremony for Abul-Qasim Ferdowsi which was held on May 15 on the theme of "Revisiting the role of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in today's national identity" at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. The event was attended by the Head of Iran’s Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, Director General of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Khorasan Razavi Province and a group of university professors and scholars of Persian literature. At the ceremony, the ECI President delivered a speech in which he

expressed that message of Shahnameh knows no boundaries and is a common literary heritage of the ECO region.

Above all, the ECI organized a webinar on May 15 to pay homage to this renowned Persian poet titled "Life and Works of Ferdowsi and the Role of Shahnameh in Vibrancy and Constancy of Persian Language". At the event, literature scholars from Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan delivered speeches on the theme of the webinar.

Also, the ECI took part in commemoration of Khayyam Neishabouri, the renowned Persian poet of the ECO region which was held in his birthplace Neishabour on 17 May and attended by prominent scholars and researches.

ECI always contributes to the events which deepen understanding of cultural and ethnic diversity in the region. In this regard, ECI took part in a ceremony for promotion of Hazara culture, held in Mashhad on May 15. Hazara people are considered one of the major ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Also, the ECI actively participated in a ceremony held in Tehran to observe International Museum Day and various other cultural events.

Furthermore, ECO Cultural Institute actively participated in the 34th Tehran International Book Fair to familiarize the public with its books and publications. During the Fair, the Institute's stall was visited by the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran and the Minister of Culture of Tajikistan.

Dear colleagues,

We hope that today this Council would reach a conclusion regarding the BoT draft documents and other important issues on the Agenda.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to you for taking part in this meeting.
Thank you.