

39^h Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) of ECI

July 26, 2023

Draft Report

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 39th meeting at the ECI Headquarters on July 26, 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).

Agenda item 1

- The draft agenda of the Meeting had been circulated among Member States via Note No. ECI/524/302 dated July 12, 2023. The agenda was unanimously adopted as follows:
 1. Adoption of the Agenda
 2. Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the 38th ECI-CPR meeting
 3. Statement by the 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. Latest update on holding 7th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)
 7. Progress report on “ECO Youth Award”
 8. Any other Business
 9. Date and venue of the next meeting

Agenda item 2

Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the 38th ECI-CPR meeting

The draft report of the 38th ECI-CPR meeting which was circulated via Note No. ECI/524/232 dated June 20, 2023 was 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 regarded the visit of the President of the ECI to Uzbekistan and his meeting with the Uzbek Minister of Culture and Tourism as a significant step. This is particularly noteworthy considering that Uzbekistan is hosting the upcoming ECO Summit, which could be seen as a positive sign of the country's inclination towards becoming a member of the ECI.

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 nomination for the post of President of the ECI has been conveyed to the Institute via a Note Verbale dated 22nd July.

He went on introducing the President-designate of the ECI and his job experience. He hoped that Dr. Khan's diverse experience in different fields and positions would contribute to the Institute's performance.

He noted that the incoming President is very keen to joining the Institute as soon as a green signal is received.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan congratulated and extended his gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the highly experienced and competent nomination for the ECI President. The Ambassador stated that he is confident that when the new President joins the Institute, he would surely contribute to enhancing its activities and encouraging the other ECO member states to join the ECI.

Referring to the important events ahead, including the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT) meeting and the ECO Council of Ministers (CoM) and Summit meeting, the Ambassador proposed that the Incumbent President of the Institute continues his service until arrival of the incoming President to avoid vacuum of leadership while the Institute needs to get prepared for participation in the aforesaid meetings.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan seconded the proposal made by the Ambassador of Tajikistan and noted that it would help a smooth transition in the Presidentship of the Institute. The incoming President may get a proper briefing on the working of the Institute from the incumbent President.

Chair congratulated the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for nominating such a capable candidate. He also emphasized that the new President will be source of some improvement in the ECI during his tenure. He expressed hope that the incoming President will join the Institute as soon as possible.

He noted that although it would be good if the incumbent President briefs the new one, according to the practice and rules, the overlap of presidents is not possible. Hence, the outgoing President will leave the Institute the day before the arrival of the incoming President.

The ECI-CPR recommended to ECI's Board of Trustees (BoT) that Dr. Saad S. Khan may be recommended to the ECO's Council of Ministers (CoM) to be appointed as the new President of the ECI for a non-renewable term of three years.

The ECI-CPR also agreed to recommend to the BoT and CoM that the tenure of the incumbent President of ECI may be extended until the day before the date of arrival of the incoming President or end of August 2023, whichever comes first.

In the absence of BoT and CoM meetings, ECI-CPR decided to solicit the consent of all member states through a two-week silence procedure.

Agenda item 5

Budgetary issues:

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

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

He noted that the write-off of the said arrears has been raised at various ECI-CPR meeting and will be followed up at the upcoming meeting of the ECI's BoT.

Representative of the Republic of Türkiye explained that the member state is currently engaged in national procedures to find a solution to transfer the annual contribution from the Ministry of Culture of Türkiye to the ECI. It is likely that a similar process will be implemented for the ECI's contribution, following the same procedure as for the ECO Secretariat. Endeavors are underway to settle the annual contribution by the end of the year.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan clarified that the outstanding arrears of Pakistan relates to the years 2018, 2022, and 2023. Although the contribution for the year 2018 was remitted by Pakistan, it had been stuck in some bank and relevant authorities are still trying to resolve the issue. Also, the arrears pertinent to the other years are being followed up to be cleared soon. Furthermore, the incoming President of the ECI has been requested to take care of the issue before his arrival in the Institute.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that the member state has already paid an amount of 220,000 USD in the current year. It is hoped that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic

Guidance as the national focal point of the Institute settle the remaining part of the due contribution as soon as possible.

Chair, in the capacity as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran will continue discussions with the Ministry of Culture in order to clear some of the member state's arrears at the earliest.

The Chair noted that it is crucial for the Institute and the new president to begin his work with some funds, because having financial resources is essential for effective operation. Therefore, efforts should be made to save some contribution for the new president to have a starting budget.

ECI Executive Director pointed out that the contribution rate of the member states was determined as a fixed amount for the year 2023. However, the ECI-CPR in its 38th meeting decided to establish a working group that will evaluate the existing scale of assessment of contribution by the member states. In this regard, a Note Verbale was circulated on July 18 among the member states, informing the date of the meeting of the Working Group scheduled to be held on Monday 07 August 2023, at the ECI Headquarters.

The esteemed member states are requested to actively participate in the Working Group meeting which would be a major determinant of the financial future of the Institute.

Chair, underlined the importance of reviewing the current Scale of Assessment due to accession of a new member state to the Institute, i.e., Republic of Türkiye, and the prospects for other possible new member states such as Republic of Uzbekistan.

Chair, in the capacity as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, assured that the delegation of the member state will actively engage in the scheduled meeting of the Working Group and urged the other member states to do so as well.

He further noted that the Scale of Assessment needs to be reviewed every three years and there should be a provisional workable Scale if some new member state(s) join the Institute in between the reviews.

The first meeting of the working group could be a briefing session by the ECI. Subsequently, it would be beneficial to seek guidance from technical experts in the respective capitals. It is possible that one of the working group meetings would serve as an opportunity to address these matters comprehensively. Considering the technical nature of the issue, it may be advisable to invite experts from the capitals to participate in discussions held at the ECI.

Representative of the Republic of Türkiye proposed that the ECI may prepare a working document for the first meeting of the Working Group that align with the procedures of the ECO Secretariat and explore alternatives for the Institute, itself. It would be better to devise a specific formula merely for Institute, particularly when it comes to technical matters. The Institute can be more active, highlighting its budgetary requirements. Otherwise, it would be easier to follow the ECO Secretariat's procedures. However, it is important to understand the merits and requirements of the ECI to ensure that Türkiye's line ministry is not put in a difficult situation. The concerned authorities need to comprehend what the ECI entails, including the budgetary requirements. The

same practice as the ECO Secretariat could be adopted at the ECI, but the Institute has fewer member states. As new member states join, it will be needed to reformulate the contribution rates of the member states, but a solid foundation is required to guide this process.

Chair supported the proposal made by the Representative of the Republic of Türkiye and stated that the ECI may prepare working papers for the first meeting of the Working Group. However, he recommended that the ECI holds a consultation meeting with the ECO Secretariat to discuss technical issues because the Secretariat has already worked on a reformulated scale of assessment of contribution. He expressed that the first meeting of the Working Group could be an informal exchange of views among the ECI, ECO Secretariat and member states on working papers prepared by the ECI and the members share the said documents with their respective capitals. However, the drafting of working papers should be based on a strong technical foundation. Once feedback from the member states is received, the Institute can update the working papers based on the comments and arrange the first formal meeting of the working group.

ECI Executive Director declared that the Institute will prepare the working papers and various alternative scales of assessment of contribution and will be shared with the member states for their views/comments.

Agenda item 6

Latest update on holding 7th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT)

Chair reminded that the BoT meeting was arranged by the host country, i.e., Islamic Republic of Iran that is holding the chairpersonship of the ECI but due to low level of participation, it was agreed that the BoT meeting would be postponed. However, it should be convened in 2023.

He requested the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to schedule their proposed date in a manner to avoid coinciding with any other regional or international cultural events. Proper rescheduling will allow maximum participation at ministerial level in the meeting.

The date of the 7th BoT meeting of the ECI to be held during the year 2023 is awaited to be proposed by Islamic Republic of Iran.

Agenda item 7

Progress report on “ECO Youth Award”

ECI Executive Director briefed the Council, expressing that as decided by the previous meeting of the ECI-CPR, the proposed Modality of the ECO Youth Award was adopted under silence procedure. Subsequently, the preparations for the Award are in progress. The theme of the Award for the current year will be Graphic design and a public announcement has been released on the ECI website. The issue will be informed via circular Note Verbale to the esteemed member states.

Also, call for sponsorship has been prepared and will be circulated amongst the esteemed member states to be forwarded to the concerned authorities for onward transmission to relevant quarters. A

special section on the ECI's website has been designed for the Award in which all relevant information is available for the applicants.

Regarding sponsorship for the Award, he noted that the member states have been informed of the call for sponsorship. However, if any proposal for sponsoring the Award is received by the Institute directly, it would be shared with the concerned member state to seek their consent.

ECI Executive Director declared that the Institute is ready to carry out the Award process in four months. The Institute will notify the embassies of the member states in Tehran of the details of the Award via circular Note verbale to be forwarded to the ministries of culture of their respective country, requesting to convey a shortlist of three candidates. The ECI will also share with the member states the online registration data of candidates on its website to help the ministries prepare shortlists. The Award Committee, comprising the Cultural Attachés of ECO member states in Tehran, will judge and select one winner from each country. In other word, ten winners from ten ECO member states will be selected.

Later on, a promotional video of ECI Youth Award, prepared by the ECI was screened for the Council.

Chair requested the ECI to circulate the supporting material amongst the member states to be forwarded to the concerned authorities of their respective country.

Agenda item 8

Any other business

Under this agenda item, ECI Executive Director referred to the deliberations of the 38th meeting of the ECI-CPR and stated that the ECI is planning to develop a ten-year Program of Action as well as a Vision for the Institute. These strategic documents are planned to be finalized for the 30th anniversary of the establishment of ECI. The esteemed member states are requested to convey their proposals/views/ points by August 20,2023 to be included in the draft version of the ten-years program of Action and Vision. The issue has been informed to the member states via a circular Note Verbale.

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan proposed that the ECI may draft the documents and circulate them among member states. Later, the embassies will share the documents with the relevant authorities. Otherwise, without a clear framework, countries can propose anything. Experience shows regional institutions first prepare draft documents and forward them to member countries for comments. It is suggested to adopt this practice.

The ECI-CPR requested the ECI to prepare the zero draft of a ten-year Program of Action as well as a Vision to be circulated amongst the member states at the earliest possible. As per Article-V of the ECI's Charter, the said documents may be endorsed by the BoT and approved by the ECO Council of Ministers.

Agenda item 9

Date and venue of the next meeting

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 39th Meeting of The ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (ECI-CPR)

List of Participants

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- Mr. Seyed Jalaledin 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. Muzaffar Muhammadi, Deputy Head of Mission

Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye:

- Mr. Mehmet Zahit Uzun, Counsellor

ECO Cultural Institute:

- Mr. Murodjon Buriboev, President
- Dr. Esmaeili Fard, Executive Director
- Mr. Salman Rostami, Cultural Expert
- 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 39th meeting of the ECI-CPR and take this opportunity to thank you for attendance in this meeting.

I will be brief with my remarks and only point out some issues to be considered by this Council. I will brief the Council on our latest activities since the last meeting of ECI-CPR which was held in late May.

First of all, I would like to extend my condolences on the commencement of Muharram to all who observe this time of mourning.

Excellencies,

Enlargement of the ECO Cultural Institute and increasing its membership has always been our priority. In order to encourage the ECO member states who have not joined the ECI yet, we organize joint activities to promote their cultural heritage. In this regard, since last year we have approached the Republic of Uzbekistan as one of potential candidates and established close relationship with Uzbek side. The Institute participated in the 26th meeting of the Council of Ministers (CoM), held in January 2023 in Uzbekistan and on the sidelines of the meeting, the ECI President met with the First Deputy Minister of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Later on, in July, the ECI President was invited by Uzbekistan as an international observer in the presidential election of the country. During the trip, the ECI President paid a courtesy call on Mr. Ozodbek Naazarbekov, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan on July 10 and briefed the minister on the goals, mission and activities of the Institute and possibilities of joint cooperation. Also, he pointed out the mutual cooperation between the ECI and Uzbekistan in the past and emphasized that such cooperation would be expanded when the country would join the ECI. Furthermore, with respect to the importance of the accession of Uzbekistan to the ECI, it was proposed that the Charter of the Institute could be signed by the Uzbek authorities on the sidelines of the important events to be held during the current year including the ECI's Board of Trustees meeting and the ECO Council of Ministers meeting. Even though it could happen during the ECO Summit to be held in Uzbekistan in the months ahead. Finally, the Minister was encouraged to take part in the 7th meeting of the ECI's Board of Trustees to be held in the near future. Moreover, the ECI President met with Nozimkhon Makhmudov, Director of Ibn Sina public foundation of Uzbekistan in Tashkent and ways and means of mutual cooperation and preparation for a joint roundtable on Ibn Sina at the ECI's Headquarters were discussed.

As an outcome of the meeting, the ECI in partnership with the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Tehran held a roundtable on the life and works of Ibn Sina, the world-renowned scientist of the ECO Region in July. The roundtable was actively participated by Ibn Sina foundations of Iran and Uzbekistan as well as scholars from the both countries who delivered speeches on the subject matter of the event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are well aware, the 7th meeting of our Institute's Board of Trustees which was scheduled to be held on June 15, in Tehran was postponed due to lack of quorum.

We all know that according to the ECI's Charter, the Board of Trustees is the principal policy and decision-making body of the Institute. Therefore, it is of great importance to convene the meeting at the earliest possible. We kindly request the host authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to reconsider the necessary arrangements to hold the meeting in the near future. It requires our collective effort so that the meeting would be participated by the most ECI member states at the highest level.

Dear Colleagues,

ECO Cultural Institute needs more cooperation and support from its member states for organizing its activities. We make every effort to promote culture, arts, literature and tourism of our members but it is not proper to do it on our own without any idea or proposal from the member states. We always prepare an annual calendar of events for the upcoming year that is submitted to and endorsed by the annual meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council, in which we try to include activities related to every member state. In this regard, we have informed the esteemed embassies via circular note to provide us with their proposals for organizing these activities. The member states are requested to kindly assist the Institute with their ideas for better promotion of their culture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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 commemoration of various luminaries of the ECO region during the current year, including Hafez Shirazi, Nasir Khusraw and Ibn Sina.

Excellencies,

We received a modest amount of annual contribution from some member states a few months ago, but the Institute was in debt to its official staff for their overdue salary and part of the received contributions were used for that purpose. Also, some staff members have completed or will complete their service this year and their end of service gratuity must be paid. Hence, we will face financial difficulty once again in coming weeks if the remaining part of annual contributions of the member states are not settled. Therefore, the esteemed member states are requested to kindly take necessary measures for acceleration in payment of their due contribution and outstanding arrears. The details of the latest status of payments and arrears of the member states will be provided under the relevant agenda item.

Dear colleagues,

We have recently informed the esteemed member states via circular Notes Verbale on two issues. One is the establishment of a working group to formulate a new Scale of Assessment of Contribution by the member states to the ECI's budget for the year 2024, which was decided on by the last ECI-CPR meeting. The esteemed member states are requested to kindly take part in the meeting of the Working Group as scheduled.

Second issue is that the ECI is planning to develop a ten-year Programm of Action as well as a Vision for the Institute. The esteemed member states are requested to kindly convey their points and proposals to be included in the draft version of the ten-year Programm of Action and Vision.

Furthermore, regarding the ECO Youth Award which is one of the main issues of this meeting, we have made some progress and planning is in process. Our Executive Director and Accounts Officer will brief the Council in details under the agenda items on the mentioned issues.

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