

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

September 12, 2023

Draft Report

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 40th meeting at the ECI Headquarters on September 12, 2023. The meeting began under the chairpersonship of Mr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ambassadors and representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Türkiye as well as a delegation of the ECO Cultural Institute headed by ECI President 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. 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 39th ECI-CPR meeting
 3. Statement by the ECI President on the ECI activities
 4. Administrative issues:
 - Extension of the tenure of the incumbent ECI President until the arrival of the incoming President
 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 39th ECI-CPR meeting

The draft report of the 39th ECI-CPR meeting, circulated via Note No. ECI/524/362 dated August 16, 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 the last CPR meeting. The statement of the ECI President is attached to this report as annex II.

Chair, in the capacity of the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed gratitude for the efforts made by the ECI President to expand the outreach of the Institute and attract more ECO members interested in membership of the ECI. The Islamic Republic of Iran holds a positive outlook that Uzbekistan may soon join the ECI.

Agenda item 4

Administrative issues:

Extension of the tenure of the incumbent ECI President until the arrival of the incoming President

Taking into consideration that the extended tenure of the incumbent ECI President ended on August 31, 2023, and with reference to the Note Verbale received from the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Tehran conveying the delayed arrival of the incoming ECI President as well as the Note Verbale of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, as the current Chairperson of the ECI-CPR, proposing extension of the tenure of the incumbent ECI President, the ECI-CPR considered the matter and made the following decision:

The ECI-CPR recommended to ECI's Board of Trustees (BoT) and the ECO's Council of Ministers (CoM) that the tenure of the incumbent President of ECI may be extended until the end of September 2023 with retrospective effect as of September 1, 2023.

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

ECI Accounts Officer briefed the meeting on the latest status of contributions and arrears of the ECI member states, including their due annual contribution for the year 2023. He referred to the points mentioned in the statement of the ECI President and emphasized that the Institute will encounter another financial crisis in the upcoming weeks if no annual contributions from the

member states are received. He further noted that the issue has been indicated in the recent Audit of the ECI's accounts.

Acknowledging that the Institute is facing a severe financial crisis and needs assistance, Chair, in the capacity of the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, assured that the host country will take the necessary measures to repay the arrears of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the country has already paid \$200,000 during the current year but still owes \$465,000. He further hoped that other members would also do their part by convincing their capitals that the ECI deserves expedited repayment of the arrears. That is especially critical as the new ECI President is about to take office, and it's essential to have sufficient funds available.

The ECI-CPR urged the Institute to inform the member states through a circular Note Verbale conveying the following recommendation of the Council:

- ***ECI-CPR acknowledges the concern of the ECO Cultural Institute facing dire financial straits and strongly recommends to the member states to expedite the settlement of their due annual contributions and arrears on an urgent basis, even with partial payments, to avert a major financial crisis.***
- ***The ECI-CPR also recommends to the ECO's Council of Ministers (CoM) to recommend to the ECI's member states the same as above.***

Chair, also recommended that 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” may be shared with the ECO Secretariat to seek their consultation for placing the issue on the agenda of the upcoming CoM meeting.

Regarding the above issue, the ECI-CPR reached the decision as follows:

- ***ECI-CPR received the proposal of the Republic of Tajikistan and decided to recommend to ECI's Board of Trustees (BoT) that the BoT may agree with 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”.***
- ***In the absence of BoT, ECI-CPR decided to solicit the consent of all member states through a two-week silence procedure.***

Representative of the Republic of Türkiye informed that the Embassy previously requested the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye for the payment of the member state's due contribution but has not received any instructions yet. The Embassy will remind the Ministry about the urgency of the matter and will provide the ECI with an update afterward.

Agenda item 6

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

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran has proposed holding the meeting in either November or early December of the current year. The esteemed member states are requested to inform the host country or the Institute about their level of participation, as this is a ministerial meeting and it is preferable to have ministers in attendance. The exact date of the meeting will be confirmed in the near future.

Chair emphasized that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to organize the BoT meeting in 2023 and expressed hope that the highest level of participation and maximum number of countries attend the meeting. The attendance of all ministers is crucial, as it will send a message to the other ECO member states that the ECI is in place and there is a strong commitment among the five member countries to expand the membership of the Institute. This will encourage other ECO member countries to consider joining the ECI and will help the ECI have a higher profile of cultural activities.

Agenda item 7

Progress report on “ECO Youth Award”

ECI Executive Director provided an update to the Council, announcing that the ECO Youth Award theme for this year is graphic design, which appeals to young people. Registration started on August 20 and the submission deadline is on October 20. The awards ceremony will take place on November 20. Banners and posters are being designed and will be shared with member states, where they will be sent to universities and cultural institutes to promote the event. Promotional materials will be produced in Persian, English, and Russian languages. A sponsor has been secured for the event. Furthermore, a Note Verbale will be circulated among the member states requesting their assistance in holding the festival on November 20. The hope is that member countries will inform their cultural and educational centers to encourage maximum participation of the youth of ECO member countries in this festival.

Agenda item 8

Any other business

ECI Executive Director highlighted the establishment of a committee to review the ECI's proposal on the scale of assessment of contributions by the member states. He further explained that a Note Verbale has been sent to member states informing them of the upcoming committee meeting. The ECI's proposal comprises two alternatives: one based on the fixed rate of payment and the other based on revising the scale of assessment for all members, as proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Türkiye.

The ECI Executive Director invited all the member states to participate in the committee meeting, which offers a valuable opportunity to discuss the proposal.

Chair referred to the first scenario for the Scale proposed by the ECI which is based on the fixed rate of payment and noted that it is not advisable to have fixed contributions when there is potential for the Institute to expand.

Chair clarified that the scale of assessment and the size of the budget are two separate matters. The member states must come to an agreement on the scale of the assessment for a period of three years, while the budget size can be adjusted annually in proportion to the Institute's activities. If the Institute's membership grows, its activities will expand accordingly. Therefore, the focus should be on deciding the percentage of contribution rather than fixed figures. However, it is important to review the Scale of Assessment every three years.

He noted that the use of the term "founding members" has been discontinued in the ECO Secretariat. Instead, it is proposed that Iran, Pakistan and Türkiye contribute a specific percentage of the budget while the remaining will be divided among the other member states. Furthermore, the Institute should establish a provisional formula in place for when a new member joins the ECI. All members are highly encouraged to attend the committee.

He suggested that the ECI consult with the ECO Secretariat as well to develop a feasible scale of assessment for three years.

Date and venue of the next meeting

Chair stressed that another ECI-CPR meeting is needed before the distinguished ECI President leaves. The date and venue of the meeting will be shared soon. The availability of all ambassadors will be checked to ensure they are present for the ECI-CPR and a farewell ceremony for the president. The ceremony may be held during the ECO-CPR meeting, but this is yet to be finalized. If it cannot be held during the ECO-CPR meeting, another meeting will be arranged. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the current Chairperson of the ECI, may host the ceremony.

Annex-I

40th 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 Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari, Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation
- Mr. Khavari, Expert, ECO Affairs Bureau

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

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

Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye:

- Mr. Ulvi Darendeli, Counsellor

ECO Cultural Institute:

- Mr. Murodjon Buriboev, President
- Dr. Esmaeili Fard, Executive Director
- Mr. Salman Rostami, Cultural Expert
- Mr. Sayed Javad Mirkazemian, Accounts Officer
- Ms. Mahtab Sahel, Afghanistan's Desk Officer
- Mr. Mehdi Omranejad, 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 40th meeting of the ECI-CPR and take this opportunity to thank you for your attendance at this meeting.

I will briefly point out some issues for the Council to consider.

Excellencies,

ECO Cultural Institute places significant value on synergy among the ECO specialized agencies. In this regard, the ECI President took part and delivered a statement in the 4th meeting of the Board of Trustees of ECO Educational Institute which was held on August 5 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

Commemorating the luminaries of the ECO region is a core objective of the Institute. To pay tribute to Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and coinciding with his birth anniversary, ECI organized a webinar that was attended by a group of researchers and philosophers from the ECO member countries. The participating scholars shared their knowledge and views on Avicenna's thoughts and scientific achievements.

Dear Colleagues,

As mentioned during our previous meeting, we create an annual calendar of events that aims to feature activities related to every member state. The esteemed member states are requested to kindly collaborate with the ECI in organizing these activities during the remaining months of the year 2023.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our top priority is to expand the ECO Cultural Institute and increase its membership. To encourage ECO member states that have not joined to the Institute yet, we take advantage of any opportunity to discuss the matter with their relevant authorities. As such, we are preparing for active participation in the upcoming Council of Ministers meeting and will strive to arrange a courtesy call on the Azerbaijani Minister to explore potential mutual cooperation and accession to the Institute.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we're aware, the Board of Trustees holds the highest authority in making decisions and policies for the Institute. So, we kindly request the host authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to make the necessary arrangements for holding the meeting in the months ahead.

Excellencies,

A couple of months ago, we received only a moderate annual contribution from some member states. Being in dire straits again the official staff members have not been receiving their salary in full. We will be on the verge of another financial crisis in the upcoming weeks if the remaining

part of the 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 a Note Verbale about the meeting of the working group to formulate a new Scale of Assessment of Contribution by the member states to the ECI's budget for the year 2024. Furthermore, a draft proposal for the new Scale of Assessment has been circulated among the members to be discussed during the planned meeting. The esteemed member states are requested to kindly take part in the meeting of the Working Group as scheduled.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to you for your attendance at this meeting.
Thank you.