

## Economic Cooperation Organization Summit (Connectivity for Regional Prosperity)

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was established in 1985 by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. It succeeded Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), which was founded in 1964 to promote cooperation among the three Member States. In 1992, the Organization welcomed in its fold seven new Members, including Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan. The Headquarter of ECO is located in Tehran and its incumbent Secretary General is H.E. Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akca (Turkish National).

Pakistan hosted 13<sup>th</sup> ECO Summit on 1st March 2017 in Islamabad. The Prime Minister of Pakistan assumed Chairmanship of ECO until the next Summit. Theme of the Summit was “Connectivity for Regional Prosperity” which is in line with the government’s priorities of enhancing internal / external connectivity.

Presidents of 5 countries, 2 Prime Ministers, 1 Deputy Prime Minister attended the Summit were: H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Sooronbay Zheenbekov, Prime Minister of Kyrgyz Republic, H.E. Mr. Askar Myrzakhmetov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and H.E. Mr. Ulugbek Rozukulov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan. President of Turkish

Cypriot State, Turkic Council and International Energy Charter attended as ECO Observers.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, being Chair of the Summit made inaugural and concluding remarks during the Summit. The highlights of the Prime Minister’s opening remarks were:

- ECO subscribes to a people-centric agenda.
- Summit focus would be on greater connectivity and trade linkages within ECO, in particulars and beyond, in generous.
- ECO region represents 16 percent of world’s population but share in global trade is only 2 percent.
- Emphasized that the member states reclaim their historic role in consonance with historic “Silk Road” spirit.
- This was the most propitious time to realize the dream of “Connectivity for Regional Prosperity.”
- Stressed development of ECO connectivity in transport, energy, trade and economics, which conforms to his government policy of “peaceful neighborhood.”
- Peaceful settlement of longstanding disputes, like Jammu and Kashmir, and alleviating the sufferings of the Kashmiri people would greatly help in advancing the goals of stability and development of the entire region.

### **Council of Ministers & Senior Officials Meetings**

The Summit was preceded by Council of Ministers Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 which was chaired by the Adviser to Prime Minister, Mr. Sartaj Aziz. The Council reviewed progress made since its last meeting. The Meeting also discussed the developments of ECO since its inception and exchanged views on the possible reforms needed for keeping pace with the evolving requirements of regional cooperation. The Council of Ministers (COM) finalized Islamabad Declaration and adopted the ECO Vision 2025 along with its implementation framework. The participants of Council of Ministers Meeting renewed their commitment to promote regional economic integration among the ECO Member States and resolved to play an active role for the realization of the Organization's aims and objectives.

The Summit, Council of Ministers Meeting and Senior Officials Meeting, deliberated and decided on ways and means to augment cooperation in the areas of connectivity, trade, energy, tourism, investment, industry, economic growth and productivity, social welfare and environment. Enhancing Cooperation for furtherance of education and scientific linkages, cultural and people to people contacts within the ECO region also remained amongst the priorities.

### **Islamabad Declaration**

The "Islamabad Declaration" which was adopted unanimously during the Summit focused on the Summit theme of Connectivity as a dynamic concept that encompasses multiple dimensions including transit transport such as rail, road, ports and shipping and cyber linkages. It set the target to double the trade between ECO Member countries within the next 2-3 years. The Declaration acknowledged and welcomed, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a far-reaching initiative that would act as catalyst for the development of the entire region.

CPEC is in consonance with the Summit's theme of Connectivity. It will augment the existing and planned transit and energy corridors in ECO region for greater progress and prosperity for our peoples. The Summit would act as a catalyst to integrate the ECO initiatives into a comprehensive connectivity apparatus of the ECO.

The Declaration underscored the three core principles of ECO Vision 2025 of sustainability, integration and conducive environment; and emphasizes the need to augment cooperation in the areas of trade, transport and connectivity, energy, tourism, economic growth and productivity and social-welfare and environment as identified in Vision 2025.

- The Islamabad Declaration reiterated political will and strong commitment for realizing the aims and objectives of the Organization for economic development, common prosperity, regional integration and peace and stability in the ECO Region.
- It reaffirmed commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Treaty of Izmir, and attaching great importance to the cooperation frameworks development under the different agreements concluded between the Member States and the momentum created in different fields of cooperation which can underpin and complement each other for meeting the objectives of the Economic Cooperation Organization.
- The Islamabad Declaration recalled commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter including in particular the respect for political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, development of friendly relations among nations, and pacific settlement of disputes.
- The Declaration resolved to work together, including by positioning the ECO to effectively address these challenges and to seize the opportunities for the collective benefit of the region and its people.

- The Declaration approached connectivity as a dynamic concept that encompasses multiple dimensions including cyber, energy, rail, road, and ports and shipping.
  - The Declaration encouraged further development of educational and scientific linkages, and cultural and people to people contacts.
  - The Declaration appreciated the value and importance of a steady and flexible approach to regional connectivity and integration that enables member states to contribute to, be part of and benefit from the various connectivity and integration programs in a gradual and progressive manner according to their respective state of preparedness.
  - The Declaration reiterated commitment to promote Intra-ECO trade as an instrument of enhanced economic cooperation and revitalization in the region.
  - Underlined the importance of the Post 2015 Development Agenda and the role that can be played by the ECO member States for achieving the goals and targets set out therein and in this context recalled that promotion of conditions for sustainable development through mobilization of economic and social potential of the ECO Region requires further strengthened cooperation and collaboration especially through enhanced trade and connectivity among the Member States in order to further strengthen the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties among the peoples of the region.
  - Recognized the importance of moderation as an approach to counter all forms of extremism and promote dialog, mutual respect, understanding and social harmony, thereby contributing towards the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development, equitable growth, stability and prosperity in the Eco Region.
  - The Declaration acknowledged the importance of Afghanistan for ECO Region and reiterated continued support to the national, regional and global efforts for reconstruction and sustainable development as well as peace and security in Afghanistan.
  - The Declaration welcomed the recently adopted United Nations General Assembly Resolution on proclaiming International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” (2018-2028).
  - The Declaration welcomed the adoption of the ECO Vision 2025 as a comprehensive document outlining the core principles and areas of cooperation within ECO, and resolving that Member States as well as ECO Secretariat, ECO Specialized Agencies and Regional Institutions will take necessary steps for implementation of ECO Vision 2025 in a timely and effective manner.
- The Summit deliberated and decided on ways and means to augment cooperation in the areas of connectivity, trade, energy, tourism, investment, industry, economic growth and productivity, social welfare and environment. It is also planned to bring improvement in education and scientific linkages, cultural and people to people contacts within the ECO. The Summit provided the Members an opportunity to reaffirm their collective commitment to progress and prosperity for the ECO region. It also allowed identifying new areas of cooperation while cementing the progress on matters currently under process.
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