



Economic Cooperation Organization

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Statement by
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Mr. Chairman
Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to address this august gathering on behalf of the Economic cooperation Organization (ECO). I would like to express my gratitude to ESCAP for inviting ECO to this annual session of the Commission. ESCAP annual sessions have increasingly proved to provide unique opportunity for timely and viable discussions on socio-economic development of the Asia and the Pacific Region with a view to harnessing ever changing regional and global dynamics for better future of our countries and sub-regions. The theme topic of this year annual session, "**Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development**" further attests to the continued relevance and great role ESCAP is playing in giving shape to optimal policy and operational frameworks for the Asia and the Pacific to meet the ambitions of 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The ministerial discussions during the last three days clearly addressed some key challenges the countries of the Asia and the Pacific are facing in realizing the 2030 ambitions. ECO is one of the largest groups in the developing world. With 8 million square kilometers and 450 million inhabitants, covering a territory connecting Europe to China and East Asia, and Russia to Persian Gulf, ECO represents huge potential for collective and individual development of its ten-country membership. We in ECO are now developing the new Vision Document for the future aligning our organization with the new and emerging global paradigms, including in SDG era. It is very much encouraging for us that ECO and ESCAP are providing mutually supportive policy frameworks in this regard. I will give you a brief account on how we in ECO value this synergy.

Connectivity in terms of the transport and transit as well as energy connectivity have always been on the top of the agenda of our organization where the overall objective of expansion of trade and economic cooperation among the Member States are very much dependent on enhanced connectivity within the Region and with the outside world. This continues to be the case for the future while we are now extending our collective cooperation into the ICT connectivity as well, very much in line with the ESCAP agenda on further harnessing ICT and innovation for more inclusive sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. In transport and transit, ECO is a unique sub-region within the Asia and the Pacific Region. Seven out of 10 ECO Member States are land-locked countries. Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are facing the challenge of access to regional and global markets. ECO has developed, and continue to develop, diversified transport and transit rail and road corridors to harness connectivity for development purposes. Iran, Pakistan and Turkey provide, through several already operational or in-making corridors, access by our land-locked countries to the outside world. We remain ready to explore any possibility within ESCAP for synergizing our shared efforts and activities to this end.

In energy, we in ECO are now much more directed towards cooperation on

renewable sources of energy as well as intra-regional connectivity in terms of electricity exchanges. The idea of ECO electricity market is now under serious examination within ECO where a pilot phase is ongoing to grasp the existing potential within ECO countries for an interlinked power grids network. Iran, Turkey and ECO Secretariat are now working together for an optimal regional arrangement to realize the "ECO Electricity Market" to be extended to other Member States in the future. The very recent inauguration of the "CASA 1000" project among four ECO countries, namely, Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Tajikistan, will certainly give further momentum for early realization of the ECO electricity arrangement. We are very much encouraged by ESCAP new institutional arrangements for energy and looking forward to viable cooperation in this important area.

ECO Member States are now in the process of exploring the advantages ICT can provide for their regional integration and cooperation. A joint ECO-ITU study is now focusing on reviewing the existing situation of the telecommunication and ICT sector and ICT infrastructures and associated services in the ECO Member States at national and regional levels as compared to the global level. The specific needs of the ECO Member States have been identified for the enhanced intra-regional connectivity, taking into account the infrastructural, policy and regulatory requirements. We very much welcome the establishment of the ESCAP "Committee on ICT, Science and Technology and Innovation" aimed at intergovernmental dialogue on STI. Having in mind that science, technology and innovation are key to economic growth and human development, ECO is looking forward to the Committee's work and contribution into the overall objective of helping countries and regions to cope with the needs and requirements to meet SDGs. We are also open for any partnership with and within ESCAP on ICT and STI for the cause of overall integration of the countries.

**Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

ECO vision for the future cooperation among its Member States is guided by the immediate needs and requirements of the countries and the Region as a whole, and

streamlined with the global agenda. SDGs, environment and climate change arrangements and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction are among the key global contexts ECO is considering when defining its roadmap for future. Allow me to say few words on the very last issue of disasters. The ECO Region is one of the most disaster-prone areas in the world. Most of the countries are highly vulnerable to earthquakes, floods, landslides and droughts. In the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the incidence rate of such disasters in our countries. In the light of the international community decisions within the Sendai Framework, we now in ECO develop our own approach to disaster risk reduction. ECO ministers/high level authorities will later this year adopt ECO framework on disaster risk reduction. We are very much interested to benefit from ESCAP rich capacities and experiences as well as current and future activities. We also welcome the emerging ESCAP disaster-related initiative, APDIM, where ECO-ESCAP partnership can be built upon.

To conclude Mr. Chairman, I would like to acknowledge a promising development in ESCAP where ECO has been given status in some ESCAP statistics. This is very encouraging step. We would like to continue to benefit from ESCAP rich research and statistical outputs, as it is the same request from ECO to benefit from ESCAP advocacy and capacity building programmes in different areas and sectors of regional cooperation, including the above mentioned areas as well as in other areas such as trade and investment promotion, agriculture and food security, SMEs and entrepreneurship, tourism, health, etc. In return, ECO continues to remain ready to offer its capacities and inter-country networks in different sectors and corners to help ESCAP implement its agenda in our sub-region.

Thank You for your attention.