

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Ministers and Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to meet all my colleagues from ECO member states here in New York on the margins of the 71th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my distinguished colleague, His Excellency Ahmad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for hosting us here today.

Taking this opportunity, allow me to warmly congratulate Ambassador Halil İbrahim Akça, a highly distinguished Turkish senior official, the Secretary General of ECO, for professionally and proactively steering the Secretariat.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Each of us around this table is aware of the vast potential of the ECO region in terms of its natural resources, dynamic work force and huge economic opportunities.

In order to utilize these advantages to the benefit and well-being of our peoples, we must work harder to strengthen the economic ties among us.

ECO's founding objective of regional cooperation and development can be achieved through enhancing inter-regional trade. In that regard, our trade agreement ECOTA will have a crucial role when implementation by all Contracting Parties is in force.

We encourage all the member states to join ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to be implemented at the earliest.

Mr. Chairman,

Since its foundation, ECO has evolved in too many different fields. After three decades and in view of the new challenges of today's world, there is a need to turn ECO into a more focused and result-oriented organization.

We should coordinate our efforts to finalize the roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group within the context of our reform process.

Turkey fully supports the recommendations of the EPG and appreciates the efforts of the Working Group.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Current budgetary problems within the organization prevent us to achieve our goals in transforming ECO into a more efficient organization.

Frankly speaking, we cannot mention transformation of ECO and realization of reform process without a strong budget in our hands. In that regard, we expect all the member countries to be more flexible and constructive in overcoming this issue.

We are also pleased that Afghanistan will host ECO Ministers of Planning and Development in 24 October 2016 in Kabul to consider the Draft of ECO Vision-2025.

I believe the revised "ECO Vision 2025" will give us the opportunity to determine and better understand the impediments to achieving a better functioning Organization and thereby strengthen regional development and cooperation which will benefit us all.

While formulating the ECO Vision 2025 Document, COMCEC Strategy might be utilized in the formulation of the new ECO Vision.

We estimate that "ECO Vision 2025 Trust Fund" to be established within ECO Trade and Development

Bank (TDB) would play a significant role in providing significant funds for implementation of concrete programs and projects.

Excellencies,

As ECO member countries, we also need to define the areas of our cooperation in accordance with the needs and conditions of today's world.

Besides our priority areas such as economy, trade, transport and energy, there is potential for us to also focus on fields such as renewable energy, ecologic agriculture and environment. The support of the affiliated bodies of ECO could play a key role in this regard.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to pay tribute to the existing political will in member countries to turn ECO into a more efficient organization. Thank you.