

**Statement by President of ECO Cultural Institute
H. E. Sarvar Bakhti**

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

This meeting is a great occasion for ECO Cultural Institute to present an account of its latest achievements and international activities in areas of culture, arts and literature.

Today, we all recognize the role of regional and international bodies in establishing cultural relations. ECO Cultural Institute, being the oldest specialized agency of ECO family, is one of such organizations and has always made efforts to prepare the ground for cultural cooperation and synergy among the countries in the region.

In its comprehensive plan to develop and enhance cultural activities and relations within the ECO region during the last 2 years, despite the outbreak of Covid-19, ECO Cultural Institute made every effort to continue its activities virtually and has arranged a wide variety of cultural programs and events, including: 7 international webinar such as The 5th meeting of ECO Heads of National Libraries, First Joint Symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member-State Universities and the like. , 7 commemoration to pay tribute to important figures of the ECO region, 7 arts and cultural exhibitions, one workshop on Written Heritage, two online training course of calligraphy, several MoUs with various cultural organizations to promote rich culture and arts of ECO region. Furthermore, the Institute has published 11 books and 6 issues of “ECO Heritage” which is the ECO Cultural Institute quarterly. It is noteworthy that all of the cultural events held by the ECO Cultural Institute have been participated by scholars, researchers and authors from various ECO member states. As envisaged in our Charter, it is our first and foremost objective to foster and promote closer association and cooperation among the people of the Region, in general, and among the intellectuals, artists, in particular. This is what we are strongly committed to in all of our programs. We proudly announce that more than one hundred scholars and research from across the ECO region have had the opportunity to come together and share their knowledge with their counterparts during the cultural events organized by the ECO Cultural Institute.

The key mandate of the ECO Cultural Institute is to preserve and promote the common cultural heritage of the ECO region. To this end, we are cooperation with researchers and scholars from all the 10 ECO member states to prepare a document on preservation of the common cultural heritage of the region, determining the shared responsibility of all the member states in this regard. Following the approval of the document by the member states during official meetings of ECO Organs, the document will function as the modality for joint plan of action.

Despite the wide variety of the cultural activities and events held by the ECO Cultural Institute, greater visibility is required to strengthen the public awareness of such cultural program. For

enhancing visibility, ECI has started publishing the latest daily cultural and social news of the ECO member states on its website and social networks which will enhance the public awareness throughout the ECO region. Also, we have released a print news bulletin containing a selection of the news of the ECO member states, which is circulated among the embassies of the ECO member states regularly.

Another plan for increasing visibility of the objectives and activities of the ECO Cultural Institute is "Friendship Ambassadors of the ECO Region" program. In this program, celebrities are nominated by the esteemed ECO member states to be designated as the Friendship Ambassadors of the ECO Region. They will promote ECO and ECO Cultural Institute's goals and activities to raise public awareness and to attract media attention and visibility to the work of ECO and ECO Cultural Institute.

Also, another important goal enshrined in our Charter is to promote cooperation between the news agencies of the Region by means of establishing network connection among them. To this end, we are planning to hold the meeting of the heads of state news agencies of the ECO member countries in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sports is one of the other priorities in ECO Cultural Institute, which we believe needs more attention. It is one of the best tools for promotion of cultural diplomacy. We have been focusing more on sports events. For instance, ECI has supported a female mountaineer to scale Somoni peak as the first woman from ECO region who climbs the highest peak of Tajikistan and Central Asia as a messenger of friendship between nations. Now the flag of ECO Cultural Institute is flying on top of the Peak. Sports can bring the nation closer together and foster cooperation between them. We plan to arrange some tournament for the ECO Member States in the year ahead. In addition, we will make every effort to hold the meeting of the Ministers of Sports and Youth of the ECO Member States in the coming year.

Excellencies,

ECO Cultural Institute has made great efforts to encourage the ECO member states to accede to ECI because we believe that ECO Cultural Institute belongs to all ECO member states. In this regard, ECI has organized joint cultural events with the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Also, in the capacity of ECI President, I recently traveled to Uzbekistan and met with the honorable Minister of Culture and briefed the minister on the objectives and activities of ECI. We hope to see the Republic of Uzbekistan as the next member state in ECI. We strongly encourage all the ECO member states, which have not joined ECI or ratified its Charter to sign or ratify the Institute's Charter. I would like to announce that we would offer special incentives for the new member states or those countries that become a ratifying member.

Distinguished delegations,

Despite all efforts made by the ECO Cultural Institute for holding a wide variety of programs in areas of culture, arts and literature of the ECO region, sorry to say that we do not receive or receive very few proposals from the ECO member states for holding joint events. This Institute

has been established as an ECO specialized agency by the collective will of all the 10 ECO member states.

Therefore, all the member states should feel a strong sense of ownership for this Institute. The member states should take advantage of the Institute's potentials for promotion of their culture and arts.

Excellencies,

We have carried out all of the mentioned activities while facing many financial difficulties. We hope the esteemed member states will facilitate the function of the Institute by timely payment of their annual contributions and settlement of their outstanding arrears. We believe that our member states can come up with a solution for our financial problems. In the event of accession of new member states to ECO Cultural Institute, it will widen the horizon to strengthen ties among our countries, particularly, cultural interactions.

In conclusion, I would like to appreciate the Government of Turkmenistan for its hospitality and special arrangements to make this event another successful experience in ECO's history.

Thank you