

Summary of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) representation speech

Mr. Morteza Khalaj Director, Transport & Communications Directorate

With many thanks to the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting this important meeting and appreciation to UNESCAP and UNECE for organizing this meeting, I should say that Transportation and Communications is one of the main priority areas of Cooperation among the ECO member states. Within this framework a lot of activities have been done in last couple of years, the most important on which has been the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA). This is a comprehensive agreement, which covers all means of transportation and communication among the ECO states. This agreement which has been signed by 9 member states and ratified by 5 is provided in conformity with TIR conventions taking into consideration the transportation situation within the ECO member states. It will become operationalized 6 months after 6 member states ratify it and it will then be a very important framework for cooperation in transportation and communication between ECO countries.

The other important activities of ECO countries in the next couple of months are:

- 4th ECO Experts Working Group meeting on the Trans-Asia-Europe Fiber Optical Cable System (TAEFOS) in Baku on 12 – 13 April which is somehow related to today's meeting.
- 1st meeting of the ECO postal Authorities will be held in Kyrgyzstan in April 20-21.
- High Level Experts Meeting on ICT which is an important development in cooperation of ECO member states in transportation and communication will be held in Tehran on 26-27 April which is a preparing step for organizing the meeting of ministers of ICT.
- The other important development which is very much related to today's meeting is EWG meeting to fine tune draft Action Plan for revitalizing and operation of China-Middle East – Europe corridors including a time framework for its execution which is organized by Iranian Railway authorities and will be held in Tehran on 9-10 May 2004.
- Following the above meeting 2nd Steering Committee meeting Coordination Unit of Container train will also be organized by the same organization from 11 to 12 May in Tehran.

Aside from the above activities the 1st Meeting of Heads of Reference Marine Organizations of the ECO member states for Cooperation in Sea Transportation was held in Tehran in last September with good results. The 2nd Meeting of the same will be hosted by the Turkish government in coming June.

Another important effort of ECO states in the transportation field is printed Road as well as Rail route maps which have been provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran and now is taking the final steps for providing the final version. Those maps when they are provided will give a good picture of the existing rail and road routes within ECO region.

Thank you very much.