

Statement by
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Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

At the
General Debate of the
High-Level Segment of the
57th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Vienna, 14 March 2014

Mr. Chairman

Mr. Executive Director

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

This is indeed a privilege for me to attend this important High-Level segment of the 57-th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs which holds special importance for the international community in its collective efforts to eradicate the menace of drug and the associated problems. Let me express my gratitude to the organizers of the Meeting for giving me this opportunity to represent Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in this high-level preparatory meeting for the envisaged UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem scheduled for 2016.

Mr. Chairman

This timely review of the implementation of the “Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem” is of great importance for ECO Region, too. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) administers the regional economic partnerships among its Member States. ECO was created and expanded in the last three decades on the high priority goal of sustainable economic development of its member countries and prosperity of the people. The experience we have learned from our collective endeavors for development revealed the imperative of addressing also the major non-economic challenges we are facing. Illicit drug phenomenon proved to be among the challenges which deserve a regional strategy to act.

ECO region, with a population of about 440 million and eight million square kilometers of area, is one of the most affected regions in the world as illegal drug is concerned. This region is crossed by major global trafficking routes. More than 95% of the global opium seizure as well as 66% of the global heroin seizure take place in our region. Five out of six of the Afghanistan's neighbors are ECO Member States. The growing problem of the illicit trafficking within the Region, notably to and from Afghanistan as well as the direct bearing of drug-related impacts on the economic and social development of our countries convinced our leaders to accord priority to the necessity of early removal of this problem. That is why the ECO Secretariat and ECO

membership have been active in the global campaign against drug and its related organized crime. And there are quite convincing reasons for us to continue to play role in any future global arrangements, including in the process leading to 2016 UNGA Special Session and its follow-up mechanisms. I am sure that international community and the United Nations also acknowledge the ECO relevance and capacity in this regard as well as the imperative of ECO continued involvement in the drug-related future actions.

Mr. Chairman

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Delegates

ECO has been pursuing a range of activities on intra-regional, inter-regional and multilateral partnerships level which, in one way or another, contributed towards the realization of the objectives of the 2009 Political Declaration and the Plan of Action. Those activities have dealt with demand and supply reduction measures, including the mainstreaming community involvement; training and networking; data collection and evaluation; law enforcement, judicial, anti-trafficking and anti-corruption cooperation as well as awareness raising. We have specifically conducted projects aiming at information and data exchange on drug situation in the Region; establishing a computerized network on drug demand reduction; upgrading the national legislative/regulatory frameworks for combating drug production and trafficking in conformity with major UN Drug Conventions; and networking of focal-points and liaison officers on police/law enforcement for organized crime, terrorism and human trafficking matters. A very important EU-ECO partnership has also been effective in the last five years, targeting regional challenges and needs associated with the illegal drug trafficking from and to Afghanistan. We are grateful to the European Union for its generous financing of this project.

Along with that, we have also started to explore ways and means to eradicate illicit crops cultivation. This proved to be in need of wider arrangements through partnerships with relevant partners from outside the Region. Alternative development approach, one of main objectives of the UN Political Declaration and the Plan of Action is now emerging in ECO agenda for addressing drug-related underdevelopment. We believe that our organization is the right place in the Region where global partnership can be translated into regional measures. ECO has rich experience in cooperative arrangements on Afghanistan-specific development and reconstruction projects, as well as established capacities to respond to the most components of any alternative development strategy; including health, infrastructure,

environment protection, market access, agricultural development and education. There are ongoing regional projects in these areas within ECO which can be adjusted for the "alternative development" purposes and targeted countries and groups within the Region. I seize this opportunity to express the ECO's interest and readiness to serve as a regional partner and implementing agency for international initiatives on alternative development in this part of the World.

We would like to propose here to incorporate one item to a Resolution to be adopted by this meeting on alternative development, reflecting the fact that ECO has extensive experience in reconstruction of Afghanistan. I avail myself of this opportunity to encourage ECO member states and all international donors to financially support and contribute to the ECO fund which has been established for the same purpose, to enable the people engaged now in cultivation of poppy to switch over to production of other crops, foodstuff, herbal medicines, etc.

Mr. Chairman

As the ECO Secretary General, who is closely involved in planning and implementing regional cooperation programs and projects in a wide range of economic activities, I believe that in absence of proper addressing of the drug problem, there is no chance to ensure sustained growth and economic development in the affected countries and regions. This is why that we agree with those who believe that drug control policies shall be treated as "economic development" issue. This premise will lead us to the conclusion that all development-related mechanisms shall be on board when new arrangements will be crafted for post 2016, a possible "Global Development Agenda for Drug Control".

In conclusion, I once again offer the ECO readiness for playing additional role in global campaign against illicit drug and its associated externalities.

Thank you for your attention