

## **The First ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism**

### **Tehran Declaration**

*Tehran, October 20, 2008*

We, the Ministers for Tourism and Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization, participating in the First ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, held on October 20, 2008, in Tehran, in pursuance of the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (Herat, October 2007), to promote tourism in the region and strengthen mutual cooperation to that end;

**Emphasizing** the importance of Article 2(e) and 2(n) of the Treaty of Izmir and the relevant provisions of the ECO Vision 2015 to develop the ECO region as a tourism destination;

**Recalling** the recommendations of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ECO High Level Experts Group Meetings on Tourism held in December 2006 in Tehran and in June 2008, in Baku, respectively, and the ECO Plan of Action on Tourism;

**Acknowledging** the importance of the tourism industry for closer understanding among our people, for improved quality of life, peace and prosperity in the region, and for the socio-economic growth of the ECO Member States;

**Considering** the vast potential of the ECO region in the field of tourism, especially ecotourism and its ability to increase the region's share in global tourism;

**Recalling** the ECO Vision 2015 which envisaged making the movement of people throughout the region easier and more efficient;

**Appreciating** the value of quality tourism and mindful of improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the tourism services of the ECO region;

**Emphasizing** the active role of the private sector in tourism industry and the need to encourage it to engage more deeply in the development of tourism and investment in tourism services;

**Encouraging** public-private partnership in tourism marketing and cooperation with tourism organizations within the ECO region and beyond;

**Have** agreed as follows:

- I. **Taking note of** the need for an action plan to promote regional cooperation in this important field, **approve** the Plan of Action on Tourism agreed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> HLEG Meeting in Baku and **call on** the Member States to implement it expeditiously.
- II. **Approve** the Modality for establishment of the ECO Tourism Promotion Fund as a means to enhance regional cooperation in the field of tourism and **call on** member states to provide the necessary support including financial contribution for its effective functioning.

- III. **Thank** the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey for their declaration to contribute financially to ECO Tourism Promotion Fund as soon as it becomes operational.
- IV. **Welcome** various measures approved by the Baku HLEG meeting for promotion of regional tourism, including such joint tourism projects as cruise in the Caspian Sea, creation of ECO tourism website, revival of the Silk Road, relaxation of visa procedures, promotion of ecotourism, health and rural tourism.
- V. **Emphasize** the need for increased cooperation among the national tourism organizations and the tourism industry, especially the private sector of the member states in promoting regional tourism;
- VI. **Appreciate** the efforts of the ECO Cultural Institute to prepare the ECO Tourism Guidebook, **call on** Member States that have not done so to provide ECI with the requisite information for the completion of the Guidebook in three months time, and **thank** the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its readiness to print the Guidebook.
- VII. **Request** the Secretariat to take necessary measures to establish linkage between the tourism websites of the member states.
- VIII. **Declare** November 28, ECO Day, as the ECO Tourism Festival Day, **thank** the Islamic Republic of Iran for its readiness to host the 1<sup>st</sup> ECO Tourism Festival Day in 2008 in Gilan, including a cruiseship programme entitled "Peace and Friendship among different parts of Caspian Sea" and **call on** member states to actively participate in these events.
- IX. **Emphasize** the need to hold, on regular basis, expert level meetings/workshops and training programs to promote tourism industry and increase public awareness in the region.
- X. **Express sincere** thanks and appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, especially His Excellency Mr. Esfandiar Rahim Mashae, the Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the President of ICHTO, for hosting this Ministerial Meeting, extending warm hospitality to all participants and making this event a memorable success.