



Economic Cooperation Organization

**A brief introduction of ECO activities in
Railway Transport in context of enhancing
transport connectivity for sustainable
recovery and green growth in North and
Central Asia”**

*Zeinolla Kalymbetov, Program Officer, Transport &
Communications*

June 7, 2023



ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO)

Introduction

- ▶ An intergovernmental organization with 10 member countries namely:

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,
Republic of Azerbaijan,
Islamic Republic of Iran,
Republic of Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyz Republic,
Islamic Republic of Pakistan,
Republic of Tajikistan,
Republic of Türkiye,
Turkmenistan,
Republic of Uzbekistan

Main Areas of Activity:

- Trade and Investment
- Transport and Communications
- Energy, Minerals and Environment
- Agriculture and Industry
- Human Resource and Sustainable Development
- Tourism

Transport and Communications

- Railway Transport / Road Transport / Maritime and / Aviation Cooperation
- Multimodal transport
- Tools for facilitating the transit trade in region , i.e. Custom Transit , Insurance, Visa issue, ECOLPAF
- Postal activities and financial postal services Telecommunication and ICT
- Development Cooperation with International and regional organizations



ECO Railway Routes

1. **The ECO Container Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Route**
2. **The ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty Route**
3. **The ECO Container Train on Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route**
4. **Railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran**
5. **Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) Railway Project**
6. **Railway connecting China and Europe via Kyrgyz-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran-Turkey**
7. **New routes under developments**



ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty Route

ECO Corridor



This route is the most direct and feasible transport route which can facilitate East-Asian trade with Europe through Central Asia. Total distance of route is 5626 km. The route is operational since 2002. HLWG is following up timetable, tariff and other technical matters to streamline the train services.



ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty Route

ECO Corridor

- The project titled “ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty route” was initiated in March 2001. Its overall length is 6103 Km (Türkiye 1,950 km, Iran 2,016 km, Turkmenistan 449 km, Uzbekistan 732 km and Kazakhstan 956 km).
- The project’s first milestone was realized via formal launch of the container train on 20 January 2002. The “Feasibility Study on the ECO Container Train Operationalization” was completed in 2010 and approved in 2014.
- The project’s initial goal designed at its onset was to enable rail-based multimodal connectivity till sea outlets in Türkiye for the en-route landlocked (LLCs) countries, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.



ECO Container Train on Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route

ECO Corridor



The first demonstration run of the ECO Container Train on Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route (3710 km) was organized on 17 October 2011 from Bandar Abbas.

HLWG is following up timetable, tariff and other technical matters to streamline the train services.



ECO Container Train on Bandar Abbas-Almaty Route

ECO Corridor

- The project titled “ECO Container Train on Bandar Abbas - Almaty route” was initiated in March 2001. Its overall length is 3717 Km (Iran 1, 580 km, Turkmenistan 449 km, Uzbekistan 732 km and Kazakhstan 956 km).
- The project’s first milestone was realized via formal launch of the container train on 20 January 2002. The “Feasibility Study on the ECO Container Train Operationalization” was completed in 2010 and approved in 2014.
- The project’s initial goal designed at its onset was to enable rail-based multimodal connectivity till sea outlets in Iran for the en-route landlocked (LLCs) countries, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.



Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Project

ECO Corridor



The railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran was inaugurated on 3rd December 2014 and completed North-South Corridor all the way through the en-route countries all the way to Bandar Abbas and Persian Gulf.

The Project is considered as a major step towards seamless transit transport connectivity, enhanced transit trade, economic growth and better access for all countries



Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Railway Project

ECO Corridor

- The project's goal is to connect the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and develop “a replicable model of the common corridor management mechanism in order to bring in greater efficiency in the ECO railway network”.
- The KTI railway link is a part of the North-South Transport Corridor and is a 677 km (421 mi) long railway line connecting the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan with Iran and the Persian Gulf.
- The Project is coordinated by ECO through Tripartite Coordination Committee (TCC). A “Memorandum of Understanding” between Railway Administrations of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Implementation of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) Railway Freight Corridor” was signed during the sidelines of the 15th ECO Summit in Ashgabat in November 2021.
- The project's economic impact will be 10 million tons freight throughput per annum via the KTI railway.



Overview of ECO-OTIF Cooperation

ECO-OTIF Cooperation

- **Signing of MoU in 2009, formulated concrete areas of collaboration in the interests of the ECO member states;**
- **Application of OTIF\CIM Rules in the ECO Container Train Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul route in 2010.**
- **Organization of joint capacity building in Pakistan;**
- **Accession of Pakistan to COTIF in 2013 as the 49th Member of the Convention;**
- **Joint OTIF/UIC/ECO Workshop on COTIF (Tehran, 11-12 November 2014).**
- **Granting Observer Status to the ECO at the Ad-hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation of OTIF in 2022**
- **OTIF members in the ECO Region: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Türkiye.**



Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- ❖ Lack of the financial resources in implementation of projects, missing links and infrastructure development
- ❖ Different legal regimes for railway networks
- ❖ Different technical standards for railway systems
- ❖ Missing links and old infrastructure
- ❖ Lack of coordination
- ❖ Information gap
- ❖ Limited skilled human resources
- ❖ Limited border crossing capacities
- ❖ Non coordinated restrictive measures for transit

Opportunities

- ❖ Territorial integrity and geographical connectivity / High interest for development of transport sector / Proximity to China on one side and the Middle East and South Asia and Europe
- ❖ Abundant natural resources and minerals
- ❖ ECO Secretariat as a well functioning convening power and mechanism.

Thank You

Contact:

Zeinolla@eco.int