



The 7TH ACD DECLARATION

Astana, Kazakhstan, 16th of October 2008

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Heads of Delegation from 29 member countries of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), namely the Kingdom of Bahrain; the People's Republic of Bangladesh; the Kingdom of Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; the Kingdom of Cambodia; the People's Republic of China; the Republic of India; the Republic of Indonesia; the Islamic Republic of Iran; Japan; the Republic of Kazakhstan; the Republic of Korea; the State of Kuwait; the Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Mongolia; the Union of Myanmar; the Sultanate of Oman; the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; the Republic of the Philippines; the State of Qatar; the Russian Federation; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the Republic of Singapore; the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; the Republic of Tajikistan; the Kingdom of Thailand; the United Arab Emirates; and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam gathered here in Astana, the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 7th ACD Ministerial Meeting;

Recalling Asia's glorious cultural heritage and vast human resources, as well as great economic capabilities for dynamic and successful development in Asia.

Reaffirming our desire to continue utmost efforts to strengthen cooperation in Asia for the benefit of the region and its peoples.

Recalling our continued cooperation and commitments to the decisions adopted at the 2nd Ministerial Meeting held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 2003; the 3rd Ministerial Meeting held in Qingdao, China in 2004; the 4th Ministerial Meeting held in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2005; the 5th Ministerial Meeting held in Doha, Qatar in 2006, and the 6th Ministerial Meeting held in Seoul, Korea in 2007.

Noting that in recent years, the ACD has progressed rapidly and dynamically in terms of membership, by expanding the number of its members from 18 in 2002 to 30 countries by 2006, cooperation projects up to 19 areas and dialogue, which convenes twice a year at the Ministerial level.

Recalling that the 6th ACD Ministerial Meeting in Seoul on 5 June 2007 endorsed the creation of the ACD High-Level Study Group to make recommendations on 4 issues of significance to the forum's future direction. This includes 1) End Goals of ACD Cooperation, 2) Desirability of Creating an ACD Secretariat, 3) Funding and other Mechanisms to Stimulate Progress and Activities of Different Project Areas and 4) Track II Participation in the ACD Process.

Recognizing that the ACD Ministers' Meeting on the sidelines of the 62nd UN General Assembly assigned the High-Level Study Group to make recommendations on two more issues, 1) Cultural Cooperation and 2) Membership Issues.

Cognizant that the High-Level Study Group meetings were held during 2007-2008 in Bangkok (20-21 August 2007), Seoul (17-18 April 2008) and Astana (18-19 August 2008).

Acknowledging the pivotal role of advancing the transport communication and connectivity for successful development of intra-trade cooperation and economic activity in Asia.

Reaffirming the need of access of landlocked countries to and from the sea and freedom of transit through the territory of transit countries by all means of transport, in accordance with the applicable rules of international law.

Also reaffirming that transit countries, in the exercise of their full sovereignty over their territory, have the right to take all measures necessary to ensure that the facilities provided for landlocked countries in no way infringe their legitimate interests.

DO HEREBY DECLARE TO:

ACD Progress

Endorse the Summary Report and Recommendations of the ACD High-Level Study Group on the Future Directions of the ACD (Annex 1),

Take note of the progress made in the ACD cooperation areas, as reported by the ACD Coordinator (Compilation of Cooperation Areas Progress Reports appears in Annex 2) and recognize the necessity to make cultural cooperation the 20th ACD cooperation project and invite the Islamic Republic of Iran as Prime Mover and the Republic of India as Co-Prime Mover in this area,

Welcome the initiative of Track II participation in the ACD process and welcome Iran and India's offer to hold ACD Think Tanks Network meeting in 2008 and 2009 respectively,

Welcome the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the first ACD cultural cooperation meeting in Tehran at the end of March 2009,

Express appreciation for the presentation of Concept Papers on Cooperation in Transport, Agriculture and Energy areas among ACD member-countries made by the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Support the proposal of the Republic of Kazakhstan to host a Transport Forum at the Ministerial Level, which will take place on April 29, 2009, in Astana, Kazakhstan,

Express appreciation for the presentation made by Almaty Regional Financial Centre,

Agree the nomination of Kazakhstan as Co-Prime Mover in the area of Financial Cooperation as well as nomination of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the Co-Prime Mover in the area of AeU,

Welcome the proposal of the Republic of Korea to conduct the 'ACD e-Government System Integration Course' in 2009,

Note the excellent progress of Asia e University (AeU) in Malaysia and agree to explore the ways and means for the establishment of the Asian Credit Transfer System (ACTS) on a voluntary basis, and reaffirm the role of Asia e University (AeU) as an instrument for human capacity building, closing digital divide, increasing higher education accessibility and promoting e-education for the benefit of all ACD member countries,

Agree to promote 'cluster cooperation' by applying best practices to maximize synergies and enhance effectiveness, and invite experts to prepare report for the 8th ACD Ministerial Meeting in 2009,

Need to consider the merits of establishing a mechanism for mid-term review and to monitor, analyze, identify, follow-up and evaluate projects and initiatives to ensure effective implementation of such projects and initiatives in agreed areas of cooperation.

Other Matters

Agree to lift the current moratorium on ACD membership,

Welcome and accept the Kyrgyz Republic as the 31st ACD member,

Welcome and accept Morocco as an ACD Partner for Development, in accordance with the Guidelines for ACD Partner for Development.

Regional and International Issues

Express concern over aggravation of food security, due to, *inter alia*, unstable grain prices and agree to intensify efforts to address this issue,

Express concern over the impacts of global financial crisis on our economies and stressed the need for joint efforts to address this issue, including coordination in a concerted manner through balanced improvement of global financial institutions as well as the sub-regional frameworks in Asia,

Express appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka to host the 8th Ministerial Meeting in Colombo in 2009,

Welcome the offers made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 9th ACD Ministerial Meeting in 2010, the State of Kuwait to host the 10th ACD Ministerial Meeting in 2011, the Republic of Tajikistan to host the 11th ACD Ministerial Meeting in 2012 and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to host one of the ACD Ministerial Meetings.

Express deep gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for the 7th ACD Ministerial Meeting in Astana.

Adopted on 16th of October 2008 in Astana, the Republic of Kazakhstan.