



# ECI NEWSLETTER

ECO CULTURAL INSTITUTE

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CULTURE COOPERATION CREATIVITY



## Message from the President



Amb. Muhammad Hassan, President, ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)

### Dear Readers,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of the ECI Newsletter for 2026. Many of our long-time readers may remember that publishing a newsletter was once a regular feature of the ECO Cultural Institute's outreach efforts. Over time, that publication evolved into ECO Nama, which has become an important platform for sharing cultural news and developments from across ECO Member States. While ECO Nama continues to serve that purpose, we felt it was equally important to

revive a dedicated ECI Newsletter that focuses on the work, activities, and future plans of the Institute itself.

May was a challenging month for our organization. Owing to prevailing circumstances, many members of our team had to work from home. Yet, despite these difficulties, our colleagues remained fully committed to their responsibilities and ensured that the Institute's work continued without interruption. Their dedication and professionalism deserve special recognition, and I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to every member of the ECI family for their hard work and perseverance.

During the month, I had the opportunity to meet H.E. Mr. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Minister for National Heritage and Culture of Pakistan. We held fruitful discussions on ways to strengthen cooperation between ECI and Pakistan's cultural institutions, particularly in the areas of cultural heritage, cultural exchange, and the creative sector. I also met Mr. Muhammad Ayoub Jamali, Director General of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), and I am pleased to share that both sides agreed to pursue the signing of a Memorandum of



Understanding to facilitate future collaboration and joint cultural programmes. Another encouraging development was my meeting with Professor Dr. Komail Tayabi, Head of our sister institution, the ECO Science Foundation, in Islamabad. Our discussion focused on areas of mutual interest and opportunities for closer cooperation between the two organizations. Such partnerships are essential as we seek to promote a more integrated approach to culture, education, science, and development within the ECO region.

One of the most significant events of the month was ECI's participation in the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization. The Institute presented an overview of its current activities and future plans, highlighting the growing importance of culture in strengthening regional cooperation and fostering greater understanding among our peoples. The month concluded with the 48th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), the governing body of the Institute. The Council considered a number of important matters relating to ECI's programmes and administration, endorsed key elements of our reform efforts, and adopted decisions that will help strengthen the Institute and enhance its effectiveness in the years ahead.

In the coming months, ECI will be organizing a variety of cultural events, publications, and collaborative initiatives with our Member States and partners. We look forward to sharing these activities with you and to further advancing our mission of promoting the rich cultural heritage and diversity of the ECO region.

Culture remains one of the strongest bridges between nations and peoples. It connects us to our shared past, enriches our present, and inspires our future. As we move forward together, I invite you to remain engaged with the work of ECI and to join us in celebrating the cultural wealth of our region.

Thank you for your continued interest, encouragement, and support.

**Ambassador Muhammad Hassan**  
**President**  
**ECO Cultural Institute**

Table of Content:

1. President ECI Called on Heritage and Culture Minister of Pakistan.....	2
2. ECI and PNCA Agree to Strengthen Cultural Cooperation.....	3
3. Courtesy Call on the President of ECO Science Foundation.....	4
4. ECI Participation in the 36th Session of the ECO Regional Planning Council.....	5
5. Statement of ambassador Muhammad Hassan, President ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) Tehran at the Regional Planning Council (17 May 2026).....	6
6. 48th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI Held.....	8
7. ECI Extends Congratulations to the Republic of Azerbaijan on its National Day.....	9

## President ECI Called on Heritage and Culture Minister of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD – May 2026

The President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), Ambassador Muhammad Hassan, called on H.E. the Minister for National Heritage and Culture of Pakistan to discuss shared interests and ongoing collaboration between ECI and Pakistan’s cultural institutions.

During their conversation, they explored ways to enhance institutional partnerships in vital areas such as preserving cultural heritage, promoting cultural diplomacy, and boosting creative industries throughout the ECO region. They also touched on internal matters within ECI, including its reorganization and upcoming Board of Trustees meetings.

The Minister expressed his support for ECI’s initiatives and emphasized the Government of Pakistan’s commitment to fostering



Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture of Pakistan

cooperation, aiming to work closely with ECI to achieve common cultural goals and strengthen regional connections.

The President of ECI thanked the Minister for the positive dialogue and reaffirmed the Institute’s dedication to collaborating with Pakistan and other Member States to enhance cultural cooperation within the ECO framework.

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*Strengthening cultural cooperation and heritage preservation remains at the heart of our shared vision for a more connected ECO region.*

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# ECI and PNCA Agree to Strengthen Cultural Cooperation

TEHRAN / ISLAMABAD – May 2026

In a recent meeting, Ambassador Muhammad Hassan, the President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), and the Director General of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) engaged in fruitful discussions aimed at boosting cooperation in the cultural sector. They came to a mutual understanding to enhance their collaboration through a structured framework designed to promote cultural exchange, artistic partnerships, and capacity-building initiatives throughout the ECO region.

As part of this effort, both parties agreed to start preparing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will lay the groundwork for future joint activities. The talks also included plans for organizing joint cultural events, exhibitions, performances, and festivals, along with increasing the participation of artists from ECO Member States in exchange programs facilitated by ECI and PNCA.

These initiatives are anticipated to strengthen



Headquarter of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA)

connections between people and showcase the rich cultural diversity of the region. Both sides highlighted the significance of maintaining ongoing collaboration between cultural institutions to support creative industries, nurture artistic talent, and foster mutual understanding among member countries. The Director General of PNCA expressed enthusiasm for the proposal of closer cooperation and showed a strong willingness to work with ECI to turn these initiatives into tangible programs. Meanwhile, the President of ECI acknowledged the positive dialogue and reaffirmed the Institute's dedication to forming strong, results-driven partnerships with cultural organizations across the ECO region.

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*The proposed MoU will pave the way for stronger cultural exchanges and lasting artistic partnerships across the ECO region.*

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# Courtesy Call on the President of ECO Science Foundation

ISLAMABAD – May 2026



Amb. Muhammad Hassan, President of the ECO Cultural Institute, and the President of the ECO Science Foundation

communities and cultural actors across the region, thereby fostering a more integrated and inclusive approach to regional cooperation.

The possibility of organizing joint programmes, thematic workshops, and youth-focused initiatives was also discussed, with particular attention to building stronger linkages between cultural heritage, scientific research, and technological innovation.

Dr. Komail Tayabi welcomed the engagement and

During his visit to Islamabad, the President of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), Ambassador Muhammad Hassan, paid a courtesy call on Dr. Komail Tayabi, President of the ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF).

The meeting provided an opportunity for both sides to exchange views on strengthening institutional cooperation between the two ECO specialized agencies. Discussions focused on exploring practical ways to better connect ECO Member States through greater synergy between science and culture, recognizing that both fields are mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development.

Both Presidents highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing contemporary challenges, particularly in the areas of education, innovation, youth engagement, and knowledge-sharing. They also emphasized the need to develop joint initiatives that can bring together scientific

expressed ECOSF's strong interest in working closely with ECI to advance shared objectives and promote closer connectivity among ECO Member States in both science and culture fields.

The President of ECI appreciated the warm reception and reiterated the Institute's commitment to enhancing collaboration with ECOSF as part of a broader effort to strengthen regional integration through knowledge, culture, and science.

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*Science and culture are mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development and regional integration.*

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## ECI Participation in the 36th Session of the ECO Regional Planning Council

TEHRAN – May 17-20, 2026



36th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran, May 2026

The ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) made a strong and active presence in the 36th Session of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), held in Tehran from 20–17 May 2026.

The RPC serves as the principal technical planning body of ECO, bringing together heads of planning organizations and senior representatives of relevant ministries and agencies from Member States. It is

mandated to review the implementation of ECO programmes, assess progress achieved under previous work plans, and propose new initiatives, including the establishment of regional institutions and thematic mechanisms in priority areas of cooperation. The Council also reviews and approves the Organization's annual work programme.

During the session, the President of ECI delivered a statement outlining the Institute's ongoing programmes, recent activities, and strategic priorities for the year ahead. He also presented an overview of ECI's future plans, with a particular focus on strengthening cultural cooperation, enhancing regional engagement, and expanding collaborative initiatives across ECO Member States.

The participation of ECI in the RPC reaffirmed the growing recognition of culture as an essential component of regional development and cooperation within the ECO framework.

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*Culture is increasingly recognized as a vital pillar of regional development and cooperation within the ECO framework.*  
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# Statement of ambassador Muhammad Hassan, President ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) Tehran at the Regional Planning Council

TEHRAN – May 17 ,2026



Dr. Mohammad Hassan, President of the ECO Cultural Institute, participating in the 36th Meeting of the ECO Regional Planning Council at the ECO Secretariat, Tehran, May 2026

Distinguished Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Honourable Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset join the delegations who spoke before me to express our heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the loss of precious life and destruction to properties during this illegal war.

It is a privilege to address this distinguished meeting of the Regional Planning Council on behalf of the ECO Cultural Institute.

The ECO region represents a remarkable civilizational space shaped by centuries of cultural interaction and shared heritage. Within

the ECO framework, economic and cultural cooperation are mutually reinforcing pillars of regional integration.

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*Culture is not only a source of identity, but also a driver of sustainable development, social cohesion, innovation, and peace.*

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Culture is not only a source of identity, but also a driver of sustainable development, social cohesion, innovation, and peace.

As the cultural arm of ECO, the ECO Cultural Institute is currently undergoing a process of reinvigoration and institutional renewal. Alongside the review of our organizational structure and foundational documents, we are also advancing the long-awaited Host Country Agreement.

At the same time, the Institute is strengthening its role as a platform for intellectual engagement, policy dialogue, academic exchange, scientific cooperation, and intercultural collaboration across the ECO region.

We are pursuing an ambitious programme of activities aimed at empowering scholars, artists, scientists, and young innovators to contribute more actively to regional cooperation. In this regard, ECI is preparing to launch an artist exchange programme and promote networking among art universities, cultural academies, and heritage institutions across member states.

The Institute is also placing greater emphasis on evidence-based cultural policy research. We are currently reviewing the cultural policies of ECO member states to identify common challenges and new opportunities for cooperation. The findings will be published in a special issue of ECO Heritage.

This work will be followed by regional studies on endangered tangible and intangible heritage, as well as the ECO region's rich linguistic diversity, which according to UNESCO includes nearly 600 living languages, many of them endangered or vulnerable.

In parallel, ECI is expanding its engagement in intercultural dialogue and people-to-people connectivity through cultural festivals, youth exchanges, translation initiatives, joint

exhibitions, digital platforms, and media cooperation, with special attention to youth engagement and emerging creative talent. Excellencies,

The ECO Cultural Institute remains fully committed to working closely with the ECO Secretariat, member states, academic institutions, and partner organizations in advancing a more connected, inclusive, and culturally vibrant ECO region.

We firmly believe that stronger cultural and intellectual cooperation will contribute meaningfully to the broader vision and long-term objectives of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

I thank you for your kind attention.



## 48th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI Held

TEHRAN – May 25 ,2026

The 48th Meeting of the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR) of the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) was held on 25 May 2026 with the participation of representatives of ECO Member States and the ECO Secretariat.

The meeting provided an important platform for in-depth discussions on the Institute's ongoing reform agenda, institutional priorities, and future direction. Member States engaged constructively on a range of administrative, programmatic, and organizational matters aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and responsiveness of the Institute.

The Council carefully reviewed progress made under the reform process and exchanged views on measures to further enhance institutional efficiency, transparency, and programme delivery. Following deliberations,

the CPR adopted a number of important decisions designed to support the continued development and modernization of ECI's structures and working methods.

Participants also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening ECI's role in promoting cultural cooperation among ECO Member States and supporting initiatives that foster regional dialogue, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange.

The meeting concluded in a spirit of consensus and cooperation, reflecting the shared determination of Member States to further strengthen the Institute and advance its cultural mandate within the ECO framework.

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*Member States reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening ECI's role in promoting cultural cooperation across the ECO region.*  
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The 48th Meeting of the ECI Council of Permanent Representatives reviewed key institutional and programmatic matters related to the Institute's future activities and development

## ECI Extends Congratulations to the Republic of Azerbaijan on its National Day

The ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Republic of Azerbaijan on the occasion of its National Day falling on 28 May 2026.

This important day is a moment of pride for the people of Azerbaijan, reflecting the country's rich history, cultural heritage, and enduring national identity. It also stands as an opportunity to recognize Azerbaijan's valuable contributions to regional cooperation, cultural dialogue, and the promotion of shared values within the ECO region.

The President of ECI conveyed sincere best wishes to the Government and people of the Republic of Azerbaijan, expressing appreciation for their continued engagement and active participation in strengthening

cultural ties among ECO Member States. He reaffirmed ECI's commitment to further deepening cooperation with Azerbaijan in the fields of culture, heritage preservation, and creative exchange.

*“Azerbaijan’s rich cultural heritage and active engagement continue to strengthen cultural cooperation across the ECO region.”*

