

REPORT OF THE D-8 COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (VII. SESSION)

1. The VII. Session of the Council of Ministers was held in Tehran on 16 February 2004. In his opening statement, the Chairman, H.E. Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomed the D-8 Ministers and explained the Iranian views on various items in the agenda in the light of the reports of the Special and XIV. Sessions of the Commission.
2. The Ministers of the member countries made their opening statements.
3. The Council adopted its agenda and heard the statement of the Executive Director on the activities of D-8 Group since the Cairo Summit.
4. The President of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines presented the report of the Second Session of the Business Forum. The chairperson of the XV. Session of the Commission presented the report of the Commission and elaborated on the major issues discussed and recommended in it.
5. Thereafter, the Council considered and adopted the reports of the last three sessions of the Commission, including the Special Session.
6. The Council reviewed the provisional agenda and the work program of the Summit and adopted them to be submitted to the Heads of State and Government.
7. The Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Kharazzi invited the Ministers to engage in an interactive discussion on two main issues in D-8 cooperation namely, * How effective the D-8 member countries would be able to coordinate their positions on international issues.
* How to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the D-8 Group.

The views expressed by the Ministers are summarized here below:

- In deciding on future activities, we should adopt a pragmatic approach and focus on practical and realistic projects in a limited number. To this end, we should institutionalize this approach. We also should be ready to bring our financial and creative resources in this regard.
- Trade and investment promotion acquires high priority in D-8 cooperation. To this end, we should take the measures to liberalize the D-8 intra-trade by concluding agreements on free trade area and customs collaboration as soon as possible. In this vein, we should also facilitate the process of granting of visas in order to encourage the contacts between the businessmen.
- The Governments should act as facilitator in D-8 cooperation as the private sector is the driving force in our economies. To this end, incentives should be

given to private sectors in order to encourage them to participate in D-8 cooperation.

- In this context, an interaction between the government and the private sector should be developed in order to obtain the views of the businessmen on D-8 cooperation. Moreover, interaction between the D-8 chambers of commerce should also be strengthened.
- The exchange of information and updating the website of D-8 is very important. The networking in the exchange of information and experience should be enhanced.
- Since liberalization of trade and eventual establishment of free trade area has been chosen as a first priority, we should take it seriously by integrating this program into our national economic plans. D-8 free trade must become high in our development agenda.
- Future summit declarations should be more concise and shorter, concentrating on a few topics of priority and therefore need not to address all the issues.
- To revitalize D-8 cooperation, we should strengthen the Coordinating Unit. In this connection, Iranian Minister stated that in the line with precious discussions, he has decided to dispatch an Iranian experienced diplomat to the Coordinating Unit as a secondment. Head of Pakistan delegation also expressed his willingness to consider favorably the secondment approach to strengthen the D-8 Coordinating Unit.
- Some Ministers favored the opening of D-8 membership to few selected countries while others took the position that we should first solidify D-8 cooperation and become an active group before inviting other countries. The latter also added that we should set beforehand the criteria and modalities for the new membership. In this context, the view was expressed that dialogue partnership could be established with developed countries.
- Several Ministers referring to Istanbul Declaration pointed to the need to establish linkage with the OIC. In this connection, it was also reminded that all D-8 members by virtue of being the members of OIC at the same time have already liaison with the Organization at national level. Furthermore, attention was drawn to the sensitive nature of this issue.