

FM says ECO could become one of most dynamic blocs in Global South

Economy Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Friday said the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region could become "one of the most dynamic emerging areas in the Global South" if member states fully use their collective potential. Speaking during the 29th ECO Council of Ministers meeting held virtually, Araghchi outlined a forward-looking vision for fostering cooperation among the organization's members, IRNA reported.

"Recent summits have shown that the political will to reinforce ECO exists at the highest level of member states," he said, adding that the Council of Ministers — as ECO's highest decision-making body — "must

continuously strengthen this valuable will and reproduce this momentum."

The Iranian minister called for "paradigmatic changes and structural redesign" in the regional bloc.

"To formulate a new vision, we cannot continue along the same old frameworks and pathways and ignore major global and regional developments and challenges," he added.

Araghchi said the 10-member bloc — comprising Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan — must move beyond past approaches to realize its full potential.

"Our countries must become more resilient, more integrated, and stronger in the face of

future risks and shocks," he said, underscoring that ECO "remains the best existing platform for the collective development and progress of its members."

The minister urged the ECO Vision Committee to develop "a more appropriate, efficient, and implementable document for the next 10 years," adding that any future strategy "must make our region more physically and technologically interconnected." The call for renewal comes after the 28th ECO Council of Ministers convened on December 3, 2024, in Mashhad, Iran, where foreign and deputy foreign ministers from all member states gathered in person — a meeting that set the stage for the current push toward institutional reform.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addresses the 29th ECO Council of Ministers meeting held virtually on November 28, 2025.

● SCREENGAB

Tehran, Moscow pledge deeper agro ties, eye joint food hub



Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezelgeh (2nd L) at the head of a delegation meets his Russian counterpart, Oksana Lut (3rd R), in Moscow, on November 27, 2025.

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Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezelgeh and his Russian counterpart, Oksana Lut, agreed to expand Tehran-Moscow agricultural cooperation during their talks in the Russian capital on Thursday, pledging closer collaboration on trade, veterinary standards, and joint research.

The meeting centered on implementing the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty signed by the two countries' presidents at the Kremlin in January 2025.

"Agriculture is a key pillar of Iran-Russia trade — already accounting for two-thirds of our current exchanges," Nouri-Qezelgeh said, adding that Tehran is prioritizing Russian agricultural products to meet domestic demand. "We are

fully prepared to supply Russia with high-quality agricultural goods and welcome Russian companies to invest in Iran's emerging food-processing and export infrastructure."

Strategic role in Moscow's agricultural agenda

Meanwhile, Lut emphasized Iran's strategic role in Moscow's agricultural agenda. "Iran is a major and important partner for Russia in agriculture," she said, noting that bilateral agricultural trade rose by 20% in the first nine months of 2025. "This year, we have resumed exports of mineral fertilizers to Iran — a significant step forward."

The ministers agreed to establish joint mechanisms for veterinary and phytosanitary quarantine cooperation to eliminate

trade barriers and pledged enhanced collaboration in technical fields, agricultural research, and farmer training. Plans were also finalized to launch joint agricultural research stations. Discussions extended to wheat and animal feed exchanges, veterinary vaccine production, plant breeding, and the deployment of advanced agricultural technologies. Both sides also explored avenues for cooperation within multi-lateral frameworks, including BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. On Wednesday, Nouri-Qezelgeh met with executives of major Russian agricultural holdings to discuss grain swaps and feed imports, and separately conferred with Kazakhstan's agriculture minister on bilateral ties.

Russian firms invited to join Iran's food hub initiative

In a separate gathering

at the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, the Iranian minister invited Russian agribusiness leaders to participate in Tehran's plan to become a regional food-processing and export hub. He highlighted Iran's semi-idle grain-processing, oil-extraction, and animal feed facilities — now targeted for reactivation under the government's new policy aimed at maximizing their capacity.

"Given regional and African demand for grains and their derivatives, Iran's processing capabilities offer a strategic opportunity: importing more grain from Russia and re-exporting value-added products," Nouri-Qezelgeh said. He confirmed that Tehran has issued necessary permits to scale up agricultural trade and encouraged Russian firms to join Iranian-led production and transit initiatives. Russian executives welcomed the proposal, citing Iran's geographic advantage along the North-South and East-West transport corridors as a key incentive for deeper collaboration.

Ardabil unveils 304 investment opportunities, launches 12 economic projects

Economy Desk

The first International Investment Conference of Ardabil Province opened on Thursday with the unveiling of 304 investment opportunities, as Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni inaugurated 12 new economic projects in the northwestern Iranian province.

The two-day conference, attended by Momeni, local businesspeople, commercial attachés, and ambassadors from several countries, aims to create a platform for domestic and foreign investment in Ardabil and foster multi-lateral economic partnerships, IRNA reported.

Delegations from Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Turkmenistan, India, Pakistan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Dagestan are participating in the event, according to Tasnim news agency.

During a ceremony at the newly-launched Ardabil Steel Complex, where the 12 projects simultaneously came online, Momeni said that 56 investment plans had reached the contracting stage during the international conference and \$50 million in currency-based memoranda of



Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni addresses a ceremony to inaugurate a series of projects in Ardabil, northwestern Iran on November 27, 2025.

● IRNA

understanding had been signed.

"We hope to soon receive reports on the implementation of these MOUs and contracts related to the identified investment opportunities," Momeni said.

The 12 newly operational economic projects are expected to directly create 400 jobs and include the Ardabil Steel Complex, the province's first agricultural park—centered on the Moghan Agro-Industrial Company—and the commencement of construction on Ardabil's Science and Technology Park.

Momeni praised Ardabil's potential, calling it a leading province in trade, investment, and tourism. "Ardabil could become a national hub in all

these areas," he said, citing strong coordination among provincial officials and the determination of local entrepreneurs as key drivers.

He also highlighted upcoming infrastructure developments, noting that completion of the Ardabil-Mianeh railway line in the coming months and its connection to Iran's national rail network would significantly boost exports from Ardabil to other provinces and neighboring countries.

"The completion of the Ardabil-Mianeh railway and its linkage to the national rail system is a major development that can facilitate exports and bring transformative change to the province," Momeni added.

The US fundamentally ...

Negotiations can take place only when both sides are prepared to work toward a mutually acceptable, win-win outcome, not when one party tries to impose or dictate terms.

This does not mean the door to diplomacy is closed. As Iranian officials, from Ali Larijani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, to Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, have repeatedly stated, talks are always possible. But Washington's insistence on dictation is simply unacceptable.

The Leader said the US suffered a major loss during the war in June. From Iran's perspective, what does that loss represent?

Before the 12-day war, Washington still had an opportunity to reach an agreement with Iran. A deal

in the sixth round of talks was considered within reach, something that would have greatly benefited the United States. But the US chose to enter a war with Iran and lost.

Before the conflict, many anticipated that Iran would fail to stand its ground or that the Establishment could collapse. None of that happened. On the contrary, the Islamic Republic emerged more confident, and the Iranian people rallied behind their country.

This unity bolstered the confidence of the state, the Armed Forces, and the government, empowering Iran to confront US demands more decisively. Post-war Iran is no longer willing to accept what it might have tolerated before. Tehran is now convinced that Washington and Israel lack the capability to destroy Iran's nuclear program, which is now increasingly

opaque to Western intelligence, something that is clearly unnerving them.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Armed Forces identified their weaknesses and strengths and are now doubling down on their advantages to ensure that, should another conflict erupt, they respond even more forcefully. Beyond that, countries that once questioned Iran's capacity to face off against the US and Israel now hold a stronger conviction about Iran's capabilities, resulting in deeper engagement with Tehran.

Ayatollah Khamenei urged Iranians to remain united against external enemies despite internal differences. What challenges stand in the way of achieving such unity?

Iran's adversaries spend considerable effort try-

ing to undermine national unity, whether through extensive propaganda campaigns designed to sow discord, or via infiltrators inside the country who pretend to support the Establishment while effectively playing into the enemy's hands.

Besides, there are individuals whose poor performance or misguided decisions create social divisions. Many of these officials have proven ineffective for years yet remain in office, often inadvertently fanning the flames of discord.

But problems exist everywhere. Differences of opinion are part of normal political life everywhere. Iran is no exception. People may have grievances, hold divergent political views, or criticize one another but national unity is what foiled the plan that Israel worked on for 25 years, and the US for over two decades, to weaken and fragment Iran.