

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

of hiring of an International Consultant for Conducting a Pre-Feasibility Study of Joint Trade Zones (JTZs) in the ECO Region

1. Background

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is committed to enhancing regional economic integration, trade facilitation, and investment cooperation among its member states. In line with this objective, ECO is exploring the establishment of Joint Trade Zones (JTZs) as a strategic mechanism to boost intra-regional trade, improve connectivity, and foster industrial cooperation.

Building on the proposal of Turkmenistan, which has experience in establishing a border trade zone with Uzbekistan, the ECO seeks to engage an experienced international consultant to undertake a comprehensive pre-feasibility study on the establishment of Joint Trade Zones (JTZs) in the ECO region. Applicants must be nationals of ECO Member States.

2. Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the viability of establishing Joint Trade Zones in the ECO region by evaluating economic, legal, institutional, infrastructural, and financial dimensions, and to provide actionable recommendations for potential implementation.

3. Scope of the Study.

The consultant will carry out the following tasks:

3.1 Economic and Market Analysis

- *Analyze regional trade patterns, flows, and sectoral dynamics within ECO member states;*
- *Assess demand and potential for JTZs, including identification of priority sectors.*

3.2 Legal and Institutional Assessment

- *Review existing trade, investment, and customs frameworks in member countries.*
- *Identify gaps and requirements for harmonization.*

3.3 Site Selection and Spatial Analysis

- *Develop criteria for site selection;*

- *Identify and assess potential locations based on economic viability, connectivity, and strategic relevance.*

3.4 Infrastructure and Logistics Assessment

- *Evaluate existing infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, logistics);*
- *Identify infrastructure gaps and investment needs.*

3.5 Financial and Investment Analysis

- *Assess investment climate and financing mechanisms;*
- *Explore public-private partnership (PPP) opportunities;*
- *Develop preliminary financial and economic models.*

3.6 Risk and Sustainability Assessment

- *Identify economic, political, environmental, and operational risks;*
- *Propose mitigation measures;*
- *Assess environmental and social considerations.*

3.7 Implementation Scenarios

- *Propose institutional arrangements and governance models;*
- *Recommend pilot JTZ projects and phased implementation approaches.*

4. Methodology

The consultant shall adopt a robust and evidence-based methodology, including:

- Desk research and data analysis;
- Stakeholder consultations (public and private sectors, regional bodies);
- Comparative analysis of international best practices;
- Use of quantitative and qualitative analytical tools.

5. Deliverables

The consultant will produce the following deliverables (all in English language):

1. **Inception Report** (within 2 weeks): methodology, detailed work plan, and timeline.
2. **Interim Report** (within 6 weeks): preliminary findings and key analytical insights.
3. **Draft Report** (within 10 weeks): comprehensive analysis and initial recommendations.
4. **Final Report** (within 14 weeks): revised report incorporating stakeholder feedback.
5. **Presentation**: summary of findings and recommendations to ECO stakeholders.

6. Duration

The study is expected to be completed within **4 months** from the date of contract effectiveness. In case of need and prior notice by consultant, duration may be extended maximum to 6 months.

7. Required Qualifications and Experience

The consultant should meet the following criteria:

- Advanced degree in economics, international trade, or related field;
- Minimum 5 years of relevant professional experience;
- Proven experience in feasibility/pre-feasibility studies;
- Sufficient knowledge about of ECO Region and its economic development frameworks;
- Experience working in ECO member states or similar regions is an asset;
- Excellent analytical, communication, and report-writing skills.

8. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report to the ECO Secretariat and coordinate with designated focal points from member states. Regular progress updates and consultations will be required.

The ECO Secretariat will review and approve all reports. If necessary, reports may be returned to the consultant for revision, and all payments will be contingent upon final approval.

9. Budget and Payment Schedule

The budget of the Study is 10,000 USD (consultancy services only). Payments will be linked to deliverables as follows:

- Inception Report
- Interim Report
- Draft Report
- Final Report and Presentation

Specific percentages will be defined in the contract.

10. Confidentiality and Data Ownership

All outputs, data, and materials produced under this study shall be the property of ECO.

11. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- ✓ Technical approach and methodology
- ✓ Relevant experience and qualifications
- ✓ Understanding of the assignment