

**AKDN Statement at RECCA-VI  
Kabul, Afghanistan**

4 September, 2015

(Check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Honoured colleagues,

On behalf of the Aga Khan Development Network, allow me to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for hosting this meeting. AKDN is honoured to participate in this important regional initiative.

With programmes and investments, in collaboration with governments across the region, international partners, and communities, AKDN seeks to improve the quality of human life with a "core conviction that human progress depends on human cooperation,"<sup>1</sup> which can surmount seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The goal of RECCA is to stimulate economic development in Central Asia, in which AKDN has a strong footprint in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and further, to Pakistan, India and hopefully in the future, also in China.

AKDN has established long-term institutions in the region, including schools and hospitals, banking institutions, leisure facilities, and telecommunications infrastructure. We are working on expanding innovations, including in cross-border energy supply, mobile banking, eHealth, and support to small and medium enterprises to serve even the most marginalised populations. Our development experience over three decades in the region has demonstrated that inclusive economic participation leads to sustainable socioeconomic development, and ultimately peace and stability.

Mr. Chairman, today, I would like to highlight two approaches that are at the centre of AKDN's development philosophy, for which I will provide some examples in a moment. The first is our multi-input approach, and the second is the principle of inclusive economic participation.

Allow me to relay two examples from AKDN's regional work that are strongly aligned with the goals of RECCA, and perhaps deserve replication:

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<sup>1</sup> His Highness the Aga Khan, Lisbon, Portugal, 12 June 2014.

The first is that, **Public-Private Partnerships create enormous economic growth, which when coupled with a multi-input approach, magnifies the socioeconomic impact.** In 2002, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) established Pamir Energy, a public-private partnership with the Government of Tajikistan, to turn around a post-Soviet utility to provide reliable, affordable and clean 24-hour energy to underserved communities in the region.

After becoming a viable enterprise in Tajikistan and the best performing utility in Central Asia, Pamir Energy, with the support of the Tajik and Afghan governments; Germany; Norway; Switzerland; the United States, and the World Bank Group, began exporting electricity to Afghanistan in 2008, reaching nearly 30,000 people as well as healthcare facilities, schools, businesses and government offices in the remote Badakhshan region.

This cross-border energy transmission has also catalysed the commercial economy in that region, increasing the number of businesses by nearly three-fold. In addition, access to clean energy reduces respiratory health problems, especially among children; improves school performance and access to computers; and allows local medical facilities to become connected through eHealth to experts in Kabul and Karachi, including at the French Medical Institute for Children and the Aga Khan University.

Pamir Energy will continue to expand its reach and increase the quality of life of people in the region, while at the same time reducing dependence on fuel and biomass for energy needs. Construction is currently underway for another transmission line, which will increase the reach to nearly 40,000 people in Afghanistan alone, while plans have been created to develop six more cross-border transmission lines and bring energy to a total of more than 120,000 people in the most remote communities. Upon completion, all transmission lines are handed over to the government and become property of the national utility, DABS<sup>2</sup>. Pamir Energy collaborates closely with DABS at all stages, from design and specification to training and maintenance.

The second example Mr. Chairman, is regarding our experience showing that **central to successful economic development and cooperation is the idea of inclusive economic participation.** The University of Central Asia (UCA) has been established through an International Treaty between Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and His Highness the Aga Khan. UCA's mission is to promote the social and economic development of mountain societies, while at the same time helping the different peoples of the region to preserve and draw upon their rich cultural traditions and heritages as assets for the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat

With campuses in three countries and programmes across four countries, UCA is engaged in policy relevant research on regional economic relations and trade. UCA is also working in close partnership with government ministries in central Asia to bring together civil servants from the region for a programme in policy analysis to strengthen human and institutional capacities and promote economic, educational, and cultural exchange and cooperation. With the support of our partners, to date, the programme has reached over 100 civil servants from Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan with this tailor-made curriculum benchmarked to international standards.

Additionally, UCA is providing demand-driven and market-responsive training and education to build human resource capacity which will catalyze economic growth in remote communities and boost the marketability of people from rural areas. UCA remains ready to collaborate further with ministries of higher education and labour, among others, in the region. To date, UCA has enrolled over 80,000 learners from Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan; alumni surveys show that 70% of graduates of certificate programmes have found new jobs or been promoted because of the training they received.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, I would like to express AKDN's deep appreciation for this opportunity to share our long standing experience around regional economic development and cooperation, and our shared vision that the wider region's growth and prosperity are closely interlinked. We remain ready to continue our support to RECCA and other complementary regional initiatives.

Thank you.