

**Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan
(RECCA VI)**

Kaboul, 4th September 2015

Draft statement by the head of the French delegation,

President Ashraf Ghani,
Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the French Government, it gives me great pleasure to thank the Afghan authorities for hosting this event, the largest international gathering in Kabul since the establishment of the new Government last year.

It is a key opportunity for the region and international partners to show their support to Afghanistan and to commit to more intensified regional economic cooperation.

It is now the sixth RECCA Conference and it is our hope that the dynamic in favor of economic development and prosperity in the region around Afghanistan will continue and even accelerate. Now is really the time, as we are at a true crossroad for Afghanistan and the region.

I will make two brief points on the issue of RECCA and regional cooperation.

My first point is that France believes regional economic cooperation around Afghanistan is essential in the context of the transformation decade. France has supported the RECCA conferences since the first one in Kabul in 2005.

More generally, regional cooperation around Afghanistan has been a feature of our diplomatic action for many years now. During our Presidency of

the G8 in 2011 we encouraged interconnection of railway networks as well as the creation by Afghanistan of a National Railway Authority.

We are also supporting, together with Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), projects in the field of health that have a truly regional dimension, between Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan, notably e-health projects. Within the framework of the French-Afghan Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 2012, France is giving its support to the French Medical Institute for Children (FMIC) which is not just an institute of excellence providing exemplary safe care, innovative teaching and research but is also striving to develop highly qualified healthcare professionals for the whole region.

My second point is that, although we all agree on the importance of regional economic cooperation for Afghanistan and for the region, we have to acknowledge that after 10 years of RECCA, there have been some successes (CASA 1000 for example), but too many difficulties remain.

More really needs to be done to improve trade and economic connectivity. Every day of the year the people of Afghanistan, as well as people in neighbouring countries, are missing out on the benefits from increased cooperation, leading to less jobs being available and reduced opportunities and wealth.

To take regional economic cooperation to a new level, we believe that the RECCA conferences should not be isolated events but become the dynamic process it was originally designed to be. We should think of a mechanism to insure the implementation of the goals, and the follow-up of the recommendations of the conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's conference is of paramount importance to foster an intensified regional economic cooperation around Afghanistan. I make the wish that Afghanistan and the region will get more stable and live in peace, security and prosperity.

Thank you./.