

**Speech of the Head of Iraqi Delegation at the Sixth Regional Economic Meeting on Afghanistan.**

H.E. Dr. Salah Al-Din Rabbani, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Excellencies Ministers of Foreign Affairs of friendly countries participating in this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace be upon you,

It is an honor to participate at this year Sixth Regional Economic Meeting on Afghanistan. Representing the Iraqi delegation this year, our nation as a whole aspires to resolve as many issues as possible in the most efficient and beneficial way to all nations, present and involved.

On behalf of his Excellency, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Ja'afari, Iraq's Minister of Foreign Affairs; I would like to convey to you his greetings and hopes that along this journey, Iraq and its conflicting nations aim to find common territory and respectively become allies and aid one another in thriving and prospering as a unit to achieve successful outcomes serving economic cooperation amongst neighboring countries of the region.

Allow me to express my appreciation for the warm hospitality and positive working energy flowing throughout this reception offered by my fellow colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and other governmental bodies.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Iraq's participation in the Sixth Regional Economic Conference on Afghanistan comes in the context of its multiple participations in the meetings related to Afghanistan in order to achieve its stability, development, unity, sovereignty and salvation of its people, suffering from wars and other core dilemmas. Without a doubt, the cooperation and

support given to Afghanistan is the responsibility of the international community, especially countries of the region. My country, Iraq wholeheartedly believes that the stability and prosperity of any country of a particular region of the world is for the benefit of all. Iraq always strives for humanity and civilization to ameliorate and coalesces in order to achieve sustainable transformations and will continue to do so during this meeting and upcoming ones. Iraq's attitude comes in the context of the principles that are stipulated under the UN Charter to respect the sovereignty and independence of states, establishment of proper- neighborly relations, non-interference in internal affairs and promotion of regional cooperation in all areas; especially the economic and security fields, as well as combating terrorism, extremism and building confidence.

In light of these principles, Iraq calls for implementing programs, agreements and treaties that target strengthening cooperation between the countries in various areas while avoiding adoption policies that may raise tensions and rivalries taken as an approach to resolve international and regional conflicts. Thus, Iraq's initiatives came in resolving crises of certain countries, including hosting a meeting gathering representatives from Iran and groups of 5+1 in 2012 to resolve the Iranian nuclear program crisis; in addition to its stance towards finding a solution to the Syrian crisis politically and bringing concerned parties to negotiate and prioritize their own internal affairs, and lastly, Iraq's stance on Yemen's crisis. Iraq was at the forefront of countries participating in all meetings related to Afghanistan, either through The Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) or the Istanbul process for the "Heart of Asia" countries, through which Iraq joined as one of the supporting countries, along with the meetings of Bonn which were held before them. Iraq calls upon all countries to support Afghanistan's government and its people in this critical stage of its history in order to democratize and secure Afghan societies, internally and externally. The process of rebuilding and instilling confidence in the hearts of its people will help support the reconciliation process led by the Afghan people themselves

and provide forms of encouragement, especially in terms of the economic viewpoint.

Iraq looks with great interest at economic cooperation with all fellow countries of the region, especially the ones participating in (RECCA), because of its loyal allies aiding one another towards maintaining peace and stability. Proud and unified, we seek to promote cooperation and economic integration, by working as one; granting each other the enlightenment and knowledge required both flourishing and motivating other nations actively participating as well. Fellow delegates, everyone is well aware that the ancient civilization of Iraq was one of the important connecting links in the Silk Road between Eastern and Western civilizations.

It is strong work in order to revive the Silk Road, and encourage every effort in this regard to achieve this goal, and so it expresses its deep appreciation to fellow brothers in Afghanistan, where they put the conference slogan "Silk Road through Afghanistan".

Iraq is aiming to create and portray plans to link the railway projects with neighboring countries, especially Iran, Turkey and Arab countries as well; to join countries of the region with a network of pipelines to transfer oil, gas and electrical power, which will serve the interests of our regional populations. Iraq has tremendous economic potentials that make it eligible for economic integration with countries of the region. Iraq welcomes all international and regional efforts working to develop common economic mechanisms that will benefit economic and human development to serve the interests of people in all countries of the region, and world.

**Your Excellencies,**

As you all may know, the most challenging obstacle that faces the development, growth, and security of forming a democratic state in Iraq is terrorism. Terrorism has hit the core of my country in various forms, ever since the fall of the dictatorial regime in 2003. The latest form of terrorism in Iraq happens to be the formation of ISIS (Daash), which dominated a huge

area in Iraq and still continues to. These barbaric extremists have committed the worst criminal acts, violating Iraqi citizens by stealing and smuggling Iraq's economic resources, including oil to finance its war machine; in addition to stealing archeological artifacts and selling them to specialized gangs, attempting to erase Iraqi history and culture.

Most importantly, Iraq reaffirms the priority to re-inform your Excellencies, that these groups have targeted the Iraqi population regardless of their sects and religions. The international community must understand that ISIS (Daash) does not represent any particular sector entity and that every state and society, is threatened by their existence. This modern terrorist organization benefiting from globalization, is promoting inhumane activities in order to jeopardize this generation and upcoming generations by blocking our efforts in shielding and securing a future, peaceful generation for every nation. Some may be confused as to why this extremist group labels themselves as "Islamic" and claims to be "rooted in Islamic principle" and to clear this confusion; ISIS (Daash) does not represent any Muslim individual or Islamic principle. They simply use Islam as a communication tool to manipulate our youths brains in order to join their forces worldwide, with no goal but to continue gaining support and recognition from their target audience in the international community in order to continue killing, destroying and displacing.

Iraq is now at the front of the line fighting these terrorist groups. Thus, it is necessary to realize that supporting Iraq is not a matter of enhancing bilateral relations, but facing a common challenge that makes it imperative for all world countries to stand firmly against it. There is no justification to be neutral in this war, because it is simply a conflict between humanity and its murderers, between civilization and deterioration and it is not possible to be neutral. It comes to our surprise that some countries still look at this conflict as a sectarian one or as a civil war, which is a narrow minded opinion lacking depth and analysis. Here we have to emphasize that any economic cooperation or integration will not be fruitful unless countries of the region and world, adopt a comprehensive and serious mechanism to combat