

## **Remarks by the Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs at the Ministerial Conference of RECCA-VI Kabul, 4 September 2015**

His Excellency President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani

His Excellency Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani,

Honourable Heads of Delegations,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Let me begin by thanking His Excellency President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani, for addressing this meeting and sharing his vision to make Afghanistan a developed, prosperous and regionally integrated country.

Pakistan fully supports this forward-looking and progressive vision, and the plans for regional connectivity.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

RECCA, over the years, has evolved into a dynamic platform, which has done a commendable work in crafting a vision and a roadmap of developmental projects complementing the Afghanistan's National Development Strategy.

Pakistan fully subscribes to the core objectives of RECCA for promoting a robust and multi-dimensional development cooperation with Afghanistan and trans-regional development cooperation among the countries of the region.

It is heartening to note that objectives of RECCA-VI are also reinforcing framework adopted under the Heart of Asia-Istanbul process, which Pakistan is co-chairing alongside Afghanistan. This mutual reinforcement augurs well for a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan.

I have carefully listened to my colleagues and found considerable convergence on how to move forward in a pragmatic and concrete manner to create synergies needed for benefitting from greater regional cooperation and integration.

Transforming Afghanistan into an "Asian roundabout" would not only require internal initiatives but also concrete and substantive cooperation of other regional countries.

Excellencies and Distinguished Participants!

Pakistan is working on a number of cross-border and trans-regional connectivity projects, including infrastructure, road/rail and energy, and promotion of trade and investment. These projects include some under RECCA framework and some on the bilateral plane.

I am pleased to share that we have expedited work on rail connectivity projects, including Peshawar-Jalalabad and Chaman-Spinboldak Rail Links between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Besides, we are also working on the feasibility study for Peshawar-Kabul Motorway. The stalled work on Torkham-Jalalabad Additional Carriageway has started and is expected to be completed by December 2016. We are committed to extend these road networks to Central Asia.

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can also play a transformative role, not only for Pakistan but for the region as a whole. Once implemented, the CPEC would provide a competitive transit route for trade between western China, which is undergoing rapid development, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Significant breakthroughs on CASA-1000 and TAPI gas pipeline projects have put these projects on fast-track. We are hoping to finalize the remaining issues in the coming months. We are also considering collaboration with Afghanistan in hydro power generation at Kunar River and a joint venture in petroleum sector.

Besides agreeing to increase the volume of our bilateral trade, Pakistan and Afghanistan have undertaken to remove impediments to the full implementation of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APPTA). In this connection the 5th meeting of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APPTCA) was held in Islamabad on 1-2 January 2015, which positively resolved a number issue relating to implementation APTTA.

We are now focusing on harmonization/simplification of practices, business friendly visa regimes, regulations, legislations and agreements in the areas of trade and transit which facilitate the flow of goods and services, greater public-private partnership and enhanced people-to-people contacts. The Government of Pakistan has also decided to accede to the TIR Convention. This will facilitate promotion of trade between the two countries and the region.

We are committed to enhance our assistance for training of Afghan civil servants including diplomats and police. We would also impart training to doctors, para-medical staff, teachers, postal, banking, railways, customs and civil aviation officials.

Excellencies!

I conclude by reiterating Pakistan's firm support for and constructive contribution towards regional and international processes for reconstruction, development and progress of Afghanistan.