

MINISTERIAL RECCA - KABUL, 4 SEPTEMBER 2015

NATIONAL STATEMENT

SPAIN

Your Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,

Excellencies,

Distinguished colleagues,

Spain thanks, and at the same time congratulates, the Government of Afghanistan for hosting the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA).

This meeting takes place in a crucial year for Afghanistan, which is experiencing a process of three transitions, a political transition, after the constitution of the National Unity Government, a military transition and, finally, an economic transition, in which regional cooperation is a key factor, and that is why we are all here today.

Today we are supporting a process with a view to fully replacing weapons by bricks and conflict by cooperation. Spain knows well the difficulties, after fourteen years of involvement to preserve stability in Afghanistan, mainly managing the PRT in the border province of Badghis, where we clearly saw that regional cooperation is essential to generate the positive economic and security dynamics that Afghanistan and the region need.

Now, this region can move forward with multiple possibilities for trade and energy corridors, inserted in the concept of the Silk Road, in which Afghanistan can play a central role, due to its strategic geographical position. Spain knows well the Silk Road, which begins in China and ends precisely in our country, more exactly in Valencia. Among other issues, Silk Road means tourism. We are organizing next year a meeting of representatives of the Silk Road cities; and we applaud the renewed interest shown by Afghanistan for the World Tourism Organisation and its participation in the next tourism world congress.

We are convinced that an important part of Afghanistan's future lies on the commitment of the new Government to regional cooperation. Spain encourages the Afghan

authorities, as well as all countries in the region and international organizations to undertake the necessary measures to pursue in this direction.

But in order to increase investment and advance on issues like tourism, as mentioned before, or regional trade or interconnectivity, we need peace and security. Spain fully supports the idea of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. Furthermore, we maintain, along other stakeholders, the firm conviction that peace and stability in Afghanistan are instrumental to peace and stability in the region at large.

Now, as a non permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the years 2015-2016, Spain remains committed to Afghanistan's stability and development. We have done so in the past and we will remain engaged, together with our allies, in this Transformation Decade.

We firmly hope that this meeting will contribute to substantive regional solutions conducive to a scenario of growth in the years to come.

Thank you very much.