

Statement by Sirodjidin Aslov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan at the 6th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA VI)

Kabul, September 4, 2015

*Your Excellency Mr. Muhammad Ashraf Ghani, the President of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Dear brother Salahuddin Rabbani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First of all I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to all participants of the Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. I would like to thank the Government of Afghanistan for the warm and generous hospitality and excellent organization of this Conference – a vitally important event in economic reconstruction of our neighboring country.

We believe that since 2005, RECCA has contributed to the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the country. Kabul 2005, Delhi 2006, Islamabad 2009, Istanbul 2011 and Dushanbe 2012 conferences have helped us to give the projects and the efforts made year after year a more precise shape and content; some of those projects are still under way and some have been successfully implemented. Thus, today we have a good opportunity to review and evaluate the progress made up to date.

The course of the plenary sessions of the Conference, meetings of Working Groups, academic and business forums, the outcomes and continuation of the implementation of commitments taken in RECCA V in Dushanbe have defined priority directions on further enhancement of regional and international cooperation for the sake of socio-economic development in Afghanistan and in the region.

Today's meeting; being convened under the slogan "The Silk Road through Afghanistan", should be complemented and supported by concrete projects of mutually beneficial interests aimed at social, trade, economic, transport and communication development of the country. The implementation of the projects considered in previous RECCA meetings serves as the basis for sustainable development and long-term economic cooperation with Afghanistan, which is the key element in the process of achieving comprehensive sustainable peace and development of integration processes in the region.

It is worth noting that development of socio-economic spheres of Afghanistan is impossible without ensuring of security. Within this context, we consider it necessary to continue providing technical and financial assistance to the Government of Afghanistan in fight against transnational organized crime. Bilateral and multilateral relations with legal bodies of Afghanistan have to be further developed within the context of regional and global security programs. Implementation of vital security projects, training and development of professional skills for security forces in Afghanistan, as well as enhancement of cross-border security cooperation are key elements on the way to sustainable peace and development.

In this regard we consider efforts of partner states in rehabilitation and enhancement of economic potential of Afghanistan through coordination and implementation of a number of short, mid and long term infrastructure projects not less important.

Dear colleagues,

Less developed infrastructure of Afghanistan, first of all in transport and energy sectors, is the main barrier to achieve sustainable economic growth. In this regard, we consider it necessary to focus on elaboration of specific economic projects. We are confident that the existing obstacles in infrastructure development could be tackled through engineering solutions, for example construction of railways, high voltage electricity lines, pipelines, trade facilitation, cross-border trade, etc. Implementation of these measures can open up new possibilities for effective integration with existing regional networks.

Practical implementation of these plans will be significant business resolution and model for development of other important projects on transmission of electricity to long distances, on construction of unified regional energy network as well as on transmission of goods and hydrocarbons.

Development of the regional transport infrastructure by improving the existing networks and construction of new ones aimed at creation of transport corridors to Pakistan, Iran and Turkmenistan through Afghanistan is the issue of vital importance. We believe

that in the nearest future these networks will turn into a traffic artery of the region, apparently stimulating significant increase in trade turnover between neighboring countries and substantially contributing to the budget of Afghanistan.

Tajikistan, as a neighboring country, strongly supports development and implementation of such programs and proposes concrete economic projects in the framework of this Conference.

In particular, position of Tajikistan in respect to socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan has been announced during the RECCA V held in March 2012 in Dushanbe, which gathered participants from more than 46 countries and about 30 international and regional organizations. Putting it more precisely, 17 projects in the sphere of transport, communication, energy, education, capacity building in border management have been proposed during the RECCA V which would significantly contribute to the development of our brotherly country – Afghanistan.

In this connection, implementation of such measures will unite the regional market, create balance in allocation of natural resources of the region, attract investments and allow the countries to integrate into the global economic system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the aim to achieve these goals, particularly in efficient implementation of infrastructure projects, it is also necessary to pay due attention to capacity building of the country.

Therefore, from our point of view it would be desirable to enhance and deepen cooperation between educational and research institutions in the region on conducting training programs for the specialists involved in implementation of the projects.

In this regard, we would like to propose to establish a multidiscipline training center for the specialists of Afghanistan involved in socio-economic development of the country.

Alongside with points mentioned above we urge for more active participation of the interested parties on implementation of the projects adopted during the previous RECCA meetings. Most of them are reflected in the Final Declaration of the RECCA V held in Dushanbe and deserve more focused attention. All these projects aimed at comprehensive socio-economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan and development of the region as a whole:

Construction of high voltage electricity transmission line (500 kW) Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Turkmenistan and Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Iran; Construction of gas pipeline from Afghan Shibirghon to Tajikistan; Construction of the railway Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Turkmenistan and Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan; Creation of a Training facility for Afghan specialists and engineers in Dushanbe.

We have already a good example of successful implementation of a project considered in previous RECCA conferences: It is the project on electricity transmission between Sangtuda and PuliKhumri (220 kW). Today, thanks to this energy line Afghanistan receives electricity from Tajikistan.

Another big project, which deserves our special attention, is the Project on transmission of electricity from Central to South Asia, CASA 1000. This project has also been included into the Final Declaration of the RECCA V. Today, the Project has received broad support from the international financial institutions and the world community. The feasibility study of the project has also received a positive feedback. The financial component required for implementation of this project has almost completely resolved and we, on our turn, need to consolidate our efforts to put the project into the implementation phase.

Excellences,

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that a key to successful implementation of any program and project is ensuring of peace and stability in Afghanistan. Today we can observe that after the withdrawal of International Coalition Forces the country still needs wider support. Taking this opportunity, I call upon our international partners to increase their involvement and enhance their cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan on overcoming the existing obstacles on way of sustainable development of the country

We are well aware of all efforts made by the Government of Afghanistan in this direction and we fully support the peace process in friendly country. Tajikistan always stands ready for continuation of political dialogue on solution of wider range of problems.

In order to achieve our goals we are keen to take consecutive, pragmatic and coordinated steps based on constructive dialogue, mutual respect, confidence and equality.

Let me once again to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this Conference and to all of you for close and fruitful collaboration.

Thank you.