

Chairman's Statement

The Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VI)

A Partnership for Promoting Regional Economic Growth & Stability: The Silk Road Through Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan, 3-4 September 2015

1. The Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VI) met in Kabul, Afghanistan on 3-4 September 2015 to further develop and consolidate cooperation and partnership towards promoting regional economic cooperation in Afghanistan and across the region. Inaugurated by His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Conference was chaired by His Excellency Salahuddin Rabbani, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. High-level Delegations and senior representatives from over 60 states and organisations took part in this historically significant gathering, celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the RECCA Process.
2. The RECCA-VI participants welcomed the commitments made at the 5 December 2011 “Bonn International Conference on Afghanistan”, the 8 July 2012 “Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan”, the strong international support demonstrated for Afghanistan’s continued progress towards stability and development, including during the “Transformation Decade of 2015-2024”, as well as the 3-4 December 2014 London Conference on Self-Reliance;
3. The Participants welcomed the continued success of the Istanbul ‘Heart of Asia’ Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, and anticipating closer linkages and complementarities between RECCA-VI prioritised projects and the Istanbul Process;
4. The Participants emphasized that the Kabul Conference builds on the enduring nature of the commitments made during the previous five meetings of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (Kabul, 2005; New Delhi, 2006; Islamabad, 2009; Istanbul, 2010; Dushanbe, 2012);
5. The Participants welcomed the commitment of partner countries, the United Nations, the European Union, and the international financial institutions in the region to play an active and contributing role in the implementation of the outcomes of RECCA-VI;
6. The Participants broadly concurred that coordinated regional economic development strategies should support the overall regional economic integration vision, and emphasising shared ownership of the work towards comprehensive regional connectivity and its importance in promoting region-wide economic integration, confidence, and prosperity;
7. The Participants took note of major investments in two major corridor agreements (as outlined in the main conference report) which could provide Afghanistan and others in the region with considerable opportunities for enhanced trade and transit benefits;
8. The Participants took note of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor as a promising multimodal transit trade and transport route among Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey in order to augment transport infrastructure and connectivity in the region, thereby increasing trade and transit among the countries partnering in this new transport corridor;
9. The Participants took note of the “One Belt - One Road” initiative launched by China and its comprehensive potential benefits for the economic and social development of East Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia;
10. The Participants recognized the benefits of the Northern Corridor, Middle Corridor, and Southern Corridor for the development of multimodal transport and logistics facilities between Asia and Europe and their sizable contribution to the linkage across existing markets as well as the creation of new markets;

11. The Participants took note of the Five Nations Railway Corridor connecting trans-Asian urban centers in order to enhance intra-regional trade and transit, and also to facilitate greater regional economic integration by constructing a railway network linking China to Iran via Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan;
12. The Participants recognized the key importance of the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India Gas Pipeline Project (TAPI) and the Central Asia-South Asia Power Transmission Project (CASA-1000) in developing regional cooperation on this energy corridor, and welcoming the joint efforts of participant countries and international financial institutions towards the implementation of these projects.
13. The Participants recognized the need to build connectivity in the region in order to help bridge the digital divide, enhancing information sharing between countries in the region, and welcoming the ESCAP's (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative and Afghanistan's efforts to build a rapid and secure data transit pathway;
14. The Participants recognized the need to continue initial discussions with new financiers including Sovereign Wealth Funds, the New Development Bank (NDB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), as well as to develop new project financing modalities such as public-private partnerships and power purchase agreements;
15. The Participants took note of the need to supplement the RECCA platform with post-conference investment road-shows and an on-line interactive web portal, showcasing bankable investment project to prospective financiers and regional governments;
16. General concurrence that priority investment projects (as outlined in the main conference report) capable of demonstrating progress in 12-18 months, being scalable in the next 2-3 years, and generating tangible returns on investment for Afghanistan's neighbours in the areas of regional transport, energy, trade and transit are designed to serve as critical pieces of infrastructure in wider regional economic integration efforts in South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus;
17. General concurrence that priority investments projects are also designed to function as specific pieces of the Lapis-Lazuli Transit Trade and Transport Route Agreement, Chabahar Trilateral Transport Agreement (and Garland Highway), and the Five Nations Railways Corridor, which have tangible prospective economic and financial benefits – direct and indirect – for the regional partners;
18. Informed by the illustrative projects and new project financing modalities outlined in the RECCA-VI main conference report, the participants made clear their awareness of the need to take serious and measurable steps towards the implementation of a modest range of infrastructure priority projects;
19. The participants agreed on the need to expedite the illustrative bankable projects with the intended purpose of making concrete progress in financing and implementation in the short and medium term, including through support provided by the two economic Confidence Building Measures of the Istanbul Process.
20. International financial institutions and development banks are especially called upon to take identify innovative approaches to financing regionally beneficial projects, as well as recognized the importance of the RECCA-VI international investment road shows in order to showcase priority regional public-private investment partnerships in the months and years ahead.
21. The Chairman offered his gratitude to the participants of the Conference, the Academic Forum, and the Business Exhibition for their extraordinary commitment to the high-level discussions of the conference.
22. The Chairman thanked the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the fifth RECCA in 2012 in Dushanbe, and the Chairman offered his gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan to host the next RECCA meeting in 2017.