6TH REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION CONFERENCE ON AFGHANISTAN

REPORT

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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The Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VI) under the theme of “the Silk Road through Afghanistan” was held on 3rd – 4th September, 2015 in the premises of Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Around 230 dignitaries representing over 40 countries and 30 International and regional Organizations participated in the conference. Key speakers of the conference included H.E. President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRA), Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, who delivered the keynote speech in the conference, H.E. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, who delivered the concluding speech at the RECCA VI Ministerial Conference and H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Salahuddin Rabbani, who opened the Ministerial Meeting of the conference.

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, presided over the RECCA-VI working-group meetings wherein H.E. Abdul Sattar Murad, Minister of Economy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, delivered a keynote speech and H.E. Assadullah Zamir, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, delivered a concluding speech, one day prior to the Ministerial Meeting.

The dignitaries attending RECCA-VI included the following officials:
1. Foreign Minister of Tajikistan;
2. Foreign Minister of Qatar;
3. Minister of Finance of Turkmenistan;
4. Minister of Interior Affairs of Iran;
5. Deputy Foreign Minister of India;
6. Deputy Foreign Minister of Egypt;
7. Deputy Foreign Minister of Iraq;
8. Deputy Foreign Minister of United Arab Emirates;
9. National Security and Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan;
10. Deputy Energy Minister of Russia;
11. Deputy Minister of Science and Education of Kazakhstan;
12. Secretary General of SAARC;
13. Deputy Secretary General ECO;
14. Assistant Secretary General of SCO ;
15. Deputy Director of the World Bank;
16. Deputy Director of Islamic Development Bank; and
17. Regional Director of Asian Development Bank.

Key Afghan economicministries including Ministry of Finance, Economy, Mines and Petroleum, Energy and Water, Public Works, Commerce and Industries, Transport and Civil Aviation, Communications and Information Technology, Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock and Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled as well as some of the independent government organizations actively participated in the ministerial meetings and the working-group meetings that primarily dwelt on three major areas namely regional energy and cooperation in regional natural resources, regional connectivity and promotion of regional trade including the development of private sector.

This conference provided an important opportunity for different government officials, scholars and experts representing various countries in our region and beyond as well as some of the international organizations to exchange views on subjects of common interests. On September 3rd, 2015, on the sidelines of the conference, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan convened an academic forum in which 70 Afghan and international scholars and experts discussed subjects that focused on areas such as encouragement of private sector, the need to coordinate regional trade activities, confidence-building and investment, improvement and expansion of economic activities along borders of the regional countries and cooperation amongst research organizations in these regional countries. Specifically, the scholars and experts participating in this forum discussed topics relating to the future of RECCA process in an effort to build common understanding and consensus amongst policy-makers and experts with regards to establish regional economic cooperation.

In addition, on the sideline of this academic forum, an essay-writing competition entitled “the Silk Road through Afghanistan” wherein twenty essays produced by contestants from various countries in the region and beyond vying for the first, second and third positions had been received. Following a careful academic review of the noted essays by a pool of qualified and seasoned professors from Hague Institute in Holland and Columbia University in US, Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Rahim of Afghanistan, Ms. Rabia Latif of Pakistan and Ms. Saheli Chattraj of India were able to receive the first, second and third positions respectively.
energy projects in form of CASA-1000 and TAPI pipeline are currently in the process of implementation as regional energy corridors. The question that we will explore in our group discussions is whether other regional partners of ours would be willing to venture into similar projects, in additions the ones just noted. Mr. Hekmat Khalil Karzai also said that regional connectivity is largely shaped externally than internally, RECCA will particularly serve as a connectivity conduit for regional cooperation. Afghanistan is ready to work with all of the regional countries on the basis of bilateral, trilateral or multilateral cooperation in various areas. In conclusion, he noted that we would reach our aspiration for true prosperity and stability only when we work together. We do not want to impose interests of one regional partner of ours on another partner. Rather, we support ideas and initiatives that promote our shared interests.

Despite the fact that military equipment is required for stability in the short run, economic growth would serve as a reliable security strategy in the medium and long term. Mr. Murad termed bankable projects as important for RECCA-VI. He stated that an investor must have a clear idea of the management, capital and cost of projects with a risk management component. These projects should usually be implemented over the course of one to three years. He described the construction of land ports and leveling out the customs as important factors for the facilitation of trade and transit. In addition, he named the Chabahar Port and Lapis Lazuli Route transit corridors as well as the railroad project connecting five regional countries, noted above, as key regional economic projects. Afghan Minister of Economy pointed out that with dwindling international assistance to Afghanistan, this country looks to assistance and economic cooperation with the regional countries. This is one durable way to stabilize Afghanistan and the region at large. Mr. Murad added, “RECCA-VI provides an opportunity to implement our existing projects and take practical steps particularly in such areas as transit, infrastructure and cooperation on investment partnership between private and public sector.”

Later, H.E. Minister of Economy, Abdul Sattar Murad, delivered his keynote speech. Mr. Murad underlined that it is significant that we have a clear understanding of our economic potential and the related benchmarks. Otherwise, we would be moving in a wrong direction with regards to how to tackle our economic challenges. He also emphasized the need for economic development and diversity to create more jobs and increase people’s income in Afghanistan. He added that energy-rich northern neighbors of Afghanistan are encountered with plummeting fuel prices and our region at large is experiencing a greater fluctuating market. As such, our economic future and that of our region rely on the growth of our transit, trade, mining and strengthening the role of private sector. Although, in principle, private investment will take place in more stable environments, historically, a lot of the companies that have operated in countries in crisis have made greater fortune. It is significant to pay closer attention to the link between security and economic strategies.
First Working Group: Energy and Natural Resources

Mr. Thomas Panella, Country Director of Asian Development Bank's Afghanistan Resident Mission, presided over this working group meeting.

First, he explained the meeting agenda by specifically stating that discussions in this working group meeting would center on the following points:
- How and when energy will be transferred from Central Asia to South Asia?
- What makes major regional energy projects such as CASA-1000 and TAPI successful?
- What are the governing legal framework and policies, investment opportunities for infrastructure in this specific area?

At the outset, Ahmad Jawed Sadat, Deputy Minister of Mining and Petroleum on Policy Affairs said that the government of Afghanistan is committed to utilize its natural resources in a sustainable and accountable manner. One way to achieve this end is to design and implement projects that are commercially viable. He noted that Afghanistan is extremely rich in natural resources. For instance, in Shiberghan alone, there is 75 million cubic meter gas. The presentation he delivered was entitled “promoting private investment in the electricity sector in Afghanistan.” According to Mr. Sadat, Afghanistan has a capacity to provide 1,073 Mega Watts electricity per hour. Its production capacity reaches around 470 Mega Watts electricity (comprising only 22% of its total supply). The remainder 78 Mega Watts of its need is met by electricity imported from the Central Asian countries. Given this scenario, it is extremely important for Afghanistan to improve its capacity to increase its home-produced electricity in the long term with a growing demand for electricity so that its dependence on imported electricity is reduced as much as possible. Mr. Sadat briefed the participants on government’s plan to build new power production plants in the vicinity of Mazar-e-Sharif Power Plan. The plants are expected to produce 50 Mega Watts electricity that would meet 30% of domestic needs. These plants will be constructed with private investment. He described upgrading capacity, institutional reforms and creating a national energy plan as key priorities of the energy sector.

The next speaker of the conference was Mr. Hamid Quraishi, Operational Staff Member of the Energy and Mines Department of the World Bank.

His presentation touched upon the transfer of power under CASA-1000 project. The noted project focuses on the extension of a power cable aiming to transfer 1,300 Mega Watts electricity from Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) to south Asian countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) at a total cost of 1.2 billion dollars, running through a distance of 1,340 kilometers. Under this project, three separate stations will be built in Sange Toda city of Tajikistan, Kabul city of Afghanistan and Peshawar city of Pakistan. Technical assistance, implementation support, environmental and social protection arrangements have been included in this project. The prime contract as well as four other contracts related to the purchase of electricity among the four countries mentioned above was signed on April 24th, 2014. Procurement for this project is ongoing with 90% of its requirements financed. Previously, Salang was chosen as a preferred route for the power cable but this has now changed. Mr. Quraishi characterized economic viability, a joint committee representing the beneficiary countries as the monitoring body, a strong ownership of the project by beneficiary countries and coordination between the World Bank, other international financial organizations and the beneficiary countries as key successes of the said project.

Mr. Serdar Periyev, Director, Ministry of Industries and Mineral Resources of Turkmenistan gave a presentation on the new phase of TAPI project. The length of this pipeline is 1,814 KM transferring 33 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Turkmen Gas Corporation is ready to take ownership of 51 shares of the consortium of TAPI project that accounts for a greater portion of the investment required to construct more than 1800 KM long pipeline.

At this point of the conference, Mr. Abdul Razaq Samadi, Director of Da Afghan Brishna Shirkat (DABS) delivered a presentation entitled “Energy Sector in Afghanistan”.

DABS was established in May 2008 as a government-owned company. In addition to the production of over 23 thousand Mega Watts hydropower, Afghanistan is able to produce 222 thousand Mega Watts solar power and 67 thousand Mega Watts wind power. With regional cooperation, Afghanistan’s capacity to produce such amounts of electricity could be utilized to the advantage of all regional countries. In addition to its activities relating the provision of electricity to the citizens of Afghanistan, DABS ventures into regional energy business. Over the years of operations, DABS has turned into a self-sustainable entity operating without government subsidies. 80% of Afghanistan’s electricity requirement is met by the imported power from its neighboring countries namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Iran. Mr. Samadi added that success of CASA-1000 which was part of RECCA-V could be repeated in expanding regional cooperation in energy for other projects. RECCA is a good forum to encourage regional cooperation.

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The last presentation at this segment of the conference was delivered by Mr. Abilkair Bolatbayev – Kazakhstan National Coordinator, Islamic Organization for Food Security: Considering the fact that 34% of the manpower in Islamic countries is in engaged in agricultural activities, these countries are encountered with numerous challenges in areas such as disproportionate use of land, weak agricultural mechanism and reduced production as well as lack of water resources, modern irrigation system, climate change and sufficient finances to carry out agricultural research. Cooperation and exchange of experience at the regional level could be effective in addressing these challenges.

Questions & Answers

Mr. Armandos Pupols, Political Affairs Officer of the United Nations Regional Center on Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), asked for more information on the timeline of CASA-1000.

Mr. Quraishi of the World Bank replied that procurement activities related to this project will be completed by the end of the current year. The actual transfer of electricity through this project is expected to take place in the summer of 2018.

Mr. Ali Demirer, Country Director of Turkish Petroleum Ltd. in Afghanistan, asked the following question: Given the lack of proper infrastructure in Afghanistan, who will construct gas pipeline under TAPI and will this take place? Even in Shiberghan, there is gas production, but there is no infrastructure.

Mr. Sadat, Deputy Minister of Mines and Petroleum on Policy Affairs replied this question by acknowledging the lack of infrastructure as a major challenge in Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan, however, strives to address this challenge and considerable progress has been achieved in this regard. With particular reference to Shiberghan, a pipeline measuring 1.5 million cubic meters has been built while a separate pipeline measuring 1 million cubic meters connecting Shiberghan with Mazar-e-Sharif is in the process of construction.

Mr. Sediqui, Director of National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) inquired about environmental and social impact of the TAPI and CASA-1000 projects.

Mr. Samadi answered that the implementing partners of the two noted projects will observe relevant Afghan laws regulating environmental protection issues in coordination with NEPA. Mr. Sadat added that environmental impact of these projects will be regulated by separate contracts consistent with international standards.

Mr. Panella, the moderator of the meeting, asked the participants to share their experiences on how high-cost energy projects are financed. In response, Mr. Samadi termed partnership between private sector and public sector as the best option to secure financing for such projects.

Mr. Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Economy added that the Ministries of Finance and Economy are currently working jointly on a draft policy called PPP aimed at diversifying financing to attract private investment for such large regional projects.

In addition, Mr. Nazeer Kabiri, Advisor to the Minister of Finance said that partnership between private and public sectors in countries such as India, China and others has produced good results. However, in the case of Afghanistan, we do not have a vibrant private sector. It would take our private sector at least a decade to be able to invest in major energy or infrastructure projects like construction of an airport and railroads in Afghanistan.
Second Working Group: 
Trade & Regional Connectivity

This meeting was chaired by Mr. Nagesh Kumar Regional Director of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) stationed in New Delhi. At the outset, he pointed out two major strengths of Afghanistan from an economic point of view as follows:

1. Abundant untapped natural resources; and
2. The strategic geographical location of Afghanistan in the region serving as an intersection between Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East and Far East.

He added that the key question is how Afghanistan’s strengths could be utilized to ensure economic growth and regional connectivity for Afghanistan itself and the broader region. Without regional connectivity from transportation standpoint, we would not be to utilize Afghanistan’s strengths just indicated. The purpose of regional connectivity is to allow Afghanistan and other landlocked countries in the region an access to regional and international markets. Therefore, forging transit agreements as well as creating commercial facilities is a fundamental need of Afghanistan.

So far, only 75 kilometer-long railway, in return, for 40 thousand kilometer road, have been constructed in Afghanistan. Considering the fact that Afghanistan is a landlocked country with rich natural resources, expansion of railways is serious need of the country. 

Subsequently, Mr. Yama Shams, Head of the Afghanistan Railway Authority was asked to deliver his presentation.

Mr. Shams emphasized the importance of railways in the regional connectivity and the transit of natural resources. Key points discussed in his presentation were the following: As H.E. Minister of Economy and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs noted in their respective speeches, the Afghan Railway Organization is pursuing a region-focused approach in the expansion of its railway network. He provided in-depth information on the National Railways Plan for Afghanistan. So far, only 75 kilometer-long railways have been constructed compared to 40 thousand kilometer roads that have been constructed in Afghanistan. Considering the fact that Afghanistan is a landlocked country with rich natural resources, expansion of railways is a serious need of the country. The railway network in the south of the country has been built primarily for the purpose of linking Afghanistan to the sea. In the expansion of railway network in Afghanistan, other major economic projects such as TAPI have also been considered. In February 2016, Turkmenistan railways will be connected to Afghanistan railway network. Technical studies regarding connecting Tajikistan to this network have been completed. Gauge diversity in the region that is based on Russian, European and international standards caused additional technical problems in Afghanistan. We were able to resolve this problem with the help of Asian Development Bank. The railway national plan for Afghanistan comprises 3,500 kilometers of railway in a ring shape. Feasibility study of the railway in the north of Afghanistan that is 650 kilometers long and connects seven northern cities has been completed. The Afghan railway network that is based on transit-focused development will be extended to ports such as Sher Khan, Aqina, Chaman, Torkham, Herat and Torghondi. At the end of his presentation, Mr. Shams noted that Afghanistan is the only missing link from a railway connectivity viewpoint in the region. Afghanistan knows its responsibility in this regard to connect 6 neighboring countries and 9 borders. This is also a need of the region and Afghanistan is ready to facilitate addressing this specific need. At the end, he asked for more investment in the expansion of Afghanistan’s railways.

This railroad has been agreed upon. This “one belt and one road” initiative will facilitate regional connectivity. This initiative is flexible enough to incorporate all regional countries.
H.E. Valiollah Afkhamirad, Deputy Interior Minister for Industry, Mine and Trade of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that Iran is connected to Afghanistan through three border crossings such as Islam Qala (known as Dogharon) in Iran, Abu Nasr Farahi (Mahi River) and Zaranj (Milak). A greater portion of trade between the two countries is carried out through these crossing points. Value of the trade between Afghanistan and Iran reaches more than two billion dollars a year. The Chabahar port is ready for use by Afghan traders. One of our key operational programs is to further expand Chabahar port. Iran is ready to provide land and other facilities at the noted port including customs exemptions for Afghan as well as regional businessmen and investors. You could get more information on this specific area on the Chabahar free trade zone website.

Mr. Muazam Ali, Deputy Head of Mission of Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Kabul, in turn, delivered his presentation on how Gawadar port could be linked with Central Asia through Afghanistan. He noted that Pakistan would provide the shortest route connecting Central Asian countries with the sea through Afghanistan. SAARC and ECO regions are experiencing the lowest level of commercial integration in spite of their great trading potential. The rate of regional trade amongst ECO members is only 9.8% and among SAARC member countries is a meager 5% as opposed to the degree of trade among ASIAN members and European Union reaching 24% and 55% respectively. Pakistan will host the ministerial meeting of Heart of Asia - Istanbul process at the end of 2015. In addition, this country will host ECO summit in 2016. Recent decision by Pakistan regarding its membership in the international road transportation convention(TIR) is yet another step towards regional connectivity and trade growth. We want to expand the China-Pakistan economic corridor to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as link CAREC 5 and 6 corridors with Torkham. Similarly, the construction of a 700 KM long road between Kashghar and Bishkek and a 400 KM long road connecting Kashghar with Osh is underway. At the end, he wished success in the Heart of Asia – Istanbul process Ministerial Conference, forging cross-border transportation agreements (CBTAs), implementation of CASA-1000 and TAPI as well as expansion of regional areal connectivity and tourism.

Mr. Idibek Kalandarov - Head of the International Organizations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan delivered his presentation that primarily touched upon railway connectivity network between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. He noted that Tajikistan has proposed these two routes for the same purpose: Kalkhozabad-Kunduz railway that is 115 KM long and Bishkek – Kaldar – Hairatan that is 50 KMs long. These two routes will also contribute to the construction of railroad network connecting five regional countries (namely China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran) and tripartite railroad network connecting Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan (covering a distance of 631 KMs). Completing the construction of these railroad networks would play a significant role in reviving the Silk Road leading to greater economic integration of the regional countries.

Ms. L. Savithri, Director of Trade, Economy and Finance Division of SAARC talked about the benefits of SAARC Free Trade Agreement known as SAFTA and briefly discussed how trade could be facilitated through uniformity of standards, coordination with respect to documents as well as customs procedures among SAARC member countries. She described removing non-tariff barriers, resolution of trade disputes and promotion of trade within the region through holding exhibitions as conducive to regional connectivity.
This meeting was chaired by Mr. Stefan Huber, Deputy Head of Mission and charge de affaires of European Union in Afghanistan. He noted that considering the scant contribution of taxes in Afghanistan’s GDP, there is a need to diversify economic activities in this country.

Mr. Najibullah Wardak, Director General of Customs Department of Afghanistan delivered a presentation entitled “Afghanistan’s Customs and its Future.” He said that areas needing reform include customs automation, forging customs cooperation agreements, facilitation and uniformity of customs procedures used by Afghanistan and its neighbors, implementation of TIR system, coordinated border management and risk management. Currently, there are 12 customs points located in various Afghan border crossings using TIR system, single window system and e-payment. ASYCUDA is also practically being used by all customs offices in Afghanistan. He added that customs cooperation agreement has been signed with Tajikistan and finalized with Pakistan that is still pending signature. Similar agreements are in the process of finalization with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran. Afghanistan secures 47% of its national revenues from customs.

Mr. Omar Alhumry, UAE representative provided a briefing on the activities of DubaiPort World regarding construction of land ports in Afghanistan. These ports will be built in five different points of Afghanistan namely Jalalabad, Kabul, Nimroz, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif. However, necessary funding for the construction of these ports has not been sourced yet. Once built, these ports will facilitate customs control, protection of goods and their prompt release.

Mr. Alexandar Ginzburg representative of Russian private sector noted that MOS Region Sterway Group of Companies has been operating in the areas of construction and trade in Middle East and Afghanistan. In collaboration with Russian Human Sustainability and Development Foundation, the noted company has planned to work on the development of Kabul City for the next 20 years that will incorporate consideration for all security, social, and tourism matters. This company has also participated in the bidding process for the reconstruction of Darulaman Palace as well as the procurement of Kamaz vehicles for Kabul Municipality.

Mr. Rudreendra Tandon, Joint Secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan and India), Ministry of External Affairs in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs delivered a presentation on trade and uniformity of customs in Afghanistan. Mr. Tandon said that connecting Afghanistan with the region would bring about a lot of economic opportunities. He added that now is the time to focus our attention towards transit trade in the context of regional connectivity because Afghanistan is located in the center of regional trade, energy and communication. He also stated that processing customs documents at one point in Afghanistan’s Customs Agency, facilitation in visa issuance and creating fundamental customs infrastructure are areas that demand greater attention. Implementation of transit trade agreements as well as the political will is of greater significance in this area.

Mr. Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, President of Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) delivered his presentation that primarily discussed an emphasis on the role of private sector and greater attention towards job creation through investment initiatives in the region. He described lack of required accurate data for business people and investors in the region as a fundamental challenge. He stressed on the establishment of a regional center that would support investment, regulate investment guidelines as well as facilitate dialogue within private sector in the region and build an online forum to exchange information on various investment projects, offer investment incentives, bring about investment partnerships, create investment insurance programs, facilitate accessibility to financing, upgrade labor skills and put in place a mechanism aimed at managing risks, monitoring and regularly pursuing the promotion of regional investment. Considering the benefits that our region has to offer such as abundant natural resources, greater manpower, cultural diversity and a strategic location that is home to fast-growing economies like China and Gulf countries, Mr. Haqjo underscored that greater investment should be made in regional projects. Our region that is largely landlocked needs a regional cooperation coalition that would produce significant economic benefits and contribute to the stimulation of regional economic growth.

Mr. Aynul Hassan, Director of Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division at UN-ESCAP talked about Afghanistan’s economic growth through an active private sector. Mr. Hassan characterized promoting good governance, creating quality infrastructure, developing human capital and facilitating access to finance as key indicators to be met in order to promote a strong private sector in Afghanistan. He added that-domistice revenues collection is weak and constitutes only 9% of the country’s GDP. Other investment impediments hampering Afghanistan’s economic growth include a low capacity of internal production, wide trade deficit and a weak business environment (with Afghanistan ranking 183rd most unfavorable place to do business in, among 189 countries in the world). Therefore, it is important to focus on a private sector driven economic growth.

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A the end of working group meetings of RECCA–VI, H.E. Assadullah Zamir, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, delivered a concluding speech by thanking the chairpersons of the different group meetings discussed above including Dr. Panella, Dr. Kumar and Mr. Stephen Huber. He noted that these group discussions were not only Afghanistan-focused but also region-focused. He described the ideas exchanged and solutions offered during the group discussion by various participants with particular reference to key issues concerning regional connectivity in the areas such as energy, infrastructure, and trade as very useful and valuable. These ideas and solutions will be considered and used in the actual implementation of RECCA projects.

H.E. Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock added that the reality of a multilateral Silk Road is understood as more different trade and transit corridors are opening up. These corridors are in the process of being built from an external, not an internal, standpoint. It is predicted that Middle East and South East would turn into a highly important economic region over the course of next decade.

Mr. Zamir stressed the new approach to the implementation of projects requiring greater private sector participation as well as restricting a larger pool of projects to those which are qualified for feasibility studies. He noted that the focus of RECCA–VI is placed on bankable projects that could be financed by private sector. He also emphasized that the implementation of the projects mentioned above starts right here and will go on over the course of next two year until the upcoming RECCA is held. The implementation of these projects should not halt as a “closed shop” operations until next RECCA. It is significant to state here that RECCA now owns a broad internet portal which will be updated on regular basis. This portal provides new information on RECCA projects and encourages effective discussions among various regional countries. Mr. Zamir indicated that the success of RECCA–VI projects largely stems from diplomatic participation from an investment viewpoint, continuation of discussions relating the projects mentioned by the private sector and a follow-up on those projects by the private sector companies as well as Sovereign Wealth Funds.

A greater portion of this strategy will be implemented by regional countries in later stages in relation to Chabahar port, lapis Lazuli Route, the railroad network between five regional countries indicated in this document and regional corridors. Regional development banks, financial and development organizations will play a key role in this regard. In conclusion, Mr. Zamir asked for the cooperation of regional countries those are members and supporters of RECCA for the implementation of the projects. He also expressed his gratitude to the active participation of the participants in the working group discussions.
At the outset, H.E. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan delivered his opening speech.

He thanked all ministers and other high-ranking officials for their participation in the conference and described it as indication of their support to Afghanistan. He noted that the agenda of RECCA-VI is more outcome-oriented compared to that of the previous RECCA held three years ago. Foreign Minister Rabbani also noted that Afghanistan is ready to work with its neighbors, international partners, private sector and international organizations with respect to transformation of RECCA into an effective regional economic cooperation mechanism that would be more regional-centered than only Afghanistan-focused.

Thanking India, Pakistan, Turkey and Tajikistan for hosting previous RECCA conferences in support of economic growth and stability of Afghanistan and the broader region, Mr. Rabbani said that: “Although we are not completely satisfied with the tangible outcomes of the previous RECCA conferences, we have all reached a general consensus that political will and commitment are required to cooperate in regional economic development to implement specific decisions based on a “win-win” principle during RECCA meetings.

Mr. Rabbani described that in moving forward Afghanistan will not act as a passive recipient of international assistance. Rather, this country will serve as heart of Asia, a continent that is emerging as a center for international economic and financial market.

This means that Afghanistan is not only a key trade and transit hub in the region but also a highly rich country in terms of its vast and untapped natural resources and investment capacity and a fresh manpower that could be utilized for economic development of the region. It is for this reason that South Asia and Central Asia share a key economic and social characteristic with Afghanistan, i.e. its important geographical location and natural resource abundance. Therefore, all neighbors of Afghanistan, near and far, need to utilize this capacity of Afghanistan in meeting their own economic and manpower requirements. The South Asia, too, can rely on Afghanistan’s role in meeting its economic development requirements by developing trade, transit and accessing energy.

The National Unity Government (NUG) of Afghanistan has supported comprehensive regional energy projects such as TAPI and CASA-1000 that ensures meeting increasing energy needs of South Asia.

H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs added that Afghanistan has continuously supported regional economic connectivity based on “win-win” principle as a requirement of the 21st century despite the ongoing terrorism threats it faces which is mainly supported from outside of Afghanistan.

“We have learned an important lesson from the sad chapter of Europe’s history in 18th and 19th centuries that a win-lose politics sipped in all strong and weak countries. We have also learned another positive lesson from the success of NAFTA and ASEAN that “win-win” policies coupled with a strong political will and respect for mutual interests would benefit everyone. Pursuing a “win-win” principle in regional economic cooperation that prepares the grounds for regional trade and investment is an integral part of our foreign policy. Afghanistan keeps its doors open to regional and international trade and investment. NUG reforms are primarily focused on greater strengthening good governance and a support for a private sector driven economic growth. The wise and prudent leadership of NUG will strive to implement reforms required to facilitate business and trade in Afghanistan and the region at large.

I think there is no need to emphasize that the world today needs connectivity more than any other point in the past. Our progress with regards to economic growth is not possible without the cooperation of our neighbors. As a landlocked country, Afghanistan relies on the stability and prosperity of its six neighbors with whom it has signed a “the Kabul Declaration on good neighborly relations ”. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan expects follow-up through actions to be taken in the ensuing weeks and months after conclusion of this two-day conference.”

“ In moving forward, Afghanistan will not act as a passive recipient of international assistance. Rather, this country will serve as heart of Asia, a continent that is emerging as a center for international economic and financial market. ”

In conclusion, H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Salahuddin Rabbani, expressed his commitment to work with all his counterparts including from the region and beyond, private sector and Sovereign Wealth Funds to implement specific decisions made in this conference leading to produce tangible and sustainable outcomes that would shape our future regional economic cooperation.
Subsequently, H.E. President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, thanked H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs for his strong leadership in convening this conference as well as countries and organizations for their participation, commitment, interest, support, investment and ideas offered during RECCA-VI. H.E President Ghani noted that we have only two options: We either transform our region into a roundabout a place through which ideas, people and goods flow and from which they disperse throughout the entire region or turn into a Cul-de-sac: a dead-end place, where ideas, people and goods are unable to connect and flow within wider systems.

H.E. the President emphasised on the role of Afghanistan as an intersection for central and south Asia. Throughout the history, Afghanistan has been a point of intersection in Asia, not a point of deadlock and conflict (known as Cul-de-sacs). The Silk Road was one of the important routes transferring ideas, people and goods across the region that had advanced financial, conflict resolution and comprehensive transportation systems. The president characterized the emergence of Asian economic continent, from an external viewpoint, and an understanding of a balance between challenges and opportunities, from an internal viewpoint, as significant. He also noted that we must work together towards future wherein everyone has active participation learning from our past. Acknowledging the fact that the Silk Road has inherently been our shared culture, we are hopeful that we witness an end to the war and as a result Asia once again becomes an important economic continent in the world wherein Afghanistan will again serve as a connectivity point for countries and people.

H.E the president said that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan will become a favorite tourist destination. He also noted that in the past Afghanistan’s location had become a source of problems for this country but hopefully, in the future, its location will become a source of progress and prosperity. The President added that we should identify our commonalities as well as challenges particularly in areas such as knowledge, governance, policy and infrastructure. Climate, agricultural and energy potential, natural and water resources, job creation, fresh labor and a strong political team and will are of important resources we have. Our country has the potential to become one of the world’s leading copper producers and of the largest players in the gold market.

President Ghani added that his country does not want to be marginalized and his administration has a strong political will for the country’s progress and development. He welcomed regional investment in his country and emphasized that the private sector and public sector must operate in collaboration with each other. He termed equipping airports, building canals, completing extension of fiber optic cable and extending pipeline and railroad as important economic progress made in the past and emphasized that regular development of infrastructure, transparent and effective procurement, streamlining government’s responsibility, investment in construction industry, public private partnership (PPP) and investment in the regional projects should take place.

He maintained that terrorist networks want to turn Arab and the Muslim world into a place of disagreements and conflict and their message is that of disappointment. Their main focus is to kill innocent lives and devastate our cultural heritage.

H.E the President also added that we must have the courage to talk on behalf of a majority of the Islamic countries and convey to the world that Muslim nations abhor and condemn the message of barbarity and conflict.

H.E. the President concluded his speech by thanking the participants of the conference for their active participation. He said that their participation and commitment are a source of hope and confidence for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as well as the peace-loving people of the country.

Afterwards, the dignitaries representing various countries and international organizations delivered their respective speeches. It is worthwhile to note that most of the participants thanked the government of Afghanistan for preparing and incorporating such useful matters into the agenda of RECCA-VI during their respective speeches.

“Throughout the history, Afghanistan has been a point of intersection in Asia, not a point of deadlock and conflict. The Silk Road was one of the important routes transferring ideas, people and goods across the region that had advanced financial, conflict resolution and comprehensive transportation systems.”
H.E. Sirodjidin Aslov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, delivered his speech:

He described implementation of RECCA projects as an important component required for economic integration, peace-making and durable stability in the region as part of a sustainable long-term economic cooperation between Afghanistan and the regional countries.

He said that economic and social development in Afghanistan is impossible without stability and thus the international community must continue its technical and financial support for Afghanistan. He added that underdeveloped infrastructure in Afghanistan is of serious challenge that is hampering economic growth of Afghanistan. He added that creation of new transportation corridors between Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and Iran through Afghanistan is important.

Mr. Aslov also noted the holding of RECCA-V in Dushanbe in March, 2012 wherein 17 investment projects and policy priorities were determined. He requested that research organizations in RECCA member countries should cooperate with each other to upgrade capability of the organizations responsible for the implementation of RECCA projects. He proposed that an educational center with a mission to train Afghan experts on matters relating to economic development should be built.

Mr. Aslov proposed that RECCA projects with particular reference to the extension of cable transferring 500 KW electricity among Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as well as Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran be implemented. He also proposed that a pipeline transferring gas from Shiberghan in Afghanistan to Tajikistan and tripartite railway networks connecting Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as an educational center for training Afghan experts in Dushanbe be constructed. Mr. Aslov termed the successful completion of a project extending a cable transferring 220 KW electricity from Sangtowa to Pule Khumri as well as the progress made with regards to CASA-1000 as key successes of RECCA-V.

At the end, H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan said that implementation of economic projects in Afghanistan relies on security and peace in this country and thus asked all international partners to continue their support to Afghanistan.

H.E. Muhammetguly Muhammadov, Minister of Finance of Turkmenistan, delivered his speech whose major highlights are noted below:

Mr. Muhammetguly Muhammadov noted his country’s role as a major long term supplier of natural gas in the region. He shed light on the background of TAPI gas pipeline project whose practical implementation would start off towards the end of 2015. This project would stimulate economic growth of its member countries. He noted that besides this project, there is a great deal of potential for economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. In the recent visit of H.E. President of Turkmenistan to Kabul the existing potential for economic cooperation between the two nations in specific areas such as natural resources and energy was discussed.

Islamic Republic of Iran considers the expansion of Chabahar an important step towards the implementation of its strategy aimed at the development and facilitation of communication within our region with particular reference to accessibility by Afghanistan and the central Asian countries to Oman Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the investment of all interested countries in Chabahar and its transportation routes.

In addition, Iran offers the shortest and cheapest routes for trade between Afghanistan, Turkey, Caucasus and Europe. Khawaf-Herat railway project, to be constructed in four parts, covering a distance of 137 KMs was constructed through grants of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The fourth part of this project will be constructed by the Government of Afghanistan. So far, fundamental work relating to the construction of the first three parts has been completed. Cost of the first three parts that is to be covered by the government of Iran is estimated to total $250 million. This project will increase the volume of trade at a reduced cost of transportation of goods and people between Afghanistan and Iran. In addition, it will increase Afghanistan’s trade and business volume with central Asian countries through Iran.

Based on the estimates of the Ministry of Highway and Urban Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran, during its first year of operation, this project is expected to transport 800 thousand ton goods and 25 thousand passengers. These numbers will increase in the upcoming years considering the existing capacity of the project.

In May 2015, a cooperation agreement for the expansion of another phase in Chabahar with Indian intervention was signed between Transportation Ministers of India and Iran in Tehran. Based on this agreement, the Indian government has so far invested $85million as part of building phase one of the Chabahar expansion plan. India will use this specific phase of the plan for the next ten years. The two sides are still negotiating terms of the executive contracts.

H.E. Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, Minister of Interior Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, delivered his speech. Major points discussed include the following: A peaceful Afghanistan with a flourishing, strong and sustainable economy best serves interest for all regional countries.

The recent nuclear deal between Iran and 5+1 could serve a new chapter for expanding cooperation as well as thriving economies of the regional countries, particularly Afghanistan. Connecting Afghanistan with central Asian countries through Chabahar port of Iran is a vision that we all have long dreamed of. This dream is now fortunately in the process of becoming a reality. Chabahar offers the cheapest and most appropriate route that has no match for these countries to access international waters and paves the way for closer ties as well as economic connectivity leading to improved security for the countries noted.
The Khawaf – Sangyan – Herat route is a new corridor that is part of a larger railway network plan connecting Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and China aiming to revive the historical Silk Road through railroad. Moreover, a separate project aimed at constructing Meel 78 Mahi road leading to the Center of Farah province is of the key projects being implemented by the Islamic Republic of Iran. This project will cover a distance of 120 KMs passing the official border crossing of Iran called Meel 78 located in Khorasan province of Iran to connect center of Farah province in Afghanistan with Khorasan province in Iran. This road will facilitate transit of goods at a reduced distance compared to that of Chabahar and Islam Qala. It will prepare grounds for increased export of goods and a flourishing economy for both countries. Currently, 57% of this project has been completed with 65 KMs of the road constructed and ready for use.

The Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran concluded his speech by thanking the host of the conference and expressed his hopes for turning the slogan of RECCA-VI “Silk Road through Afghanistan” into a reality as soon as possible with the help of the regional countries as well as countries beyond our region.

Mr. Sartaj Aziz, National Security and Foreign Affairs Advisor of the Government of Pakistan, in turn, delivered his speech: Over the years, RECCA has become a dynamic platform and contributed a lot towards determining and achieving goals stipulated by National Development Strategy of Afghanistan.

Pakistan, too, is committed to RECCA objectives. This conference strengthens the confidence-building framework relating to Istanbul process whose next meeting will be jointly presided over by Pakistan and Afghanistan. Turning Afghanistan into an Asian intersection will require efforts not only within Afghanistan but also cooperation from regional countries. Pakistan will expedite the construction of railroad connecting Peshawar with Jalalabad and Chaman with Spin Boldak.

In addition, feasibility studies for the construction of a motorway connecting Peshawar with Kabul has also started. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will offer a competitive route between western China, Central Asia, Middle East and Afghanistan.

We demand immediate implementation of CASA-1000 and TAPI projects. We are also working with Afghanistan to produce hydropower over Kunar River. Pakistan has recently decided to sign off International Road Transport Convention. This development will facilitate trade amongst countries in our region.

Mr. Arjun B. Thapa, Secretary General of SAARC, delivered his statement whose major points are described hereunder:

He briefed the participants on SAARC’s actions in areas such as trade, economy, financing, energy and regional connectivity. He described the timing of RECCA-VI as very appropriate, particularly given Afghanistan’s readiness to not only join SAARC but also integrate economically with central Asian countries.

Since its launch in 2005, RECCA has proved to be useful for reviewing progress and responding to emerging opportunities. In the context of Asian intersection, Afghanistan has a strategic location with a capacity to become a center for regional trade and transit. Trade in the South Asia undergoes a rapid growth as SAARC strives to provide trade facilitation to its member countries.

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Since its launch in 2005, RECCA has proved to be useful for reviewing progress and responding to emerging opportunities. In the context of Asian intersection, Afghanistan has a strategic location with a capacity to become a center for regional trade and transit. Trade in the South Asia undergoes a rapid growth as SAARC strives to provide trade facilitation to its member countries. South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) have been signed among SAARC members aimed at trade development and service trading respectively among such members. In the eighteenth Assembly with the participation of heads of member states, held in Kathmandu in November 2014, a proposal was made to establish an economic union among SAARC member states aiming to take a step forwards from free-trade to create a customs union and a shared market for the member states. Presently, SAARC is in the process of finalizing an agreement for constructing railroads and motorway within SAARC countries. To finance its projects, SAARC has created a trust fund called SAARC Development Fund (SDF). So far, more than $66 million has been spent in areas such as social sustainability and promoting livelihoods. Cooperation in energy is one of the SAARC priorities. SAARC Center for Energy has been operating since 2006.

A SAARC framework agreement relating to energy cooperation has also been signed. The Secretary General, at the end, stressed on incorporating and highlighting the key role by economic sectors.

H.E. Ms. Sujata Mehta, Deputy Minister (Multilateral & Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs of India delivered her statement which its major highlights noted below:

Implementation of major projects such as TAPI and CASA-1000 require a longer period of time. So, if our goal is to produce economic activity that would yield immediate results including increasing revenues and job creation over a period of 12 – 18 months, we should prioritize these activities and focus our attention towards trade and transit. The message we often get from our own private sector as a leading country in confidence-building efforts aimed at trade and investment in Heart of Asia – Istanbul process is that private investors are more interested in investment in natural resources of Afghanistan.

Major challenges facing this endeavor is the fact that Afghanistan is not connected to the region. As such, regional connectivity is an urgent need and all of Afghanistan’s trade and transit agreements with countries in the region must be respected and completely implemented. During President Ghani’s visit to India, we expressed our interest in joining Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement (APTTA) and also unilaterally expressed our willingness to allow Afghan trucks to enter Atari-Wagah port. In addition, we expressed an interest in signing a tripartite agreement for motor transit between India, Iran and Afghanistan. We have reached an agreement with Iran regarding starting an immediate work on two terminals at Chabahar port so that Afghanistan has an access to an alternative transit route.

A successful economic transformation is dependent upon peace and security in the country. With recognition of this fact, implementation of economic projects necessitates defeat of terrorism without wasting much time.
H.E. President, accompanied by H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs took a group photo with heads of participating delegations and then paid a visit to the exhibition of Afghan products that was organized by AISA within the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Afterwards, Mr. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Political Affairs provided a briefing on the progress, challenges as well as a new process relating to RECCA. He noted that this conference focused on priority projects and he would introduce new models to finance these projects.

Since the launch of RECCA in 2005, we have had greater achievements that demonstrate two important facts. Firstly, it was not clear that despite a great amount of international assistance, the Asian intersection has not been formed from an internal to external viewpoint; rather, it was shaped from an external to internal viewpoint. As a result, we must rely more on our neighbors and broader region for their support to regional connectivity and trade facilitation. Secondly, we cannot rely on the funds from donors for such major projects and so we should strengthen partnership between private sector and public sector.

Mr. Karzai added that the future of Afghanistan hinges on trade, transit and mining. The agricultural sector would help rural population of the country but it does not yield the government any revenues. The dwindling international assistance does not have a large and direct impact on economic growth of Afghanistan. The only source for sustainable economic growth for Afghanistan is its exports. And the mining industry would help government increase its revenues. Nevertheless, in order for the mining industry to bear fruit, five to ten years would be required provided that large investment pools are available.

Therefore, given Afghanistan’s limited exports and a time-consuming mining process, Afghanistan would primarily need to focus on transit and attracting private investment. In recognition of this fact, RECCA strategy focuses on unleashing foreign investment capacity in the private sector.

Mr. Hekmat Khalil Karzai pointed out that the purpose for creating RECCA was to facilitate the implementation of regional economic projects that are worth-investment, identify a number of economic policy priorities, create regional energy markets and facilitate trade and transit in the region.

Later, he summarized progress made by RECCA as follows: Creation of Afghanistan’s railroad and in the next ten years much progress would be made in this regard. In the past ten years, a lot of progress has been made with respect to roads but the construction of the ring road has not yet been completed. In the energy sector, recent progress made with respect to CASA-1000, TAPI gas pipeline and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan power cable is a major achievement.

In the mining sector, despite lack of satisfactory progress with regard to Aynak and Hajigak mines, progress made concerning small mines which is a source of hope. With reference to, public private partnership scant progress has been made including the creation of a draft law on PPP which is now ready to be submitted to Afghan parliament. The first independent power network was constructed with financing from International Finance Corporation (IFC) in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

Mr. Khalil Karzai added that as part of their efforts to remove the gaps related to the previous conferences, he has proposed to hold RECCA on yearly basis and to follow up the decisions made in the conference through an online commission. A website on RECCA has been launched. The analysis of economic projects has improved as well as new financing models comprising consulting and coordinating for projects has been put in place.

Previously, there were no any guidelines for RECCA projects and projects’ listing would be proposed in form of a “projects wish list” such as Salang tunnel reconstruction that never got financing. This year, we want to introduce projects that could be financed, invested in and implemented from one to three years with clear risk management plans.

Some of these projects are listed as below:
- Land ports that are essential for trade, transit and mining industry;
- Job creation and attract foreign money as a priority;
- Public private partnership regarding energy;
- Conducting feasibility studies of the projects;
- Lapis Lazuli transit and transport route;
- Railroad connecting five regional countries namely China, Kirgizstan Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran;

Towards the end of his presentation, Mr. Karzai stressed on the creation of a framework monitoring results, development of bankable projects, creation of working groups for Sovereign Wealth Funds, incorporating various forms of financing including new methods of financing as well as guidelines for regional financing as important priorities. He expressed his hopes that RECCA would serve as a platform to further streamline regional economic cooperation process.

Speeches were later given by dignitaries from other countries and international organizations at the Plenary Session.
H.E. Yasser Morad Usman Hosny, Deputy Foreign Minister of Egypt delivered a statement. Its major highlights noted below:

After New Delhi, Islamabad, Istanbul and Dushanbe hosting RECCA for the past several years, Kabul, its original birthplace, is yet again home to this conference with hopes of finding better regional economic solutions. This conference is convened at a juncture where the Afghan nation has opened a new page of their political life by creating a National Unity Government (NUG).

The title of this conference “The Silk Road through Afghanistan” and the three areas it discussed during the working groups are related to the entire region including Afghanistan and Egypt. Egypt has an ancient history dating back to 6,000 years. The world trade center was actually formed through Silk Road connecting Asia, Africa and Europe.

Currently, in 2015, Egypt launched a new large project called New Swiss Canal. This canal has 6 new tunnels to be constructed under the existing canal covering an area of 76 thousand kilometers. This project and its similar regional designs would help greatly with reviving the old Silk Road, opening new regional economic windows.

Since 2005, RECCA has served as an important regional platform in promoting stability and regional cooperation with Afghanistan playing a central role, in Central, South Asia as well as Middle East and Europe.

H.E. Takir Balykbayev – Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Republic of Kazakhstan delivered a presentation discussing issues briefly noted below:

He described RECCA as an important forum for enhancing and strengthening regional connectivity and cooperation among regional countries. According to the statement of RECCA-V held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, regional disasters center has been created in Almaty city of Kazakhstan and is operational. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan requests other countries to join this center. Afghanistan, too, has expressed an interest in becoming member to this center. We hope that Afghanistan would complete all required procedures to be able to join the noted center.

He talked about the importance of key regional energy projects including CASA-1000 and noted that Kazakhstan would be willing to contribute its surplus power energy to CASA-1000 as may be required. He also touched on the importance of contracting railroads in Afghanistan and added that last year leaders from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran launched a new railway project connecting the Persian Gulf. Kazakhstan wants to extend the same railway network to Afghanistan. Mr.Takir Balykbayev emphasized the training of professional human resources for the implementation of such projects. Kazakhstan has organized training programs for Afghan youth and would continue to do so in the future. At the end, he asked all regional countries to responsibly help Afghanistan with its peacemaking and stability efforts in order for the economic programs to be implemented as required.

Mr. Mohammad Aqa, Deputy Director of Islamic Development Bank delivered his statement:

As a citizen of Afghanistan, I thank you all for your participation in this conference. This clearly shows your support to stability and economic development in our country. On behalf of the Director of Islamic Development Bank, I would like to thank the organizers for their reception and successfully conducting this conference.

Financing experts have concluded that Islamic financing system including Islamic banking, Islamic microfinance, Awqaf, Sokok, Islamic insurance (Takaful) and other services are of greater significance for sustainable and equitable development. Currently, world’s major financial centers including Hong Kong, London, Moscow and Tokyo are considering introducing Islamic banking. He demanded that RECCA projects to be implemented. He noted that beyond issuing statements, we should put in place easy-to-use mechanism for the purpose of coordination among financiers. Continuing with business as usual would not produce any results.

He also asked that diplomatic realities prevailing in the region with reference to the implementation of regional economic programs should be understood.
H.E. Mr. Yuri Sentyurin, Deputy Minister of Energy of Russian Federation delivered his speech as summarized hereunder:

Describing RECCA as an effective forum for regional economic cooperation, he noted that Russia is committed to help Afghanistan in strengthening stability and economic development.

In the recent past, an agreement on encouragement and support of investment between the two countries has been signed. Air traffic agreement between the two countries has been in effect since September 2013. In the near future, an agreement on Afghanistan’s exemption to pay back Russia’s loans will also be signed between the two countries. There is a great flexibility with regards to Afghanistan’s exports to Russia. A zero percent of customs is charged on certain Afghan exports to Russia. The volume of trade between the two countries has increased around $1 billion a year. Russia supports regional economic projects and initiatives that benefit Afghanistan including TAIP, TUTAP and the railway network connecting five regional countries previously noted in this conference.

Russia is ready to launch the project aimed at the transfer of hydrocarbon from Russian to India through Afghanistan. With its membership at Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Russia could play a key role in the development of infrastructure in the region. Recently, Russia has awarded some 250 scholarships in various areas to Afghanistan. It is also worthwhile to note that Russia contributed 57 Kamaz vehicles to Afghanistan through World Food Program. The Russian Deputy Minister for Energy indicated that the reduction of international forces in Afghanistan has caused a reduction in trade, economic activities and investment interest in this country. He called upon the international community to continue living up to their commitments with regards to ongoing economic assistant to the country.

He expressed hopes that the outcomes of SOM conference expected to take place on September 5th as part of Tokyo commitments right after RECCA-VI would produce effective solutions. A the end, he emphasized that Afghanistan’s problems would only be resolved through diplomacy and economic development.

Mr. Nurjehan Mawani, Diplomatic Representative of Agha Khan Development Network in Afghanistan delivered her statement: This organization is operating in Afghanistan to uplift quality of life and development through cooperation. It is currently operating in different regional countries including Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in the areas such as construction of schools, hospitals, banking institutions and infrastructure. She briefly talked about successful experiences of AKDN in the areas such as partnership between private sector and public sector including the creation of a company called Pamir Energy in 2002 with the participation of Tajikistan.

Establishment of Central Asian University as a result of joint effort between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and AKDN that aims to exchange information, strengthen cooperation, analyze regional policies and enhance capacity in the central Asia is also pertinent to be mentioned.

Mr. Stefan Huber, Deputy Head of Mission and charge de affairs of European Union in Afghanistan:

He appreciated Afghanistan’s efforts to strengthen cooperation and regional connectivity as well as regional confidence building measures as part of the efforts of National Unity Government that has just turned one year old.

He stressed the importance of regional trade, infrastructure development and use of natural resources as well as water resources management. He asked that focus needs to be placed on specific time-bound projects that are implementable. In addition, he noted that consistency of RECCA projects with economic confidence-building measures with reference to Heart of Asia - Istanbul process would contribute to ensuring a result-based follow-up of the projects.

Mr. Hiroshi Takahashi, Ambassador of Japan in Afghanistan: International cooperation particularly regional cooperation is needed for stability as well as economic development in Afghanistan so that it can utilize its rich agricultural and natural resources. Japan is ready to help Afghanistan in the development of its infrastructure that would facilitate regional connectivity. Japan has also helped Afghanistan in the areas such as border management, natural disasters, agricultural and livestock development. Japan’s assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 is worth more than $5.8 billion.

Mr. Saud Abdulaziz Al-bassam, Representative of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Trust Fund: Saudi Arabia’s assistance to Afghanistan is worth $470 million since 2001. Of this amount, $102 million has been spent in construction of roads. In addition, Saudi Development Trust Fund has allocated $240 million for the purpose of financing key development projects in Afghanistan in the areas such as health and education sectors. Saudi Arabia would continue financing development projects in Afghanistan through the noted trust fund in the future.

Mr. Tareq Y.M. Almenayes, Economic Advisor of Kuwait Fund: He said that this fund was created more than 50 years ago with an aim to help economies of member countries, development and technical assistance as well as lending in various areas such as infrastructure, health and education by this trust fund currently takes place in 102 countries in the world. So far, this fund has been implemented more than 900 projects.

Kuwait Trust Fund’s assistance to Afghanistan started in 1974 involving a feasibility study for a sugar production factory in Baghlan province. He also announced an additional assistance worth $7 million for the purpose of financing small agricultural projects. He added that signing a lending agreement with Afghanistan would pave the way for future assistance by the Kuwait Trust Fund to Afghanistan.
Ms. Maria Aurora MeijaErrasquin, Spain Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan delivered her statement that mainly discussed the following matters: She congratulated the government of Afghanistan on successfully conducting this conference. She said that RECCA-VI takes place at a particular juncture in which Afghanistan experiences political, security and economic transformation. In order for the economic transformation to be successful, regional cooperation is highly crucial.

In this process, we all support the notion of “replacing a gun with brick and unrest with cooperation”. This region plays a key role throughout the Silk Road origination from China and ending at Walnasya city in Spain as it offers various trade and energy corridors. Spain supports Afghanistan so that this country becomes stable with a strong economic growth in the transformation decade.

Ms. Pauline Maria Highs, Director of West Asia at the British Ministry of Foreign Affair delivered her speech at the conference whose major highlights are as follows: Regional cooperation was one of the key subjects of London Conference on Afghanistan that was held in December 2014. Participants at that conference recognized the fact that Afghanistan is located at the heart of one of the highly populated regions that is rapidly in growth. Therefore, regional connectivity and cooperation supported by coordinated policies could change rules of the game at central and south Asia. RECCA-VI renewes these commitments. We welcome the finalization of CASA-1000 agreement and are glad that we have contributed $31 million to this project. In addition, we support World Bank’s efforts for the creation and leadership of CASA-1000 and TUTAP projects.

H.E Mr. Nicholas Haysom Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA):

The logic behind the sustainability of regional cooperation is the win-win situation and mutual interest. The impacts of economic development, creating job opportunities and investments will go beyond economic sector and cause political and social stability in the region. Infrastructure investment in Afghanistan is not a relief project or granting relief, but in fact will benefits all regional countries. In order to connect Afghanistan with regional countries, there is not only need for hardware such as transport infrastructure, but more attention should be paid to the software part which is making framework agreement on the facilitation of goods in transit and transport.

H.E. Ambassador Ali Salt Akin, Turkish Ambassador to Afghanistan, in turn, delivered his speech that touched on the following points: By tapping its rich natural resources and location that is very suitable for trade and transit, Afghanistan is able to reach sustainable economic growth and create jobs for its citizens. Turkey supports the emphasis RECCA-VI places on projects aiming to transform Afghanistan into a regional trade and transit hub through Lapis Lazuli route as well as Heart of Asia - Istanbul process. At this conference, I present the concept of creating a free trade and transit zone in the framework of the Silk Road at the heart of which Afghanistan would be placed. This way we can revive the ancient Silk Road.

Mr. Nagesh Kumar regional director of UNESCAP:

Mr. Nagesh Kumar head of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) based in Delhi stated: By taking part in the technical working-groups, it is now clear that there is high potential for mutual cooperation, through Afghanistan centered, which result to common prosperity for the entire region and RECCA as a forum has significantly grown. The ESCAP is the regional development arm of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific and tries to support regional cooperation and integration among the 53 member states. The activities of the organization resulted to the establishment of several regional networking forums including Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Considering the importance of transport connection, ESCAP has initiated drafting and signing of agreements for Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Networks. Currently, ESCAP is working on the concept of agreement for dry ports. Meanwhile, ESCAP is implementing a project to connect South Asia to Central Asia. It is expected to connect Istanbul to Myanmar through transport corridors of south Asia. ESCAP is supporting Afghanistan in terms of capacity building and providing technical assistance to join world Trade Organization (WTO), agricultural adaptation to climate change, sustainable energy and disaster management, Mr. Kumar said. ESCAP is jointly working with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), in the framework of the United Nations Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECIA), which Afghanistan was chairing during 2014. Afghanistan having high potential of unused natural resources and its strategic geographical location deserves to become the center of economic activities in Asia. ESCAP is ready to support Afghanistan in this transition.
To get benefits of trade and transit agreements, the transit process of goods among regional countries should be facilitated by bringing consistency in the road passes and introducing multiple entry visas.

Mr. Larry Sampler, Assistant to the Administrator in the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA) of the US Department of State:

RECCA-VI is mainly focusing on three areas including energy, infrastructure and economic integration, which seems unique opportunity to regional cooperation between Afghanistan and other regional countries. Several important conferences including RECCA in Kabul, CAREC in Mongolia, Silk Road International Conference in Georgia and Heart of Asia Ministerial Meeting of the Istanbul Process in Pakistan show that we believe the regional connection will improve the quality of livelihoods for the entire region.

The United States of America supports the concept of New Silk Road to establish regional energy market, facilitate transit and trade, improve customs processes and connect people at the regional level.

To get benefits of trade and transit agreements, the transit process of goods among regional countries should be facilitated by bringing consistency in the road passes and introducing multiple entry visas. There are lots to be done, as only 15% of trade among central and southern Asian countries are deemed regional trade. We can help Afghanistan and other regional countries by creating jobs/employment, economic development and stability through joint focus on key priorities.

According to Mr. Sampler, the technical assistance of USAID in implementing the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and the Afghan Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement (APTTA) improved trade and transit at the region. So far, Afghanistan had significant progress in joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), and after the next technical working group, the accession process to the WTO will be completed. USAID also helped in revitalization and implementation of “TIR” system in Afghanistan.

USAID encouraged the public-private partnership scheme, through which 157 million dollars have been invested and 2,000 jobs were created. USAID’s Afghanistan Trade and Revenue Project (ATAR) with 77 million dollars for 2013-2017 and The Assistance in Building Afghanistan by Developing Enterprises (ABADE) of 105 million dollars will not only benefit Afghanistan, but the entire region will get benefits.

Representative of United Arab Emirates:

He thanked the National Unity Government for the invitation and expressed his sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and the efforts of Afghan government for the success of regional economic cooperation process focusing on regional connectivity. UAE as a regional partner of Afghanistan supports the objectives and programs of this conference. He added that UAE will continue to assist Afghanistan. The two-year project of constructing 2,000 Mosques in Afghanistan with the financial aid of UAE will start soon.

Mr. Sayed Jalaeddin Alavi Sabzevari, Deputy Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO):

From all the countries bordering Afghanistan, only China is not an ECO member. There are high potentials among ECO’s member states in the areas of business, banking, transport and regional connectivity, agriculture and food safety, disaster management, health, combating against drug trafficking and organized crimes. ECO has established a special reconstruction fund for Afghanistan. Currently, ECO is setting its vision for the next 10 years, which also includes its policy revision towards Afghanistan to effectively address the emerging needs of the country. ECO will hold a meeting in the near future to assess the effectiveness/achievements of Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund.

Mr. Deng Xijun, Chinese Ambassador in Kabul:

Mr. Deng Xijun highlighted the importance of the Silk Road economic belt, acceleration of regional connectivity, and the history of Silk Road. He pointed that during September 2013, H.E. Xi Jinping President of China has proposed the initiative of the Silk Road economic belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road. Up to now, 60 countries including Afghanistan have expressed their interest to be part of it. Enhancing policy integration, facilitation of connectivity, free of obstacles business, and financial integrations are the advantages of this initiative. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is attached to the Silk Road economic belt. This will not only provide regional connectivity for Afghanistan, China and Pakistan, but will also be important for the economic development, export of energy and natural resources of Afghanistan.
By 3:30 PM, H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officially started the closing session of RECCA VI.

The Chief Executive mentioned that while closing the sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan, we also celebrate the 10th anniversary of RECCA, which was established in 2005 as an important regional cooperation platform.

I would like to congratulate all member states, international organizations and other participants for the great achievement and appreciate their efforts.

I was told that the past two days had been extremely busy for you and much areas have been covered and discussed, and we have together came to some important conclusions on the way forward.

Taking this opportunity, I thank all regional partners and other stakeholders, and express my sincere appreciation for your active presence and valuable contributions.

I can say with confidence that RECCA has moved into new era. This forum is now truly regional in its perspective, as well as it is pragmatic in its approach to economic cooperation and regional economic integration.

He added that by using modern analytical tools backed by empirical data collection and update information, it is now easier to undertake feasibility studies, research and evaluations on small to large scale infrastructure projects.

Using the opportunity, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, please allow me to thank Turkmenistan for offering to host the next Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan, which will be held in Ashgabat in 2017. The recent visit of H.E President of Turkmenistan to Kabul demonstrated, important initiatives to modernize and expand projects in the transport, energy and trade sectors are underway in our region - stretching from Russia and Kazakhstan to Turkey and the Persian Gulf region on one side, and to China and India on the other. H.E. Dr Abdullah added that by opening new corridors and creation of new opportunities, the livelihoods of millions of people will be positively impacted in the region.

As our greater region undergoes change, we see the re-emergence of multiple new Silk Roads. We are eager to see them complement each other, leading to land and maritime connectivities that benefits all stakeholders,» H.E said. There is no doubt that regional connectivity will be increasing with the finalization of the Lapis Lazuli and five nations railway corridors. I can say that the key to getting projects off the ground is through public-private partnership and a combination of both, in the context of bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation.

The technical feasibility and financial viability of these projects will continue to be assessed to assure bankability, best practice, accountability and fair market value, he added.

The CASA-1000 energy project, which will increase the power capacity at regional level, is an example of win-win regional cooperation.

Although some of the larger projects that are listed are of longer-term significance, and will be dealt with in due time, the projects that were presented at this conference, considering the mutual impacts and investments, are deemed feasible. In other words, these projects are examples of ready fruits which are accessible to every regional partner. H.E Chief Executive said Afghanistan has committed to take advantage of the emerging geo-economic environment, in order to seize the opportunities available including the establishment of new Silk Road.

As the RECCA process has highlighted, the selected projects are proposed strategically, in order to facilitate activity, energize the pathways and reduce the bottlenecks on these emerging trade and transit corridors, he said.

It is in this spirit that Afghanistan's National Unity Government welcomes the ongoing realization of five economic corridors in our region. Each economic corridor has the potential to unlock our regional economic capacities at a time when volatility is becoming a cyclical norm as demonstrated by currency fluctuations, stock market instability and commodity price volatility, he added. Some of our partners come from the public sector; some from the private sector. Both are crucial.

Moreover, governments, donors and international financial institutions can play an important role in providing seed capital for viable project kickoff, easing the risk factor for private investors, he added.

I can say with confidence that RECCA has moved into new era. This forum is now truly regional in its perspective, as well as it is pragmatic in its approach to economic cooperation and regional economic integration."

Continued...
H.E. Dr. Abdullah noted that the key to this process in moving forward is the launch of the RECCA implementation phase. We warmly welcome stakeholders, partners and investors to work with us hand-in-hand during this critical phase. On the other hand, I am happy to see that new technologies resulted to creating web portal, through which investments are tracked and reports on management and implementation of projects are easily provided.

As per the economic impact analyses presented at the conference, there is real incentive and tangible economic benefit for all regional partners to engage in increased trade, transit, transport, energy transfer and investment along the new pathways being developed. Afghanistan stands at the crossroads, as part of the roundabout, as a key hub and a landbridge for the realization of regional collective interconnectivity, he said. We jointly work to eliminate the threats posed to security and stability in the form of terrorism, radicalism and narcotics. Afghanistan is very much a victim of these scourges and appreciates the international efforts to combat these threats. He went on to say that the country needs more robust measures to tackle terrorism in all its traditional and newer forms. It is not sufficient to engage in talk and promises, but fail to deliver in deed and action.

In fact we are paying a high price, but we are united in our aim to address these menaces in all its forms. We need your cooperation, as you need ours, to bolster our defenses and protect our people, and the well-being of our social, political and economic institutions, he said.

As we deal with a diverse set of challenges, this conference has proven to us once again that the opportunities and potential for growth and prosperity at the regional level are real and attainable. The work has already started, and Afghanistan is ready to play its role in the larger context, he added.

In conclusion, H.E. Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan addressing the participants said: you have spent several years and worked hard within the RECCA framework laying down a solid foundation. Thus, let us now go forward, unite behind the vision of our joint Chairmen Statement. Let us bring projects to life to help in the growth of our regional corridors; and let us be partner on this road until we bring to the peoples and nations of our greater region the stability and prosperity they so much deserve.

Later, H.E. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and chairman of the Sixth RECCA conference, requested Mr. Nagesh Kumar, Regional Director of UNESCAP, as a rapporteur to share the findings of the three working group sessions and two side events of RECCA VI with other participants.

There were comprehensive and detailed discussions in the working group sessions and side events, Mr. Kumar said. I am proud to be given this responsibility; however, summarizing these discussions in the given period of time is not easy, but I will try to highlight the key points:

- The first working group, focusing on energy and natural resources, discussed projects like CASA-1000 and TAPI. The participants discussed on the potential and status of these projects, highlighting the effectiveness of the projects in energy security and stability in the region, as well as how the projects - as potential factors - can change the rules of the game in terms of development and stability in the region. Furthermore, it was discussed that there is high potential to produce solar, wind and water energy in Afghanistan, and how private sector including IPPs can play their roles in producing energy from these resources.
- The second working group focused on regional connectivity. The two economic strengths of Afghanistan, its unused rich natural resources and strategic geographical location, were the pre-determinants for discussion. These potentials can be used to enhance regional connectivity and connecting dry transport systems. In this working group, several regional initiatives, including expansion of Chabahar port capacity and connecting it to the north-south transport corridor, five nation railway corridor, expansion of Gwadar port capacity in Pakistan, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) were also discussed. The participants emphasized on the importance of Asian inter-continental corridors, being as an intersection for Europe and Asia, the central and south Asia, particularly Afghanistan stand as a land-bridge and key hub, through improving these transport corridors. The expansion of transport corridors including the mapping of Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway which UNESCAP has already worked on the agreement drafts is important to connect central and south Asia to Euro-Asia region. Furthermore, the participants emphasized on better coordination for regional connectivity initiatives, using a master plan by engaging all regional stakeholders including regional institutions / organizations such as ECO, SAARC, ESCAP and regional banks.

The third working group of RECCA-IV focused on regional trade, improving private sector role and business to business cooperation in Asia through Afghanistan. There were nine presentations on customs, trade and transit facilitation/private cross-border investments and public-private partnership (PPP) in the working group. It was pointed out that despite the growth in the Afghan economy during the past few years, the country still faces extreme economic problems and there is need to utilize its production potentials to overcome the challenges.

The potential economic developments include increasing agricultural productivity, providing essential services, infrastructure development, enhancing tax system and encouraging private investment through improving business enabling environment.
Mr. Chen Xiaochen, senior researcher of Cheong Yang Institute of Ramen University of China: Mr. Chen who has conducted the first international seminar of economic connectivity of Silk Road in 20 Brifed the participants on the outcome of the RECCA Academic Forum that was held in Afghanistan Central Media on 3rd of September by participation of scientists and experts of regional countries.

Mr. Chen said: as the first step, RECCA and its programs should focus more on the region rather than Afghanistan, because regional connectivity and development of infrastructure in the region requires effective regional cooperation.

Second, RECCA should pay attention to the role and endurance of private investments. Investments through independent fund organizations, partnership between private and government sectors are important for capital attraction and merging Afghanistan finance with the region.

Third, RECCA and other regional platforms should strengthen cooperation and coordination at policy levels. Fourth, attention should be paid to the new aspects of cooperation like environment and people interaction. Fifth, the proposal of regional investment council, regional multi-national corporations should be prepared.

Sixth, beside capacities on mineral and natural resources, water resources and its management also should be taken into consideration. Seventh, in addition to the previous donors, the new organizations including Asia Investment Infrastructure Bank, Bank of BRICS could also be helpful for Afghanistan. For performing the central role of Afghanistan and its strategic benefits in terms of energy transit, more research, studies and cooperation have to be conducted on natural resources.

RECCA has analyzed different initiatives of the Silk Road which includes Silk Road Economic Connectivity and realized that different Silk Road proposals could be specifically and comprehensively worked upon to develop regional capacities. In conclusion, Mr. Chen emphasized on the roles of research and study organizations which are crucial for preparing regional cooperation policies and they can fill the gap between policy makers and researchers.

SIDE EVENTS

FIRST SIDE EVENT MEETING
Economic Integration in the "Heart of Asia": Role of Regional Organizations

Mr. Kumar briefed that the first side event meeting was held under the aforementioned title, organized by UNESCAP with partnership of SAAARC, ECO, CAREC, Islamic Development Bank and other NGOs. He said “the contents of this side events include better and more cooperation between regional organizations, conducting research on issues associated within the gathering of mentioned groups”.

This side event has been held under chairmanship of Afghanistan respected Minister of Economy, and he directed debates and mechanism of effective cooperation and coordination between mentioned organizations with Afghanistan as the beneficiary.

SECOND SIDE EVENT MEETING
Renewable Energy

The second side event meeting on renewable energy was held by Afghanistan Ministry of Power and Water with chairmanship of respected Minister of Energy and Water. The contents of this conference was how to use Afghanistan’s good potential in renewable energy such as solar and wind energy which is beneficial not just for Afghanistan but neighboring countries as well.

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Later on, the respected Minister of Foreign Affairs mentioned the article writing contest which was held under the subject of “the Silk Road through Afghanistan on the occasion of RECCA-VI with initiation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and social media added that this contest had three winners and asked Mr. Ahmad Shoaib Rahim the first winner to briefly talk about his article.

Mr. Shoaib Rahim the 1st RECCA Essay Contest Winner talked about his research on the topic of how Afghanistan can regain its historical role as center of regional trade and transit. He said that Afghanistan as a land-locked country should consider alternative transit ways. In case of obstacles on bilateral trade and transit relations, we should go for trilateral and multilateral agreements. The corruption and insecurity problems should be addressed. Finally, Afghanistan is capable of resolving these problems and has the capacities to stand and turn into the center of trade and transit in the region between Central Asia and South Asia.

At the conclusion of the sixth regional economic cooperation for Afghanistan, honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs and chairman of RECCA VI appreciated the active participation of all participants and said that: RECCA-VI is the biggest international conference in Afghanistan after establishment of National Unity Government which has been successful and historical. This government considers reaching economic self-sufficiency as preconditions of welfare and stability in the country.

RECCA-VI was conducted in a time when Afghanistan is facing security challenges and is moving towards self-reliance that could create its future. RECCA from its commencement for the past ten years played assisting role towards more development of regional economic cooperation. Successful conduction of this conference reflects our cooperation with regional and international partners for reaching peace, stability and welfare not just in Afghanistan but throughout the region.

We heard opinions of all participants in this conference including official delegates, private sector and economic experts on developing regional economic cooperation.

According to the multi-lateral purpose of this conference which was regional economic cooperation, let’s continue implementation of development projects and funding trade and transit emerging corridors. All these projects and corridors have great potential for benefiting and connecting south, center, and south west of Asia through Afghanistan and key economic activities including agriculture, light industries, energy and extraction, trade and transit.

In these projects and corridors, Lapis Lazuli, railroad between five countries, Chabahar port, CASA-1000 and TAPI which was included in RECCA First in 2005 which now entered the implementation phase, was included. Development of such projects reflects our capability through cooperation and fulfilment of initiations that results in our common benefits. So, it is important not to neglect any effort fulfillment of our promises and be prepared to face challenges in this regard. Consequently, it is required to improve our partnership for implementation of projects and different initiatives that have been agreed upon. RECCA-VI was an opportunity to understand new horizons of regional economic cooperation.

H.E Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end of his speech and conclusion of RECCA-VI said to the participants that: Afghanistan expects your constant cooperation in the next few months and is also waiting for conduction of RECCA-7 which will be held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in 2017.

At the closure of conference, final document of RECCA-VI under the title of “Chairman’s Statement”, on pages 26-27, was provided to the participants.
Dr. Faramarz Tamanna, the Director of Center for Strategic Studies of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan inaugurated the RECCA Academic Forum, and welcomed the presence of national and international participants. He added that this forum is a part of the Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in which the respected ministers and senior decision making officials will assist the conference on making deliberate decisions.

We hope to have comprehensive outlooks on the following issues during the third gathering of this academic forum:
- Cooperation on regional energy and natural resources.
- Regional connectivity.
- Promoting regional trade, improving private sector and business to business cooperation in Asia through Afghanistan.

Mr. Tamanna added that this academic forum will certainly increase our awareness on regional policies and Afghanistan projects. I have confidence that such gathering will have remarkable results on our mutual outlooks and better cooperation on creating welfare and increasing awareness about important issues of Afghanistan and the region. Passing continuous years of war, a new chapter has been opened in the history of Afghanistan. In the past fourteen years, Afghanistan has regained its position in the region and has been changed from a passive state to an active one, and is an effective state in the promotion of international relations. In this regard, the regional cooperation, the relation with the Islamic world and strategic partners are at the top priorities of Afghanistan foreign policy.

Mr. Tamana added that Afghanistan is a part of this geographical location and this fact cannot be altered. However, with proper programs a new chapter based on friendship, solidarity and economic cooperation will be opened with the neighboring countries and other states. Afghanistan is expecting regional cooperation, effective use of resources, preparing opportunities for economic development in the region and fight against common threats from the regional countries, so that we could take specific steps towards a solid economy and secure society. We are happy that this region is constantly progressing. The similarities and historical identity of people will open gates of opportunities for achievements to this conference.

The purpose of Center for Strategic Studies in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is that policy makers of the country could shape the foreign policy of Afghanistan based on strategic and academic research. Thus, the center for strategic studies tries to create opportunities to improve awareness between Afghanistan, regional states and states beyond regional spectrum.

The purpose of Center for Strategic Studies in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is that policy makers of the country could shape the foreign policy of Afghanistan based on strategic and academic research.

His Excellency Dr. Daud Shah Saba, Minister of Mines and Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

He appreciated the presence of national and international experts in the academic forum and expressed the importance of issues related to Afghanistan. He added "we are glad to have your opinions since you are working out of the government and have deep expertise on issues related to Afghanistan and central Asia".

Mr. Saba stated that RECCA has created an important opportunity in contributing the region in economic cooperation throughout last decade. We are eager to know if our outlook is compatible with yours and how can we achieve our goals? How can we achieve our regional economic goals? Currently, we are implementing RECCA programs which will take 18 months. It is worth mentioning our status in 2005 and its comparison with our current status.

Mr. Saba added that currently three corridors have emerged, the first one from India, the second one from China and the third one from Afghanistan. We are expecting that this conference to be an important step towards implementation of programs and the contributing countries in RECCA benefit from such programs.
Mr. Mahmoud Saikal, Special Envoy and International Affairs advisor to the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: With expressing his gratitude on convening of the seminar and presence of high ranked guests in the sixth RECCA academic forum, talked about the background and future economic cooperation in the region. He expressed his happiness on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of RECCA. Mr. Saikal added we have to know what RECCA means and why it should be prioritized. As you are aware, we have experience numerous difficulties during 80s and 90s. Our country was occupied by former Soviet Union during 80s, and we witnessed gradual occupation of Afghanistan by Pakistani militias, Al-Qaeda and other radical groups like Taliban during 90s. The eleventh of September created a suitable opportunity for the international forces to come to Afghanistan which our people supported.

Mr. Saikal added: “I remember the December of 2002, after presence of international forces for one year; we invited our six immediate neighbors in Kabul to sign “Good Neighborly Relations Agreement” with them. Our message was to have good and equal relation with our neighboring countries. Afterwards, we began promoting the role of Afghanistan in connecting with other countries in the region. The RECCA was initiated in 2005. We understood that one day international forces will withdraw, and Afghanistan should regain its position in the region. We have to learn how to develop Afghanistan post withdrawal of international forces. Though, Afghanistan was relatively at a better situation, we thought that regional economic cooperation can be beneficial for creating a better economic environment and alleviating political tensions within the region”.

Mr. Saikal added: We have witnessed the regional cooperation of European states for the past sixty-seven years. Now the threat of war within those states does not exist. Afghanistan is the only country in the region that can use its geographical location at its best. The China possesses special superiority in the region in terms of its structure of infrastructure. Tajikistan has the shortest, most suitable and costly effective route with China. Afghanistan can use this route for trade purposes with China under the condition of signing a trilateral agreement within the three countries. The Kabul- Panjshir route up to the borders of Ashkashm is about seven hundred fifty kilometers. Tajikistan has practically initiated the greatest infrastructure program meaning construction of railroad between China, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Kazakhstan.

The first expert meeting of the five countries were held in Dushanbe City. The presidents of Tajikistan and China had talked on mentioned railroad during their last meeting. In the past, people were facing difficulties with their transit, but now these difficulties will decrease after construction of this railroad. Based on conducted research, both countries can increase their trade up to one billion dollar. Tajikistan can be a very suitable market for Afghanistan export products.

We have witnessed the regional cooperation of European states for the past sixty-seven years. Now the threat of war within those states does not exist. Afghanistan is the only country in the region that can use its geographical location at its best.

H.E. Sharofiddin Imom, Tajikistan Ambassador in Afghanistan: Firstly, appreciated the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for holding this seminar and added that “certainly, economic cooperation in today’s world is the most effective tool for improving relations between states”. The great program of new Silk Road which is proposed by China is a vivid example of this fact.
Mr. Khalid Aziz, representative of Pakistan Center of Regional Research and Studies:

While appreciating conduction of this academic forum and with indication to Mr. Mahmoud Saikal’s statement said: “I am glad to see Afghanistan government caring so much about its waters. I think this is the future outlook. All programs on regional cooperation, regional connectivity and promotion of trade have their own importance, but the other important issue which has to be taken seriously and is crucial for survival of people is water. The topic that I have put in my article is named “Doomsday”. If water vanishes one day, doomsday will arise. People cannot live without water.”

“Why do I emphasize on this point? In 2040, the global warming will liquidate more than 35 per cent of Himalia’s snow. Pakistan and Afghanistan will equally get harmed. You can estimate what kind of problems will arise. If the water estimation decreases to annually a thousand cubic meters per individual, the state of emergency will be announced in that country. In 1990, water estimation in Afghanistan was 3414 cubic meters per individual, but in 2013 this figure decreased to 1543 cubic meters per individual. In 1990, water estimation in Pakistan was 1600 cubic meters per individual, but in 2013 this figure decreased to 850 cubic meters per individual which put us in a state of danger. If the global warming does not decrease in Pakistan, our agricultural system will face difficulties or will be damaged thoroughly. ”

Mr. Aziz added: “Now I want to reveal the other problem that we all suffer from”. It is uncontrolled population growth. Surveys conducted in this regard shows that Pakistan population will increase to more than 250 million by year 2050. Currently, Pakistan population is about 190 million. I do not know how this problem can be addressed. Similarly, Afghanistan’s population which is estimated to be 33 million will increase to 67 million by year 2050. This growth is so rapid and enormous. Addressing this problem requires more water, but considering the global warming and climate change, we will face more problems than these.

Mr. Chen Xiaochen, senior researcher of Cheong Yang Institute of Ranmen University of China: While appreciating conduction of the sixth academic forum of RECCA, he mentioned the seventieth anniversary of victory of his country against Fascism and stated that seventy years ago, his country was in a difficult insecure situation that Afghanistan is facing right now. He said: we fought for peace and for the last seven decades Chinese are living in peace. Peace is everything, and is the need of all mankind. Afghanistan and China love peace and have good relations with each other. Mr. Chen mentioned the two thousand years history of Silk Road during which both countries had good relationship. Geographical location of Afghanistan turn this state to one the most important route on Silk Road.

Mr. Wais Barmak, former Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development: we have lived together in this region for centuries. When we talk about peace in the region, trade and transit, the regional connectivity is the only solution or precondition to that goal. As you can see, an initiation is created in this regard. This initiation is not just in this region but is created in other regions as well to connect the central Asia with South Asia. I think Afghanistan is able to build capacities to improve this connectivity, and connect the central Asia countries with south Asia countries and prepare the ground for implementation of projects in this regard. The SAARC Organization in its declaration announced year 2010 – 2020 as years of pre-condition to that goal. As you can see, an initiation is created in this regard. This initiation is not just in this region but is created in other regions as well to connect the central Asia with South Asia. I think Afghanistan is able to build capacities to improve this connectivity, and connect the central Asia countries with south Asia countries and prepare the ground for implementation of projects in this regard. The SAARC Organization in its declaration announced year 2010 – 2020 as years of implementation of projects in this regard.

Mr. Shakti Sinha, head of Center of Research and Policy (BRIEF) India: I, as student of economy and management, researched and analyzed Afghanistan economic growth.

As we all know, Afghanistan had rapid economic growth from year 2002 – 2012 and its economic growth is more than 12 per cent. In 2013, the economic growth was 3.5 per cent and during last year (2014) it was 1.5 per cent. This economic depreciation can be analyzed through different perspectives, one of which is the issue of insecurity. Though, Afghanistan had remarkable improvements in other fields which should not be ignored. Still it is one of the poorest countries in the region.

During my studies in USA, I learned that the important element in economic growth of a country which plays a vital role is the location, and Afghanistan possesses this vital element in its economic growth.

Afghanistan can benefit from its geographical location and play important role in its economy and the economy of the region. Afghanistan can extensively use the ports of the neighboring countries including Chabahar port.

“ Afghanistan had rapid economic growth from year 2002 ñ 2012 and its economic growth is more than 12 per cent. In 2013, the economic growth was 3.5 per cent and during last year (2014) it was 1.5 per cent. ”
Miss. Wang Lin, member of CBN Research Center, China: She talked about role of China in regional connectivity and its investments in the region. She said that the president of China had an official visit to Kazakhstan and mentioned regional connectivity. Two weeks later, the president of Afghanistan made an official visit to China and talked on same matter and stated that Afghanistan support China’s initiative on structure of economic connection of Silk Road. Since the economic aspect of Silk Road was just at its proposal stage, most of the Chinese scientists were not aware such initiative. I was so happy to have the president’s support. It is worth mentioning that, the ambassador of Afghanistan in China participated in all seminars, workshops, and conferences on economic connectivity of Silk Road for the past two years announcing Afghanistan support and that Afghanistan should also have important role in this subject.

Mr. Aydin Noor Khan – Permanent Representative of OIC in Afghanistan:

He spoke on local transport and mentioned its importance on livelihood of rural people who have less amount of revenue. He added, in Africa which is a poor continent, the small roads for people living in villages are so important which can help them to take their commodities to the market for sale. The international banks can play prominent role in these fields. During my two years of staying in Afghanistan, I witnessed that everyone is busy doing something, but the most important task has not been done yet.

His Excellency President Mr. Ashraf Ghani pointed to a very interesting issue in his speech a few months ago. Afghanistan should transform from a land-locked country to a land-linked country. This statement of Mr. President is very important and effective for the future of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is at very good geographical location. It can connect the Central Asia to South Asia. But, the countries should choose this route for their transit. Afghanistan has to convince the other countries to use this transit route for their trade purposes.

Afghanistan has a great future in this regard. We can change Afghanistan to the heart of aerial transport. Some problems may occur. Other countries are also at the competition, but Afghanistan is located at the best geographical location, and should gain the best benefit out of it.

Mr. Noor Khan at his conclusion said “the other issue I want to mention is that countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan have equal amount of production. They can create simplicity in their system to improve their trade with one another”.

Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Rahim – Winner of the best article in the sixth conference of RECCA: He appreciated convening of this academic seminar and added that initiating an article in RECCA-VI is a great step towards growth of talents in our country and in the region”. The topic of my article was “How Afghanistan can regain its position in the region as a transit country”? In today’s academic forum, we can see that everyone talks about regional connectivity, but based on my research on regional connectivity “connection and production” are interlinked. The countries of the region can become connected and increase their production. This process is beneficial for economic growth. We are connected with six of our neighboring countries, and due to our location at the heart of Asia we benefited a lot in the past, but due to the thirty years of civil war we lost many opportunities.

Mr. Rahim added: In post 2001 and after downfall of Taliban regime, a new economic era emerged in Afghanistan. But, due to the current problems that Afghanistan is facing, we are turned into an importer state. In 2014, Afghanistan imports was more than 8.4 billion dollars. Turning a country to a trade and transit center is not an easy task, but it requires further actions in this regard.

Our problem is that we failed in using proper approaches. I believe the donor countries can play important role in this regard. We ask the regional countries to help us. We do not want them to provide us with direct financial assistance. We want them to help us with the technologies, and capacity building. The regional countries specially the neighboring states have expertise, trade centers and strong private sectors, and we want to ask them for their cooperation. We want them to hold workshops and make trade exchange with us. Beside scholarships for higher education and research, we need to have technical courses, short term or long term scholarships so that our private sector could benefit from. Great opportunities exist for private sector, for instance, carpet industries, dried fruits, fresh fruits especially pomegranate.

Now, Afghanistan is producing the best quality Saffron in the world, but our problem is that we do not have access to the international markets. We hope that investors cooperate with us to access international markets. When our products reach the international markets, our economy engine will ignite and we will get the results we wished for. I am sure we can change Afghanistan to an important country for regional connectivity, but the local fundamental infrastructures are the precondition for that.

Mr. Rahim added: the other important issue I want to mention is that Afghanistan railroads should be built so that we do not face any problem in the future and become able to easily transport our products. The last point I want to mention is that Afghanistan should eliminate corruption, decrease bureaucracy and encourage our investors so that we could change Afghanistan into a peaceful country.

“ In 2014, Afghanistan imports was more than 8.4 billion dollars. Turning a country to a trade and transit center is not an easy task, but it requires further actions in this regard.”
Mr. Talant Sultanov, Head of National Institute of Strategic Studies of Republic of Kyrgyzstan:

While appreciating conduction of RECCA Conference said that, it was my first time to come to Afghanistan, and I can say that most of Kabul roads and streets are better than the streets in Bishkek. Last year, we prepared a report that I will tell you its summary. The topic of our report was “Regional Cooperation in Central Asia”.

We have to work together for implementation of regional cooperation and it needs some time. The implementation of big projects in the region needs an organization or a country to take the lead. The other issue I want to point is the “Water and Energy”.

Besides, if we consider the load of trade among countries in central Asia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have the largest trading exchange in the region. But, if we compare Afghanistan trade with central Asia, it won’t be more than 15 per cent. The trade exchange between Afghanistan and other countries in the central Asia is bilateral not regional.

Mr. Sultanov added: the great projects are under execution to better connect our countries. The railroad project of China-Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran and also the CASA-1000 electricity project are the greatest projects. Kyrgyzstan also provides long term scholarships for Afghan students. Great opportunities for trade and regional cooperation exist in Kyrgyzstan.

Dr. Shanthie Mariet D’Souza, Researcher in National University of Singapore:

Afghanistan is on the path of self-sufficiency and should use the regional organizations at its best. She added: I think RECCA is the best opportunity for implementing projects and regional programs in Afghanistan. Further, Afghanistan should work on trust building to become able to implement economic projects like TAPI Gas Pipeline. The other point I want to mention is that Afghanistan should involve the regional organizations in RECCA programs.

Mr. Hasibullah Mowahed, Deputy of Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan:

Afghanistan is a land-locked country, but it has a strategic location and it is a corridor between south Asia and central Asia. Afghanistan is not important just for south Asia and central Asia countries, but it can also be a transit and trade corridor for other countries in the region as well. Afghanistan is the source of water. If we use these resources for power generation, we can generate power and also export it. The other important issue no one mentioned is the issue of investment in Afghanistan. Rich minerals, cheap labor and cheap land are the benefits of investing in Afghanistan.

H.E. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs in his concluding remarks appreciated the presence of all participants and added that: the regional economic cooperation is very crucial for the Unity Government of Afghanistan and is a core issue in foreign policy of our country.

When I began my work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H.E. President ordered us to change our foreign lines of policy from security oriented policy to economic oriented policy. I think the security talks attracted the most attention for the last thirteen years.

I believe our country possesses enormous resources. Afghanistan possesses rich natural resources like oil and gas, but these resources do not alone help Afghanistan to become self-sufficient. Transit is our most priority for which we need hardware and software infrastructure.

Now different perspectives exist. How can we serve our nation without economic growth? Our outlook is for the next twenty or fifteen years. I believe our country possesses enormous resources. Afghanistan possesses rich natural resources like oil and gas, but these resources do not alone help Afghanistan to become self-sufficient. Transit is our most priority for which we need hardware and software infrastructure.

Hardware includes construction of roads and infrastructures. Software could be agreements between countries in the region, tariffs, taxes, trade and transit policies and etc.

Mr. Karzai once again appreciated the presence of guests and their active participation at the end of the conference and concluded the gathering.
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.

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;

The Participants welcomed the continued success of the Heart of Asia Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, and anticipating closer linkages and complementarities between RECCA-VI prioritized projects and the Heart of Asia Istanbul Process;

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);

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;

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;

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;

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;

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;

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;
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;

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.

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;

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;

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;

The participants had a general concurrence on investment priority for 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 that 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;

The participants had also a general concurrence on investment priority projects that are 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;

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;

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 Heart of Asia Istanbul Process.

International financial institutions and development banks are especially called upon to 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.

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.

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.
This dinner banquet was held by Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries with the presence of Mr. Hamayoon Rasa, Afghanistan Minister of Commerce and Industries on the occasion of RECCA VI.
Appreciation ceremony of the active participation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ staff in successful convening of RECCA-VI held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 08 Sep, 2015 under chairmanship of His Excellency Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs with presence of H.E. Nasir Ahmad Andisha, Deputy Foreign Minister for Administrative and Financial Affairs and directors of different departments.

At the outset, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Salahuddin Rabbani talked regarding the importance of RECCA-VI, and said: “Strengthening regional economic, political and security cooperation have close and reciprocal ties with one another and one can’t be achieved without the other one. At the meantime, the successful convening of this conference gave a new promise to the society and has a significant importance on current situation, as well as its successful convening demonstrates the presence of capacity in the diplomacy sphere of the country.”

At the end, award and appreciation letters distributed to those staff members who actively participated in the successful convening of the mentioned Conference.

His Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end appreciated the Economic Cooperation Department personnel for their efforts and awarded the Great Government Medal to Mr. Wahidullah Waissi, Director general of Economic Cooperation Department. First degree letters of appreciation for deputies of this department Mr. Mostainbilah Balagh and Mr. Mohammad Shoaiab Habibi; second degree letters of appreciation to Mr. Ahmad Faheem Hunarwar, Asadullah Hamdard and Mukhtaruddin Nezami; and the third degree letters of appreciation for Miss. Fayezza Sadat, Mr. Abdul Bashir Raufi, Mr. Shah Wali Naseri, Mrs. Farzana Niazi, Mr. Ahmad Helal Atmar, Mr. Ahmad Sadeq Alamyar, Mr. Mohammad Ismail Joya, Mr. Mohammad Zarif Qasimi, Mr. Mohammad Nawid Aniaye and Ali Reza Joya were awarded.
PHOTOS
Sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan