

Statement

**by H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca, ECO Secretary General
at the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference
on Afghanistan (RECCA-VI)**

14 November 2017, Ashgabat

**Distinguished Chairman,
Honourable Ministers and Delegates
Dear Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a great honour for me to represent the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) at the seventh Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for extended invitation to me to participate in this important forum and for the warm hospitality by the host country.

Excellencies

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has been engaged in regional activities sponsored by the Economic Cooperation Organization since its accession to ECO in 1992. Since then ECO and Afghanistan have been cooperating in development programmes. For ECO, a region of diverse membership from South, West and Central Asia and Caucuses, covering an area of 8 million square kilometres connecting China to Europe and Russia to Indian Ocean, Afghanistan is considered as a country of huge potential to offer for regional development programmes. For Afghanistan, with the exception of China, five out of six Afghanistan's neighbours are members of the ECO. This implies that most of the ECO projects have involved Afghanistan as a contributing and beneficiary member country. This also attests to the importance of peace and security in Afghanistan, as well as its economic development and stability for the whole ECO Region. Therefore our leaders from the early years of accession of Afghanistan to ECO accorded high priority to the needs and requirements for a more prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan.

As an Organization dealing with the economic development of a region of over 470 million inhabitants and endowed with vast natural and human resources, the ECO and its Members States

posses great potential for achieving socio-economic development and generating regional economic growth with the direct bearing on the national development programmes of its members, including Afghanistan. Trade promotion, quality management, banking and finance, transport and regional connectivity, agriculture and food security, energy efficiency and environment, tourism, disaster risk reduction, health, and drug trafficking and organized crime are among areas where ECO has developed regional frameworks and networks for cooperation. ECO has also developed Afghanistan-friendly projects, including rail and road transit corridors, and has established a Special Reconstruction Fund for Afghanistan, with a view to assisting this Country in overall efforts to respond to its developmental needs and requirements.

ECO has also proved its credibility as a regional partner for global agenda for helping Afghanistan. We have been in partnership with major UN agencies, as well as other players in the international community in implementation of some projects targeting Afghanistan. In December 2014, ECO successfully completed a 5-year project aimed at fighting drug trafficking from/to Afghanistan sponsored by the European Union. The Member States of the ECO were extended capacity building and

technical support within the framework of the 9.5 million Euro project. As part of the project, a number of measures were adopted to develop and strengthen the capacities of the Member States in tackling the menace of drug trafficking that affects the regional economies, as well as the stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Excellencies

We have developed and adopted our new Vision for the next ten years, which entails re-defining ECO policy towards Afghanistan, with a view to responding more effectively to the emerging needs of this Country.

We will soon organize in December this year the “ECO Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan” with the participation of the ministers of economy and planning of the Member States to discuss and agree on an optimal ECO advocacy programme for Afghanistan for the years to come. It is also evident that success of ECO efforts to bring about economic development for the Region is contingent on the success of the efforts for a more secure and prosperous Afghanistan. ECO, therefore, is always open to cooperate with relevant stakeholders for making partnership for Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Government of Afghanistan of the full support of ECO for the national, regional and global activities aiming at securing higher rate of economic growth for Afghanistan and more prosperity for its people. We also remain ready to share with potential partners from outside the Region our capacities to help implement development-friendly programmes for Afghanistan. Once again I would like to thank to the Turkmenistan Government for hosting this conference.

I Thank you very much for your kind attention.