

Speech of Mr. Roland Albert J. Kobia, EU Special Envoy to Afghanistan
RECCA VII Ministerial Meeting, Ashgabat, 14-15 November 2017

RECCA is about building corridors of trust, networks of mutual interest, and bridges of hope. Obstacles are not natural, topographic or financial. They are human, man-made. What man creates, it can undo it.

The European Union knows the value of economic cooperation for the promotion of peace. EU has been built on ashes of war and on the pillars of economic cooperation and connectivity, free movement of persons, goods, and services. EU proves that economic cooperation can turn countries from war to peace. Prosperity and sustainable economic development is also the guiding principle of the EU Global Strategy (2016) and the Consensus for Development (2017). EU aims to share these benefits and export peace.

During the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan last year, EU brought together 75 countries and 26 international organisations, and USD 15.2 billion were mobilised in support of Afghanistan's development. Hope all pledges will be mobilised soon.

The 28 Ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU Member States had just adopted its new EU-Afghanistan Strategy (Foreign Affairs Council, 16 October 2017) with four priorities: peace, regional stability security; democracy; economic/human development; and migration. Afghanistan and region have therefore the strength of 28 EU countries in their support.

EU also promotes regional economic cooperation through the formats of Heart of Asia-Istanbul – supporting trade, commerce and investment opportunities as confidence building measures - process. These different formats are complementary, serving a purpose to reinforce the regional and international engagement in support of peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. EU will support any format or venue that serves this purpose. EU promotes cooperation and non-competitive interaction of formats.

I represent the EU in a mandate of a EU Special Envoy to Afghanistan. My mission is to promote regional consensus for peace. The EU believes that RECCA is an important platform to promote peace and stability in the region and that the EU has an interest in promoting RECCA priorities.

We need now to move quickly on "implementation" of projects as CBM, to create an enabling environment as factors of peace and regional cooperation. Need to maximise cascading benefits (growth, jobs, investment, and peace). To highlight some of the priorities:

- Bankability of projects;
- A Need to finish the pre-implementation phase
- Mobilisation of capital
- Promotion of investment by private sector

- Development of cross-border markets
- Integrated connectivity
- Offer of alternatives, diversification, competition, in order to reduce dependence]
- Women empowerment as a contribution to development and peace

Security and safety are keys to attract investments and make them viable. We need to mobilise our efforts in fight against terrorism and drugs.

As we are here in the heart of Central Asia today, I would like to underline the pivotal role of the Central Asian countries in maintaining the security and stability in the region. Recall the recent EU-CA Ministerial and the Joint Communiqué adopted, which covers the mobilisation of EU-CA cooperation to ensure regional security and economic development. I thank the Turkmen government for their efforts in support of RECCA and for your hospitality in hosting this important event and co-host Afghanistan.