

**Intervention of Mr. Marcus Potzel, German Federal Foreign Office Director for South Asia, Special Representative of the Federal Government for Afghanistan and Pakistan, at the RECCA VII Conference in Ashgabat on 15 November 2017**

I would like to thank our Turkmen hosts for organizing today's conference. Germany believes RECCA to be an important initiative to promote good neighborly relations and regional economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its partners in the region. Other gatherings will follow to complement, such as the Heart of Asia (HoA) conference in Baku and the meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) in Oslo, co-chaired by Afghanistan and Germany.

Today's meeting offers the opportunity to take stock of the progress that has been reached since the last RECCA meeting in Kabul two years ago and to look at the way ahead.

It is encouraging to see that some of the big infrastructure projects - like CASA 1000 and the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India)-gas pipeline have been making some much needed progress during the last two years, but we all know that there are still many challenges ahead.

One of these challenges definitely is the difficult security situation in Afghanistan. Security and prosperity are interdependent. Stability in Afghanistan - in the heart of this region - is a precondition for prosperity of the region as a whole.

Apart from the great infrastructure projects - which no doubt are important for further regional integration - smaller projects with quick impact results for the benefit of the peoples should also not be neglected.

Germany welcomes today's Business Forum „Economic Empowerment of Women", thanks to the MFA and MoTC, as a useful means to bring in participants from the private sector in order to meet the challenges of the future.

I hope that this Conference will send out a powerful signal to the peoples of the region. Today's conference once again shows that there is no shortage of ideas. They now must be put into practice.