Speaking Points

of

Eng. Aman Ghalib
Dy. Mini Energy
Minister of Energy and Water
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

At

High-Level Seminar: “Accelerating Sustainable Energy for All in Landlocked Developing Countries through Innovative Partnerships”

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1. At the outset, I would like to thank the organisers of this Seminar for inviting me to speak on the important subject of achieving sustainable energy for all in the landlocked developing countries.

2. I am happy to share with you our experiences in developing our power infrastructure in Afghanistan under some of the most challenging circumstances. We have to deal with extremely complex issues in providing sustainable power to our people and our issues go much more beyond the issues related to landlocked countries.

3. All of us are aware that the landlocked countries of the world face unique challenges in developing their infrastructure. The difficulties caused by not having direct access to sea ports take the project costs to prohibitive levels, which makes some of our projects financially unviable.

4. Even though Afghanistan does not have direct access to the sea, we are fortunate to be Land Connected. We have a strong road network, which is well connected with our neighboring countries. As a matter of fact, Afghanistan plays an important role in connecting Central Asia with South Asia.

5. I am happy to inform you that we have made significant progress in developing our energy infrastructure since the last United Nations Conference on LLDCs held here in November 2014. We have formulated a long-term power development plan that is both pragmatic and achievable. This plan has
been formulated after careful consideration of the difficulties and barriers that we face in developing our infrastructure.

6. The Ministry of Energy and Water’s plan for infrastructure development in Afghanistan covers both new projects and renovation, rehabilitation and modernisation of the old inefficient projects.

7. MEW has successfully rehabilitated a number of old dams and associated irrigation projects. Notable amongst these are Darunta, Naghlu, and Kajaki Phase-1. We have also completed the construction of Salma Dam. We have planned construction of 21 new dams, out of which six dams are ready for construction.

8. As regards power generation projects, we have recently commissioned the first phase of Salma hydroelectric power project, which is generating around 22 MW. The rehabilitation work of 18.5MW Kajaki Phase 2 was completed last month. This will increase the capacity of the power plant to 51.5MW.

9. We have formulated and announced the National Energy Policy (NEP), which lays emphasis on development of power generation resources of medium to large size.

10. We have realised that the most optimal and effective solution for providing power to our rural population is development of our renewable energy resources. Afghanistan has significant renewable energy potential with 300 sunny days a year for solar energy development and 158 GW of wind energy potential.

11. I would like to emphasise that development of renewable energy sources is an important part of our National Electricity Policy. Solar energy is being considered by us as one of the key elements of Afghanistan’s energy security initiative. In this regard, MEW has announced a National Renewable Energy Policy and demonstrated strong commitment for its implementation. MEW has also announced solar, wind, mini hydro and bio-mass power projects aggregating to 100MW.
12. I had mentioned earlier that Afghanistan is playing a critical role in connecting Central Asia with South Asia. I would like to mention about the CASA-1000 project in this regard. Afghanistan is not only a major partner in this noteworthy project but would also be providing the transit transmission route for supplying power from the central Asian countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to south Asia. This would be a path breaking project for inter-regional cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia and Afghanistan is expected to get 300MW of power from this project.

13. The power projects planned by the Government of Afghanistan, once completed, will provide water for irrigation of thousands of hectares of land and will generate hundreds of megawatt hours of electricity that would directly and indirectly benefit our people.

14. While Afghanistan has achieved notable progress in the last few years in implementing infrastructure projects, much remains to be done to realise our dream of becoming self-reliant to meet our energy and water needs.

15. We recognise that building the energy and water infrastructure in the country is by no means a small and easy task. We face several challenges in achieving our objectives and goals. We lack institutional capacity, our people do not have adequate education and many do not possess requisite skills. The security situation in the country continues to remain fragile. However, we remain steadfast and focused to develop our infrastructure.

16. We are reorganising our power and water sectors to make these more efficient and responsive. We are laying emphasis on capacity building of our people and our institutions.

17. Our demand for electricity and water is growing at a fast pace. We have to narrow the gap between supply and demand. Long term sustainability of our power sector would largely depend on our ability to become self-reliant in power generation. We import large quantities of power today. This exposes the country to significant uncertainties and financial risks.
18. We have, therefore, recognised that there is no substitute for domestic power generation resources. These resources would make Afghanistan self-reliant for its power needs in the long term. Power and water projects built in the country are our national assets and we need to develop and build these so that the entire country could be justifiably proud of our achievements.

19. In addition to the several challenges mentioned by me before, we also face problems in importing goods and equipment to our country due to multiple border crossings and complicated transit procedures. The transit charges in some cases are unreasonably high and the long delays in getting the transit clearances impact timely commissioning of our generation and transmission projects. I strongly believe that the international community has a critical role in resolving the issues related to transit policies and cross border trade for the LLDCs.

20. As per the World Bank data, the LLDCs pay more than twice that of the transit countries for imports and exports. The LLDCs also have a right to develop their economies with project costs that are reasonable and comparable with the rest of the world.

21. I therefore, strongly urge the international community to support the LLDCs in achieving a balance with respect to the international infrastructure costs. I hope that the outcomes of this seminar would go a long way in overcoming our problems.

I thank you all for your attention.