

Statement by Mr. K. L. Thapar

Chairman, Asian Institute of Transport Development

**THE HIGH-LEVEL EURO-ASIA REGIONAL MEETING ON IMPROVING
COOPERATION ON TRANSIT, TRADE FACILITATION
AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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It gives me immense satisfaction to share with you the contribution of the Asian Institute of Transport Development on issues relating to transit, trade facilitation and sustainable development. The Institute has promoted the concept of regional transport corridors, undertaken inter-country studies, provided training to professionals from landlocked and developing countries and that too free of cost.

The Institute has actively advocated and worked towards evolving and implementation of helpful and simple transit and trade facilitation policies and measures and highlighted their key role in poverty alleviation. Based on empirical studies, it has highlighted the need for making rational intermodal choices that would promote sustainable development in the world.

Encouragingly, these efforts have borne fruit. The concept of corridor-based development has received acceptance. Additional seaports have been nominated for the Exim trade of landlocked countries. Third country seaports have also been agreed for this purpose. In this regard, I refer to nomination of seaports in Bangladesh for Exim trade for Nepal transiting through India. Transport professionals from Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan are being brought into the mainstream of knowledge and realms of technology.

The Institute continues to assist Afghanistan in development of its inter-country transit routes, rail network, dry ports and importantly trade facilitation measures. It is for the first time in history, Afghanistan has a choice of alternate land-cum-sea routes for its Exim trade. Our interactions have brought to fore two important maxims which have been profoundly articulated by the President of Afghanistan. In his words – geography is not our destiny. In matter of transit, sovereign reciprocity is the cardinal principle.

The Institute has been articulating the liberalized trade is an important instrument of economic development and poverty alleviation. The Vienna Programme of Action is also based on this premise. Regrettably, this premise is coming under threat with protectionist sentiments. The Institute feels that barriers to trade and transit are an invitation to poverty and instability in the world.