

Statement by  
His Excellency Mr. Humayoon Rasaw, Minister of Commerce and Industries at 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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Your Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and Head of Delegates,  
Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Good Morning!**

It is a great pleasure to address this High – Level Euro – Asia Regional Meeting on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I would like to extend my gratitude for the organizers of this meeting – the Government of Vietnam, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Co – Organizers and all Stakeholders.

**Excellencies,**

Afghanistan is reviving its role as part of the historic Silk Road and transforming itself into a roundabout between two emerging economic hot spots, connecting Central Asia to South Asia for further regional cooperation, energy transformation, trade facilitation, and improving transit. In this respect we have already taken some very remarkable steps by either initiating or completing a number of highly important regional connectivity projects. Among others the most important are regional energy integration projects, including the CASA1000 electricity transmission project, the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) natural gas pipeline, and the TUTAP (Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan) electricity transmission line. These projects help realize the notion of One Belt One Road more effectively.

Today, I am pleased to report that the implementation of TAPI project has started; the Chabahar Port agreement was signed; the first cargo train fully stocked with goods from eastern China arrived at Hairatan Rail Station – Northern Afghanistan; many infrastructure and energy projects have reached to their implementation phase. This has been the result of remarkable and tremendous efforts of all government officials, policy makers, business community, civil society and other key stakeholders of the Afghan government involved in improving cooperation on transit, trade facilitation and sustainable development for better future.

**Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Our government has been actively working on reducing costs and time required to transport and transit products by developing alternate transit routes such as Chabahar Port, Lapis Lazuli Corridor and Air Corridors to the world's markets. Fortunately, the Lapis Lazuli Corridor was inaugurated last year which will ensure Afghanistan land

access to Europe through Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

Moreover, to further simplify, harmonize and streamline border crossing and transit procedures and meet the multi-lateral trading system standards, on 29 July, 2016 Afghanistan became 164<sup>th</sup> member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In order to increase the effectiveness of transit procedures and benefit both our neighboring Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and transit countries, Afghanistan ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. We strongly believe that the WTO rule based platform can serve to promote greater regional trade with our regional partners and facilitate transit for our landlocked economy. We encourage other nations, in the region and globally, to join the multi-lateral trading system and take advantage of its privileges.

It is indeed a pleasure to learn that the TFA has entered into force. We believe full implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement will reduce global trade costs by an average of 14.3%

### **Ladies and Gentlemen!**

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan strategies its National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) with the objectives of stability, regional cooperation and sustainable development. One of the key objectives addressed by this plan is strategic investment in infrastructure and technology; backed by a robust and well-regulated financial sector that can channel money to where it can best be spent.

As part of my concluding remarks I would like to reiterate that improving cooperation on trade and transit issues should be tackled and addressed at all levels from an organization to country and to global levels. I believe that the only way to achieve this goal is to separate trade and economic cooperation from political agendas.

I hope our today's discussion and elaborations contribute to further improvement of the transit, trade and SDGs 2030 in the Euro-Asia region.

Thank you for your time and attention!