

**Country Statement at Ministerial Conference
of the Geneva Conference**

(28 November, 2018; Geneva)

H.E. Dr Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

H.E. Ms Rosemary DiCarlo, the Under Secretary-General of the United Nations

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

At the outset, I convey deep appreciation of the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations for the excellent arrangements in organizing this conference. The enthusiastic presence of the international community is testament of our collective and enduring commitment towards Afghanistan. This Conference, organised mid-way during the decade of transformation 2015-2024, is an opportunity to take stock of the progress made and plan for securing the future of the people of Afghanistan marked by peace, security, self-reliance and connectivity.

Excellencies,

It is true that progress in Afghanistan has not always been as desired. While there are continuing challenges of security, peace and development, there has also been considerable progress in the last 17 years - especially in promoting education and health care, protecting the rights of women, children and the marginalised; securing lives; improving governance and reforms; generating livelihood; moving Afghanistan towards self reliance. Democracy is taking deeper roots. The enthusiastic participation of the people of Afghanistan in the Parliamentary elections held last month despite terrorist violence, reflect their desire and faith in democratic governance and rejection of forces that foment and spread terror and violence. Presidential elections scheduled next year would strengthen democratic institutions further.

Excellencies,

We strongly condemn the mindless terrorist violence against the innocent Afghan population. The people of Afghanistan yearn for peace, security and stability. New opportunities are emerging from the renewed efforts being made in this regard. India supports all efforts for a political settlement in Afghanistan which are inclusive, promotes unity, peace, security, democracy and builds a self-reliant and prosperous Afghanistan. It is important that all such efforts for peace and reconciliation should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled. The Afghan side should have greater responsibility of running and managing its own affairs. International community need to continue to support the people and the Government in their efforts so that there can be enduring peace, stability and end of terrorist violence.

Excellencies,

Economic reconstruction and development is a key pillar for enduring peace and stability in Afghanistan. India has been engaged in a development partnership with Afghanistan that is based on the objectives of building capacities for governance; training human resource; creating infrastructure; enhancing connectivity; promoting trade and investment. A robust bilateral development cooperation dialogue is in place to ensure that these are in consonance with National Peace and Development Framework and National Priority Programmes of Afghanistan.

India has committed over US\$ 3 billion towards economic development, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and capacity building in Afghanistan. After a successful implementation of a large number of projects, including the Afghan-Indian Friendship Dam in Herat and Afghan National Parliament building in Kabul, we embarked upon 'New Development Partnership' last year. This ushers in the next generation development projects as per the priorities of the Government and the people of Afghanistan. Under this:

116 High Impact Community Development Projects are being implemented in 31 provinces of Afghanistan, including in the areas of education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro-hydropower, sports infrastructure, administrative infrastructure.

Construction of Shahtoot dam to augment the drinking water supply to Kabul city as well as facilitate irrigation.

Construction of low cost housing project in Nangarhar Province to facilitate resettlement of returning Afghan refugees,.

Road connectivity to Band-e-Amir in Bamyan Province will be strengthened to promote tourism to the National Park and its economic development

Human Resource capacity building programmes expanded with over 3500 annual scholarship and training slots for Afghan students, officials, security personnel in Indian institutions. This year a scholarship programme for the next of the kin of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) martyrs and exclusive training programme for women officers of ANDSF.

We are sharing our experiences in administrative reforms, civil service recruitment and training; public finance management; e-governance; training of electoral officials; promotion of online education.

Support has been extended to build women self-help groups.

Management of natural resources through application of remote sensing technology.

Building reliable connectivity for land locked Afghanistan is key component of our regional partnership. Chabahar Port project and direct India-Afghanistan Air-Freight Corridor have been successfully operationalised.

In recognition of the importance of private enterprise and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the economic recovery process, India has been, for the last two years, providing a immensely successful business platform for private business enterprises of the two countries to cooperate on investments and business promotion. The India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Shows held in cooperation with the US and Afghanistan in New Delhi and Mumbai in 2017 and 2018, respectively, have generated a cumulative business propositions in excess of US\$ 500 million amongst private businesses of the two countries. Concomitantly, our bilateral trade last year rose by over 40% to cross the figure of US\$ 1.1 billion.

Excellencies,

No doubt there is much more work that remains to be done. This requires continued commitment and sharing of responsibilities by the Government of Afghanistan and all its international partners to build a political, social economic environment enabling

Afghanistan to strengthen peace, security and sustainable development. This conference is adopting a Mutual Accountability Framework. It is setting ambitious scales, standards and short term deliverables. It has to be our collective endeavour and commitment to support the Government of Afghanistan as it takes the responsibility to achieve the same. We have to be mindful that support for economic recovery would need to be continued after political settlement is achieved. Thus, we need to look at a mechanism for the same. Also, for sustainable peace, prosperity and stability it is equally important that the international community continue to support the Government, the people and the National Defence Forces of Afghanistan to combat terror and violence imposed on them and ensure that verifiable actions are taken to end safe havens and sanctuaries outside Afghanistan.

Excellencies, I once again thank you for this opportunity and reiterate India's continued commitment to work with all of you to ensure that Afghanistan emerge a peaceful, secure, stable and self-reliant nation.

Thank you.
