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Statement by H.E. Halil Ibrahim Akca
Secretary General
of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
at
Special Segment of
59th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Vienna, 14-16 March 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Executive Director,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Heads of Delegation,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a matter of privilege for me to attend this Special Segment of the 59th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs that would finalize the preparations for upcoming “United Nations General Assembly Special Session on World Drug Problem”. I would like to thank all the stakeholders for contributing into this long process of preparation for UNGASS. I would also like to particularly express my gratitude to UNODC for its important role in leading this preparatory process.

Mr. Chairman,

As UN General Assembly Resolution 69/200 rightly acknowledged, regional organizations are among constituencies of the international community that need to contribute into preparatory process for the UN Special Session on Drug Problem. ECO is among the most relevant regions as and when drug related challenges are discussed. ECO Region, with a territory of eight million square kilometers and with more than 450 million inhabitants, is one of the most drug-affected regions in the world. The major global trafficking routes, namely, the Southern route, the Northern route and the Balkan route originate and pass through the ECO Region where more than 95% of the global opium as well as 66% of the global heroin seizures are taken place.

The growing problem of the illicit trafficking within the Region convinced ECO leaders to accord priority to the necessity of removal of this

problem. That is why the ECO Secretariat and ECO membership have been active in the global campaign against drugs and its related organized crime. We hope that international community and the United Nations also acknowledge the ECO's relevance and its needs and requirements in this regard as well as the imperative of ECO's continued involvement in the drug-related future actions.

The review of the implementation of the "Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem" which is supposed to be done by the UNGASS and the set of recommendations to emerge in the Special Session will be of great importance for ECO and its 10 Member States. The long-standing and emerging challenges in countering the drug production, trafficking and consumption have seriously affected the capacities of the countries in realizing their socio-economic development programmes. This requires measures to strike an effective balance between supply and demand reductions, and to address the key causes and consequences of the world drug problem, taking into account the principle of common and shared responsibility.

This is why ECO Member States, that are collectively striving for enhanced economic development, give due attention to the need for addressing the challenges associated with drug problem. ECO Member States have also realized that success of collective efforts to develop nationally and regionally relies on the requisite preconditions of peace and stability in the ECO Region. Accordingly, we believe that any international drug policy needs to be developed in the overarching context of "economic development" of the affected countries and regions.

This also seems to be true, as indicated in the Report of the UNODC Executive Director to the UNGASS (Document UNODC/ED/2016/1, dated 6 February 2016), that efforts to counter drug problem will be reinforced if level of socio-economic development of the countries and regions are lifted up, including through lowering the rates of

unemployment, inequality and social exclusion as well as by availability of wider alternative livelihoods. This requires that the international policy on drug problem that will be emerging in the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in April this year shall be paralleled with the enhanced contribution by the international community as well as donor community into the socio-economic development of the affected countries and regions.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

ECO has been pursuing a range of activities through intra-regional, inter-regional and multilateral partnerships which, in one way or another, contributed towards the realization of the objectives of the 2009 Political Declaration and the Plan of Action. Those activities have dealt with demand and supply reduction measures; training and networking; data collection and evaluation; law enforcement, judicial, anti-trafficking and anti-corruption cooperation; as well as awareness-raising.

We have specifically conducted projects aiming at information and data exchange on drug situation in the Region; establishing a computerized network on drug supply reduction; upgrading the national legislative/regulatory frameworks for combating drug production and trafficking in conformity with UN Drug Conventions; and networking of focal-points and liaison officers on police/law enforcement for organized crime, terrorism and human trafficking matters.

A very important EU-ECO partnership was also implemented in the last five years, targeting regional challenges and needs associated with the illegal drug trafficking from and to Afghanistan. ECOPOL, the Police of the Organization, is in the pipeline. A regional judicial cooperation mechanism is also under negotiations that would in one way or another abet the implementation of 2009 Plan of Action in our Region. In addition, the ECO

is exploring with potential international partners for possible partnership on alternative development initiatives and capacity building for Afghanistan as given prominence in UN Political Declaration and the Plan of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Participants,

We believe that our Region deserves more attention by United Nations and international community when drug control policies and programmes are crafted. Similarly, we also believe that our Organization is the right place in the Region where global partnership can be translated into regional measures. ECO enjoys rich experience in cooperative arrangements and owns established capacities and regional networks to assist implementation of correlated drug-development policies and projects. I seize this opportunity to express the ECO's interest and readiness to serve as a regional partner and coordinating agency for international initiatives, including in the post UNGASS era.

In conclusion, I wish this Meeting fruitful outcome to be submitted to the UNGASS in April where the global community is expected to agree on concerted actions to tackle, more comprehensively and effectively, the drug problem.

Thank you for your attention