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Statement by
H.E. Mr. Halil Ibrahim Akca
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Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)
at
"International Conference on Security and Sustainable
Development in Central Asia: Shared past and Common Future,
Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Mutual
Prosperity "

10 November 2017
Samarkand-Republic of Uzbekistan

**Honorable Minister Saidova;
Excellencies; Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is a distinct privilege for me to address this important forum on behalf of the Economic Cooperation Organization. At the outset, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the people and the Government of Republic of Uzbekistan for warm hospitality and excellent arrangements in this beautiful and historical city of Samarkand. I am also grateful to the United Nations for its contributions into this timely and important regional initiative.

Excellencies,

“Central Asia” is significant in different terms. It enjoys an incomparable geographical location; an abundance of rich and varied energy resources as well as human resources. In the recent years, Central Asian countries have made remarkable achievements in their attempts for more conducive economic policy environment and better performance. These have resulted in successful economic liberalization and market reforms as well as more investment-friendly climate. Republic of Uzbekistan is among success stories in Central Asia and beyond.

Dear Participants,

In the last 26 years, Central Asian countries have been playing important roles in Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). ECO Region includes all 5 Central Asian countries along with 5 more countries from Caucasus, West and South Asia, namely, Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. The core objective of the Organization is to upgrade welfare and prosperity for our people and

enhance sustainable development in our region; quite the same as the main topic of this important gathering today.

There is strong conviction within ECO that the more our region experiences sustained economic growth and sustainable development, the less it will suffer from menaces of insecurity, drugs and organized crimes. We are pursuing this noble objective through realizing regional cooperation and harmonization across a wide spectrum of areas and sectors. We are very much relying on continued inputs by our Central Asian Member States to our region-wide projects and activities.

ECO Member States, including our Central Asian countries, are now implementing “ECO Vision 2025”, an upstream roadmap for our Organization, aimed to promote global, regional and national targets, including those related to sustainable development. The “ECO Vision 2025”, which is based on principles of sustainability, involves implementation of regional programmes and projects in areas such as intra and inter- regional connectivity; trade promotion and facilitation; energy efficiency; and tourism, which are planned to upgrade human development, social welfare and economic productivity of the countries. This is why we firmly believe that ECO agenda is directly and indirectly promotes the prosperity and sustainability in Central Asia and its individual countries.

Dear Participants,

In line with the priority given to Central Asia by ECO, our Organization is quite vigilant about Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is one important member of the Economic Cooperation Organization. Five out of six Afghanistan’s neighbors are ECO Member States. This attests to the importance of peace and security in Afghanistan

as well as its economic development and stability for the whole ECO Region.

This is why our leaders from the early years of accession of Afghanistan to ECO accorded high priority to the needs and requirements for a more prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan when charting regional arrangements for economic cooperation and coordination.

We will soon organize in December this year the “ECO Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan” with the participation of the ministers of economy and planning of the Member States to discuss and agree on an optimal ECO advocacy programme for Afghanistan for the years to come. It is also evident that success of ECO efforts to bring about economic development for the Region is contingent on the success of the efforts for a more secure and prosperous Afghanistan. ECO, therefore, is always open to cooperate with relevant stakeholders for making partnership for Afghanistan.

Excellencies,

Central Asia is not only a geographical and geopolitical, but also a single cultural and civilized space. Nations living in the region are bound by common spiritual values, similarity of national traditions and customs, and common historical past.

Building on the rich cultural values and traits of this Region, we are very much hopeful that collective and individual efforts by all regional countries would promote sustainable development, peace and stability in Central Asia. Once again I would like to thank the host country Uzbekistan for inviting us to this important forum and the excellent hospitality extended to me and my delegation.

Thank you for your attention.