

**Statement by H.E Dr. Nasser Ahmad Noor, Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at the 29th Meeting of ECO
Regional Planning Council (29th RPC)**

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ECO Secretariat, Tehran - Iran

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Excellencies,

Your Excellency Dr. Soleimanpour, Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization, Honorable Heads of Delegation, Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am glad to be here among my colleagues and representatives of esteemed Member States at 29th Meeting of Regional Planning Council to discuss the annual performance and important issues related to ECO activities and review the areas that require more cooperation and planning.

I appreciate His Excellency Mr. Secretary General for his comprehensive statement on activities and achievements of our organization during the last year. I wish the success and achievements of Mr. Secretary General and ECO shall continue in the next year.

ECO has been playing an important role in enhancing the economic and regional integrity and promoting the socio-economic development in the Member States.

Such cooperation also plays important roles in strengthening mutual trust and ties which are vital elements of a secure, prosperous and united International Community.

Afghanistan as an active member of this organization tries its best to take constructive steps along with its brother and friend countries to implement ECO's goals, agreements, projects and ECO Vision for 2025.

During the year 2018, we have reached noticeable milestones in our national achievement reports including:

1. The Afghanistan Railway authority (ARA) become an independent body, and the Afghanistan railway law is endorsed and ratified.
2. Agreement on the implementation of project, financing, design and construction of the Mazar-sharif -Herat railway (657 KM) has been signed. Based on the agreement, an International consortium will be established to attract investment, funds from the international financial institutions with the support of World Bank, the technical and economic studies of the project is ongoing.
3. Torghondi cross -border station with the length of 13 Km has been constructed and inaugurated.
4. Aqena cross-border station with the length of 10 km reconstruction work has been contracted.
5. Feasibly studies of the second part of KTAI corridor from shabarghan to Herat, 460 km has been completed.
6. The construction work of third portion of Khawaf - Herat railway which is 62 km and funded by Islamic Republic of Iran is about to complete soon. Survey and feasibility studies of the forth segment of Khawaf -Herat, 87 km has been completed, the first phase of the project ,43 km is under the procurement process, funded by the Afghanistan Government, the construction work will begin soon. The phase two of the project, 44 km which will be finance by the Italian government as a soft loan. The procurement and construction work will be kick-off in 2019.
7. Implementing a custom joint operation (Clearance) mechanism with the central Asian neighboring and later extending it to other countries.
8. According to 2018 World Bank doing business indicators (DBI) report, Afghanistan overall rating has been improved compared to the year 2017.

Afghanistan attaches great importance to the vital projects such as TAPI, CASA-1000, the Five-Nation Railway, *Lapis Lazuli* Corridor and KTAI Corridor, because these projects have a immense effect on inter-regional connectivity and areas of trade, transport and economic development of the countries of the region.

by recognizing and eliminating challenges like weak infrastructures, lack of technical knowledge and discordant economic policies, we together can witness the growth and improvement of regional trade and socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan and the region.

As His Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has always emphasized during COM Meetings, achieving tangible benefits in the fields of trade and other forms of economic activities requires lasting focus on overcoming existing challenges throughout the region.

Terrorism, violent fundamentalism and narcotics are serious threat to peace, security and sustainable development in our region. It is essential to cooperate with each other and combat these threats and eradicate the suitable ground for terrorism in order to provide favorable condition to cooperate.

Once again I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the ECO Secretariat for devising the ECO Advocacy Program for Afghanistan (EAPA) and also thank the esteemed Member States for supporting this program. I do hope that with cooperation of all Member States we can fulfill the goals of EAPA, implement more projects in Afghanistan and encourage regional investments.

At the end I avail myself of this opportunity and reassure Afghanistan's full commitment to the principles and objectives.

I am sure that our collective and synchronized efforts will yield notable results.

H.E. Mr. Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Economy and head of our delegation, is still on his way due to some airline problems and inshallah will soon join us. inadequate and lack of flights and airlines among Members States forces us to use longer distances to reach each other. This is a proof that we are still far away from desirable state and must work harder and use the potentials of ECO in order to get closer to each other, facilitate the transit of goods and passengers and relations of our people among our countries.

Thanks