

“Unofficial Translation”

**The Message of H.E. Hamid Karzai the Honorable President of the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan to the ECO Ministerial Meeting of Commerce**

Your Excellency Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization
Excellencies Ministers of Commerce of ECO
Honorable Delegates from ECO Member States
Valued Guests
Distinguished Participants

I'm very pleased to meet you in Afghanistan, and I bid welcome to all you attending in the ECO Ministerial Meeting of Commerce. I hope your consultations and negotiations within this very important meeting could strengthen our cooperation and bring us fresher ways to further integrate our nations.

As you are aware, six years have passed since the last ministerial meeting of commerce of ECO in Istanbul. In the course of six years, our region and the world have undergone remarkable changes and faced various challenges such as global financial problems, regional political upheavals, devastating natural disasters, cross border crimes, arms and drug smuggling, increasing degradation of the environment which all have influenced the life of the human beings in our region and the world. In order to succeed to combat these challenges, we need to move hand in hand and pool our human resource and potentials cooperatively. I believe that ECO could establish a proper framework for fostering cooperation required for such an endeavor to combat common challenges.

ECO has always been viewed by Afghanistan as one of the key regional cooperation organizations and wishes to play an influential, active role in the development and to strengthening of this organization. The area under the territory of ECO is the habitation of four hundred million people who are talented, diligent and capable. This area possesses rich natural resources which could shape a promising future for the current generations and hundreds to come. Cultural commonalities in such a vast area are among other factors which could awaken our undiscovered talents and cause a huge spiritual and material movement in the region. Therefore, all these dreams and aspirations will not come true unless we seek our welfare and happiness in the welfare and happiness of one another and assist each other in the quest for peace, stability, headway and combating challenges.

Excellencies;

Afghanistan and its people, who have been the victims to violence, war and foreign interventions for three decades, now are fully determined to move towards peace, internal stability and strengthening close and friendly ties with neighboring states and other countries of the globe. We believe that the most effective way to combat internal and regional conflicts is via understanding, negotiations, cooperation and reciprocal good intention. With holding such a strong belief, we expect our friends to assist us in our efforts to consolidate peace and fight against deviations. There is no doubt that a peaceful Afghanistan could be great asset for the region and the whole world. The central location of Afghanistan which acts as a connecting link in the region could greatly benefit our neighbors and nations of this region. We expect ECO States to address the investment and commercial opportunities in our country. We are looking forward to a day when the gates of investment and trade could be wide open among ECO States and all tariff and non tariff barriers could be removed to facilitate the work of traders and investors. We expect that ECOTA could be sooner put into effect to actualize the idea of ECO Free Trade Zone. We also wish to see the transit and energy lines in ECO States connected as soon as possible and the intraregional trade increased to the maximum possible volume.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, while wishing for the realization of these dreams, I extend my gratitude for attending this meeting and ask the Almighty God to grant peace, prosperity and welfare to our nations.