

Statement by HE. Mohammad Kabir Farahi,
Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of Afghanistan,
At the 15th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting,
Madrid, November 29-30, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

It is a great honor for me to represent Afghanistan in this Ministerial Council meeting. At the outset, I would like to join with the previous speakers in extending our appreciation to the Foreign Minister of Spain and the OSCE Chairman-in Office, His Excellency Miguel Angel Moratinos, and the OSCE Secretariat for their warm hospitality and excellent organization of this important event.

Afghanistan attaches great importance to its partnership with the OSCE and we are very keen to learn and benefit from the best ideas and practices of this organization in voluntarily implementing its commitments.

Afghanistan shares not only a long border with three OSCE Participating states in Central Asia, but mutual concern and interest in terms of security and stability and economic development in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

As a result of decades of conflict and violence, six years ago Afghanistan was a safe haven for terrorists, and territory with no state institutions, nearly one fifth of the population was either refugee or internally displaced.

Fortunately, in recent years, we succeeded in rebuilding our state institutions, now Afghanistan has a progressive Constitution, elected President and Parliament with considerable number of women, and Supreme Court. The presence of tens political parties, more than 300 publications, 12 private televisions and tens of radio stations throughout the country have made Afghanistan one of the most liberal environment in the region. 85 percent of the population has access to the basic health services and the maternal mortality has been reduced by 40 thousands just this year. More than six million students are attending schools and universities and five million Afghan refugees have returned to the country.

In the security area , we have increased our efforts to strengthen Afghan National army and police. By the end of March next year, Afghanistan will have 70 thousands National army and serious efforts are continuing to increased the number and capacity of Police forces.

These are Mr. Chairman, just a few examples of our accomplishments, which have been achieved with the support and assistance of the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite these achievements, terrorism, narcotics, weak state institutions and underdevelopment are the main challenges that we are facing. Terrorists rely on brutal acts aimed at undermining the security of our people and deterring the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan.

I would like to emphasize, that we are the prime victims of terrorism and this menace has never been a homegrown phenomenon in Afghanistan. The ongoing tension in our southern neighbor, has clearly showed the gravity of terrorism and extremism in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

Narcotics is another major threat which undermines the security and stability of Afghanistan and the region. There is a deep linkage between the production and trafficking of drugs and the financing of terrorist activities.

Afghanistan has adopted its National counter-narcotics strategy and we are committed to rid this menace from Afghanistan. In our view, a comprehensive and coordinated approach in providing alternative livelihood, rural development, poppy eradication and interdiction of traffickers will be vital in fighting the drugs issue.

At the same time, the enhancing of border management cooperation between Afghanistan its neighbors , will be also very important in disrupting illegal cross-border trafficking of narcotics and precursors, as well as other criminal activities in the region.

We strongly believe that the adoption of Ministerial specific Decision in Madrid on the OSCE engagement with Afghanistan, will be a very significant step forward in fostering co-operation between the OSCE and Afghanistan in addressing the existing threats and challenges.

In our firm view, a stable and prosperous Afghanistan will play a major role in promotion of regional economic cooperation. We are determined to realize Afghanistan as a potential land-bridge and facilitator of trade and transportation between Central Asia and South Asia, as well as other regions and make our country as a “win-win” case for all our regional and international partners.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan continues to struggle with legacies of three decades of conflict and emergence of the new challenges. As such, it will not be able to deal with these problems on its own. Therefore, the long, sustained and adequate support of the international community is vital for us. In this context, the assistance in enhancing the capacity of our national army and police, as well as development and employment opportunities will be a pre-condition for long-term stability and security in Afghanistan.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me extend our great appreciation to the OSCE Participating states for their continuous support and commitment to Afghanistan, as expressed in the statements of many delegations during this OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid.

Thank you, very much.