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STATEMENT
AFGHANISTAN

BY
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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

AT THE
24th MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING
OF THE
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE
(OSCE)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Honorable Chairman,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all,

Afghanistan attaches great importance to the role of the OSCE in helping to advance progress in a number of important areas that are of crucial importance for ensuring a more peaceful and secure global landscape.

As an Asian Partner for Co-operation, Afghanistan welcomes the opportunity to participate in this prestigious event.

Mr. Chairman,
Security is a fundamental right of all peoples, and a strategic imperative for ensuring peaceful, stable and prosperous societies.

In this context, it goes without saying that this forum has proven its effectiveness in fostering constructive dialogue and co-operation within the OSCE region and beyond to overcome challenges from which no country or region is immune.

Needless to say, international terrorism remains a daunting challenge confronting all countries and a phenomenon that we, in Afghanistan are battling each and every day. Our forces risk their lives on a daily basis to protect our nation and the rest of the international community from several terrorist groups.

These include the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Al Qaeda, ISIS, as well as their affiliated regional and transnational groups. The war against terrorism and extremism has been a tremendous burden on our forces, society, and economy. Yet, our struggle against these perils continues with utmost resolve and determination.

Seventeen years have passed since the international community joined us in our long-standing fight against terrorism. Over this period of time, we were able to make important progress across the social, political and economic spheres – all of which have profoundly impacted the lives of our people in a positive way and set us on the path of self-reliance.

Nevertheless, we fully recognize that the strategic objective of fully defeating terrorism has yet to be realized by us and our many friends, partners and allies in the international community. To this end, Afghanistan has been crystal clear in asserting that defeating terrorism in our country and our neighborhood will not be achieved unless the fundamental drivers of extremism, in the form of terrorist safe-havens and sanctuaries beyond our borders, are adequately addressed.

We are confident that, based on its rich experience in fostering mutually beneficial dialogue and co-operation on common challenges, the OSCE can serve as an excellent platform for facilitating progress on many important fronts.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past seventeen years, the Taliban have created an enabling environment for the presence and malicious activities of their affiliate groups, including ISIS, as well as for the flourishing drug trade. The production of illicit opium has substantially increased in comparison to 2016 levels. The majority of the narcotic drugs are cultivated and processed in areas controlled by the Taliban.

Revenues from narcotics finance terrorism, as the Taliban are said to be earning some \$200 million annually from drug production and trafficking. Hence, the need for increased efforts in combatting the problem of narcotics drugs, in all its aspects and on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility, cannot be overstated.

We believe that an increased role of the OSCE can prove essential in helping to reverse the tide against the problem of narcotic drugs and we look forward to increased collaboration on this issue and in related fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The security and sustainable development of Afghanistan and Central Asia are intertwined. Over the past two years, regional connectivity has witnessed continuing progress. Our trade with Central Asian states has expanded significantly, as we have signed with them many bilateral agreements to facilitate cross-border trade, transit, and investment.

The recent Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and RECCA Ministerial Conferences in Baku and Ashgabat, respectively, reaffirmed a regional commitment to the implementation of these projects, including the Lapis Lazuli Route Agreement with four OSCE participating States: Turkmenistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In this connection, I would like to thank Secretary General Thomas Greminger for his continued support to the RECCA process and its proposed regional projects.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE can play an important role in our endeavors to counter the security challenges posed by terrorism and illicit drugs, while backing our efforts to achieve economic integration in our wider region. In this context, we appreciate OSCE's continued assistance in security and border management capacity building for our officials. We strongly encourage OSCE to expand its co-operation with Afghanistan in the key areas of mutual interest and concern.

Given our central location and common intertwined interests, we believe Afghanistan can be a relevant hub for co-operation of OSCE participating States and an opportunity for them to support Central Asian states to further contribute to peace, security and development both in Afghanistan and throughout the region.

Thank you!