



Statement by H.E. Abdul Sattar Muard
Minister of Economy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
At the Ministerial Segment of the 72nd UN-ESCAP Session
Bangkok, 18 November 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me thank the UN-ESCAP secretariat and Kingdom of Thailand for holding and hosting the 72nd Session of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

It is a great pleasure for me to address the 72nd UN-ESCAP Session being held under the theme of *Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development*. All the three elements of overarching theme of this year's ESCAP Commission session are quite significant and relevant in all Asian and Pacific countries. I would like to emphasize on the importance of transfer of technology, in particular in the case of least developed countries in our region.

At the outset, I would like to briefly highlight my country's key achievements in the implementation of MDGs before sharing with you our road map on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Afghanistan started implementation of the MDGs in the year 2004, five years' latter the millennium declaration was adopted by the United Nations. Since its inception we have made huge strides forwards.

There has been considerable progress over the past one decade in terms of access to education in Afghanistan. Enrollment in primary and secondary education combined has increased from 900,000 children to 8.9 million in 2014, of which 39 percent are girls. Meanwhile, the literacy rate has sharply increased from 34 percent in the year 2003 to 47 percent in 2014.

Similarly, in the health sector we have achieved most of our annual targets. The Under-five mortality rate has fallen from staggering 319 deaths per thousand live births in 1970 to 97 in

2010 according to latest available date. Equally, maternal mortality rate has fallen from 1600 per 100,000 in the year 2003 to 327 in 2010 that shows a remarkable reduction.

Distinguished Delegates,

Still millions of people are suffering from extreme poverty, millions of boys and girls are today out of school. Hundreds of women die every day from having a baby and millions of other people have no clean drinking water.

Building on the past experiences of MDGs implementation, we commit ourselves to the more ambitious sustainable development goals and we have already discussed our regional priorities and Regional Road Map through the Asia-Pacific Forum held and facilitated by UN ESCAP in April 2016 here in Bangkok. We do understand how difficult the task may be. But our joint cooperation at the regional and global level will turn this ambitious agenda into realization.

The world leader adopted the sustainable development goals in critical juncture last year for the coming 15 years representing a radical new approach to transform our shared world focusing on the integrated pillars of the sustainable development goals: the economic, social and environment. In this context the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan like other UN member countries is deeply committed to Implement SDGs.

To achieve the sustainable development goals some of the key steps and initiative has been undertaken by the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

- Prioritizing and localizing of the SDGs.
- Aligning the SDGs with national level policies and budgeting
- Monitoring, reporting and advocacy of the SDGs
- Evidence-based policy advocacy on SDGs

The above mentioned activities have been undertaken in line with our benchmarks targeted for MDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

My country is currently in the third phase of its transformation process. After the political and security transformation, now we are focusing on economic transformation from and aid dependent economy towards self-reliance. The withdrawal of international security forces in 2014 from Afghanistan to a large extent adversely impacted on our Economic Growth, yet our Macroeconomic stability remained constant. Further, we are working on new policy reforms to readdress our fiscal deficit and balance of payment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Financing the post 2030 agenda for sustainable development is a serious challenge globally, particularly for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing countries and small Island and Developing States, LDCs , LLDCs and SIDS.

Regional partnerships in the sectors of energy, agriculture, information communication technology will not only expand our trade at the region, but will also strengthen our political and social linkages.

The Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and the Heart of Asia –Istanbul Process are the two important regional economic cooperation frameworks to facilitate and promote regional initiatives and confidence building measures in our region. After successful convening of RECCA 6 in September 2015 in Kabul with active participation of regional countries and international organizations, in particular ESCAP, much progress has been achieved towards implementation of regional mega projects. Following the start of construction of TAPI gas pipeline project in Ashgabat, in December last year, the CASA 1000 electricity transmission project, inaugurated last week, in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan. These projects are bringing the region together in fights against poverty and fulfillment of the SDGs aspirations

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The new Afghanistan National Development Framework (ANDF) will be aligned with SDGs and we have prioritized agriculture sector, regional trade, and mining, infrastructure capacity building as well as small and medium enterprises. The given areas of focus will support SDGs implementation and strengthen our regional partnerships. A Ministerial Committed overpasses the incorporation of SDGs into ANDF.

Very recently we have developed our private- public partnership model. The PPP will provide value for money and generate new employment opportunities and economic activity.

At the end, I would like to thank UN ESCAP for facilitating this event which provides a great opportunity for discussion and exchanging ideas on the implementation of Sustainable Development goals in the Asia and Pacific.

Thank you for your attention,