

Draft Statement by the Delegation of Afghanistan

The OSCE Asian Conference

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Second Session

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, please allow me to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting the OSCE Asian Conference in this beautiful city of Bangkok and for the warm hospitality extended to us. I would also like to thank Serbia as the chair of the Asian Contact Group for their excellent efforts in facilitating our various activities within the Group this year. Allow me also to express our gratitude to Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and his staff for their continued support toward OSCE's engagement with the Partners for Co-operation, including Afghanistan. I wish to also thank distinguished panelists for sharing their views and thoughts on the topic.

This year's Asian Conference addresses a number of important global security topics relevant to our joint efforts at both regional and international levels including under the OSCE.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this second session of the conference and I would like to mainly focus on the world drug problem in the framework of United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 2016) which was held from 19-21 April 2016 in New York, as well as our efforts at the national level with a focus on alternative development.

The UNGASS 2016 was an important opportunity to shape our collective efforts in light of the new challenges, trends and realities in addressing the world drug problem. The UNGASS outcome document along with the Political Declaration and Plan of Action of 2009 will serve as a guiding document for such collective efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me very briefly share an overview of our counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan along with our perspective of the way forward in dealing with the world drug problem at all national, regional and international levels.

In 2015, we witnessed a 19 % reduction in poppy cultivation, a 48 % reduction in opium production as well as a 40 % increase in eradication of poppy cultivation compared to the previous year. We have also made considerable law enforcement and operational achievements during 2015, including in seizing different types of narcotics as well as precursors, arresting drug traffickers and destroying laboratories during many operations conducted by our national police force, where unfortunately more than 50 members of the police force lost their lives or got injured.

I would like to highlight a number of important points with respect to the drug control situation in Afghanistan:

Firstly, over 90 % of poppy cultivation has occurred in the most insecure provinces in the south, east and western parts of Afghanistan which suggests a direct link between poppy cultivation, drug trafficking networks and terrorist groups across the region and the wider world. Many terrorist groups continue to benefit from narcotics to finance their activities.

Secondly, beside the security aspect, there is high demand in the regional and global markets; trafficking in precursors and continuation of drug-related financial flows across the world remain important factors behind illicit cultivation and production of opium in Afghanistan.

And thirdly, at the domestic level, socio-economic factors such as poverty; unemployment and lack of alternative livelihood for farmers continue to encourage farmers to cultivate poppy in Afghanistan.

We believe that all these factors need to be given due attention under an integrated and balanced approach. In this context, the government of Afghanistan has developed the new National Drug Action Plan based on a balanced, comprehensive, co-ordinated, and sustainable approach which integrates key elements of counter narcotics efforts including alternative development, eradication, interdiction, and drug treatment and prevention into broader efforts to further good governance, economic development, security and stability.

Mr. Chairman,

Alternative development is a very important aspect of drug control. As the *Socio-economic Survey of Opium Production in Afghanistan in 2015* shows, farmers' dependency on poppy cultivation in many cases is due to the lack of continuous, reliable and sustainable market access to sell alternative products, and to the overall development of their villages in terms of social and economic opportunities as well as security situation. Therefore, any approach without focusing

on rural development and sustainable livelihoods for farmers will be ineffective in fighting narcotics in Afghanistan. In this context, infrastructure development and access to markets for alternative products are very important. Women's empowerment also remains important as part of a sustainable solution for poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, we believe that any failure in addressing the socio-economic factors may lead to their exploitation by insurgent and terrorist groups and may drive farmers to further rely on illicit activities.

As highlighted in the UNGASS outcome document, addressing drug-related socio-economic issues through the implementation of long-term, comprehensive and sustainable development-oriented and balanced drug control policies and programmes, including alternative development is very important.

The *United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development* provide an excellent base for developing effective programs in the area of alternative development and in this context, sharing of best practices in particular by countries like Thailand, with extensive expertise and experience in alternative development including through International Conferences on Alternative Development, remains crucial.

We therefore hope that long-term financial and technical support will be provided to Afghanistan in developing viable and sustainable alternative development programs in the context of a broader economic development agenda in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman,

In the end, let me share a few words on the partnership between Afghanistan and the OSCE. Since 2003, Afghanistan has greatly benefited from its engagement with the organization including under many programmes and projects across all three dimensions of security and in areas such as border security and management, training for law enforcement officers, customs and counter narcotics officers, cross border trade facilitation, economic development, electoral support and good governance, water management, anti-trafficking and freedom of the media. I would like to thank both the host and donor countries within the organization for their support to the implementation of these projects.

We look forward to further deepening and strengthening our partnership with the organization including in the area of counter narcotics and the implementation of the Afghan National Drug Action Plan.

Thank you!