



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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Statement of H.E. Dr. Zalmay Rassoul
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

His Excellency Sheikh Hmad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani

Honourable Lawrence Cannon

Distinguished participants

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the G-8 BMENA – 7th Forum for the Future and would like to extend my gratitude to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar, H.E. Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani as well as the people of Qatar for hosting this important event in the beautiful city of Doha. Under the leadership and vision of His Highness Shaikh Hmad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, this country is emerging as a center for regional and global dialogue.

At this juncture, congratulation is also in order for Qatar being selected as the host of the FIFA World Cup in 2022. We all take pride that for the first time in history of football, such grand event is taking place in the Middle East.

I also would like to extend my especial thanks to my colleague Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon for Co- chairing this meeting.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Events around the world reveals that today, more than any time in the past, our destinies are closely inter-linked. The nature of challenges facing us including terrorism and violent extremism calls for a concerted and effective regional and global response based on dynamic solidarity and sincere dialogue. As part of their tactics, the terrorists may have focused their attacks on Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen or Iraq, but their transnational strategies poses grave challenge and danger to all of us, particularly in the Broader Middle East region. Thus, it is our duty as leaders of this region to have a common strategy to prevent violent extremist from further destabilization of our region and defamation of our great faith.

I am glade to see that this Forum is emerging as one such successful international platform for cooperation between the G8 and the countries in the Broader Middle East and North Africa.

The essence of enhancing regional and international cooperation and the presence of the G8 and Muslim Arab countries, make this forum of special importance for Afghanistan. It is worth

mentioning that as part of its engagement in Afghanistan, in 2010 the G8 presidency developed the concept of ‘ Afghanistan and Pakistan Border Prosperity Initiative’ I hope that under the new G8 leadership in 2011 we can further the concept and take practical steps toward realization of this very important Initiative.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Strengthening ties and creating close cooperation with countries of BMENA region is one of the pillars of Afghanistan’s foreign policy. Since taking responsibility as the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, building a partnership with the Arab and Muslim world has been and is my top priority.

In 2010, the progress on building such a partnership was encouraging. On the 30 of November last year, at the initiative of his highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the government of United Arab Emirates hosted the first International Investment Conference on Afghanistan where hundreds of entrepreneurs from all over the world, particularly from the GCC countries, gathered and explored investment opportunities in Afghanistan.

For the first time, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) sent a full time resident ambassador to Afghanistan with whom I had the pleasure of meeting last week. The government of Egypt is sponsoring an OIC Foreign Ministers meeting on Afghanistan later in this March. The republic of Iraq had re-opened its embassy in Kabul recently and we are sending a delegation to prepare the ground of re-opening of the Afghan embassy in Baghdad.

As part of our active engagement with the Arab and Muslim world, we are we are expanding our diplomatic presence in the BMENA countries. I really hope that our brotherly countries of this region should reciprocate and elevate their diplomatic relation with us.

There are indeed significant achievements, but certainly not sufficient. There are numerous opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation between Afghanistan and the countries of the BMENA region. Mining, construction, agro industry, aviation, education and labor exchange are among the potential areas of immediate cooperation.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Taking the opportunity of addressing this Forum for Future let me mention few words about my government's vision and determination for a better future for Afghanistan. We (the Afghans) with concerted support from the International community have intensified our efforts for establishing peace, stability and prosperity and strengthening national institutions to enable Afghanistan not only to stand on its own feet but to positively contribute to peace and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Over the course of last year, we have witnessed a sequence of High-level international meetings on Afghanistan in London, Kabul and Lisbon where we shared with the international community and regional partners, our action plans for improved security and accelerated economic development which's reflect five important pillars, namely security, economic development, good governance, regional cooperation, and reconciliation and reintegration with a view to, allow us, to exercise our sovereign authority towards a secure, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

President Hamid Karzai made a commitment a year ago to assume leadership for security of our country by 2014. During the Lisbon summit in November 2010 a joint transition plan was agreed upon through which, we are determined to take over the security, governance and development responsibilities by 2014. We will make all concrete and integrated efforts to implement transition plan on time.

We intend to stand – up on our own by 2014, but our partnership with the international community, emphasizing new aspects and qualities in 2015 and beyond, ensures that we will never stand alone.

As we all know military action alone cannot guarantee long lasting security. Thus as a measure to ensure long-term security, we are pursuing national reconciliation and reintegration program to bring back to normal life members of the armed opposition who are willing to give up violence, accept Afghanistan's constitution and begin a new life as law-abiding citizens. In this regard, we have begun implementing a number of the recommendations which were adopted at our national consultative peace-jirga including the establishment of High Peace Council.

Honorable Co-chairs,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Afghan government and people are fully supporting initiatives amid strengthening peace and prosperity in the region that includes achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East which could put and end to the occupation and create an independent and viable Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside its neighbors.

A peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan is vital for peace and stability in the region and around the world. I am certain that together, we will not only overcome the forces of disorder, but also create a stable region whose people and governments can be forces of stability and prosperity and an anchor global security.

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Let me once again express my sincere thanks to you Mr. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister for the warm welcome extended to me and my delegation and for your continued support to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

I thank you,