

Seminar on Cooperation among Central Asian National Chambers of Commerce

Speech by

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Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am highly delighted and grateful to have found the opportunity to participate in such prestigious event. On behalf of the Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) an apex business organization of the country and the distinguished delegation of Afghanistan - I would like to convey our collective thanks to the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC) and Asian Development Bank for the warm hospitality and support they have provided to us.

Distinguished Participants,

The Islamic republic of Afghanistan is a country located at the heart of Asia. The devastating war and deteriorating economic, social, and physical conditions in both rural and urban areas have damaged most infrastructures such as housing, communication and sanitation facilities and created a highly troublesome situation.

After the war Afghanistan had to start almost from the scratch, for building its economic system, consistent with requirements of a growing economy on the one hand, and the economic aspirations of the masses on the other hand. Economic development has slowly improved. The Afghan government has always attached great importance to economic stability; in particular free trade has been the most spoken objective of the state policy ever since the beginning of planned economic development in early stages. From time to time, the state undertook numerous policy measures, including unhesitatingly carrying out amendments to Constitution, to achieve the objectives. Thanks to all these policy initiatives that has made the negligible private presence and investment stronger. The centrality of the private sector has known as the vehicle and engine of growth, employment, poverty reduction and enhanced equity, between both men and women. Though, private investment, adequate custom tax, banking, and other facilities are provided for the private sector. The various organizations, such as Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), Economic Consultative Council, Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan (EPAA), Association of Industry, and Afghan Women Business Federation (AWBF) are established and assigned to support the initiative alongside with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Afghanistan. As a result the progress that we have made, both in terms of creating an enabling environment and in terms of enhancing the much needed regulatory capacities of government to support the development of a strong private sector.

Distinguished Delegates,

Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) is one of the oldest business organization of the country was formed 1931, with aims to continues cooperation with government authorities, encourage investors, guide importers and exporters, launch exhibitions, commercial arbitration and protect and support its members.

ACCI with its 75 years of magnificent experience has managed the provincial chambers, Union of Private Industries, and the Union of Exporters and Importers, lead trade and industries in the country and has 22 provincial branches. In addition, Participation in the construction of industrial parks, equipped storehouses for importing and exporting goods, conducting of exhibitions inside and outside the country, participation in foreign exhibitions and liaison with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of foreign countries in order to protect the merchants and national capital holders are all among hundreds of its functions.

During its long history of presence, unfortunately, ACCI also was not immune to the nation wide disaster and faced serious difficulties through out its history as the spirit of ACCI undermined by ruling of various governments came into power, finally ACCI used by the state and the party, that was not demand oriented organ of the business community and not able to provide market service and represent the private economy of the whole country.

While, Effective institutions for supporting the market system are at the core of the efforts to create an enabling environment for the private sector. we look to the development of institutions which can effectively deliver services to support private sector development. So with aim to enhance the efficiency of its operations and to be more pursuant with the economic policy of the government, ACCI has initiated bringing wide reform in administration, and operations, in association with technical support from other international partners and with close cooperation with the private sector community. These reforms aimed to adjust the ACCI's operations more comparable with market oriented economy.

ACCI is now a member of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) based in Paris, France. It is also a member of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce; Furthermore, ACCI has close ties with international organizations like International Road and Transport Union (IRU) and International Labor Organization (ILO). In addition to these, ACCI is member of the ECO Chamber of Commerce, and Industry as currently acts as chairperson of this organization and SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry. ACCI has able to sign MOUs with 14 different chambers in the world including CCPIT- china, Germany, England, Iran, Czech Republic, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia etc. Currently signing such MOUs with Bulgarian and Russian Chambers of Commerce and Industry are ongoing.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The people of Afghanistan, particularly private sector, whom we represent, are looking for an enabling environment for private sector. The expansion of commercial and economic relation has been recognized from the beginning of our work. I want to reiterate that the private sector is our engine of growth that can accelerate the emergence of a dynamic, competitive and inclusive process of development within the country.

ACCI is eager to establish close industrial and commercial relation with its counterparts of CAREC member states. Similarly ACCI wishes to enhance the relationship between Afghan business communities with their counterparts in CAREC member countries. ACCI never hesitates to provide mutual regional economic and trade cooperation among CAREC

member states. Afghanistan as a land-bridge linking central and south Asia, linking people, markets and products, will play an important role in improving business environment across central Asia. Our international economic and trade ties are a critical component of our vision. As has often been iterated by my colleagues, we are not a landlocked state — we are a land-bridge linking the region. Our economic potential will expand with greater regional and global outreach. Linkages with world and regional markets will ensure the competitiveness of domestic industries and enhance investment possibilities. With development of an effective system for international trade and transit, a large portion of future investments will aim to capitalize on Afghanistan's strategic position as the key 'Land-bridge' connecting Central and South Asia regions together.

Thank you.