

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Edris Zaman,
Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs,
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,
At the 25th OSCE Ministerial Meeting
Milan- Italy, 6-7 December, 2018**

**Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to echo all previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for the warm hospitality extended to us during this Ministerial.

Afghanistan attaches high value to its partnership with the OSCE and since we became OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation in 2003; we have benefited immensely from knowledge and experience of the OSCE in fighting terrorism and drugs, enhancing border security and management as well as capacity building of the law enforcement.

As an emerging democracy, we also value the contribution of the OSCE election support teams in supporting our previous parliamentary and presidential elections.

Distinguished delegates,

Last week, a successful International Conference on Afghanistan was held in Geneva and as we speak, NATO Foreign Ministers and their partners are meeting in Brussels with Afghanistan at the top of their agenda.

The Geneva conference once again demonstrated unity of voice in the International community in support of our efforts for peace and development led by the government of Afghanistan. In Brussels, the RSM contributing nations reaffirmed their strong commitment to help the security and stability of Afghanistan by continuing to train, advise and equip our security forces.

Friends and Partners,

As the frontline country in fighting regional and international terrorist networks, Afghanistan continues to face immense security threats. These terrorist networks have increased their activities in some parts of the country with an aim to disrupt our progress towards stability and democracy. While their focus has been to carry out spectacular terrorist attacks, they have failed to succeed in capturing any major population center in Afghanistan. They have carried out barbaric terror attacks mainly targeting civilians and have tried to spread terror and fear; thus they have no place and support amongst the population of Afghanistan. Our brave security forces have stood firm and strong in protecting our people.

In October this year, we held our Parliamentary elections. Despite direct threats from the Taliban and other terrorist networks, Afghan people proudly voted; a demonstration of our firm determination for democracy and rule of law. We are now preparing for the Presidential elections to be held in the spring of next year. We would like to take this opportunity to invite the OSCE to continue its cooperation by sending its election support teams.

Mr. Chair and Colleagues,

After four decades of instability and imposed violence, achieving a durable peace is our highest national priority and the most fundamental aspiration of our people.

In February this year, we made a comprehensive offer to the Taliban to start direct formal peace talks with the Afghan Government. Last week in Geneva Conference, President Ghani announced a new roadmap for peace and negotiations confirming our people and governments unwavering resolve for peace.

We further complemented the roadmap by forming the required bodies and mechanisms for formal negotiations; which we believe will result in the Afghan Taliban stopping violence, severing their ties with terrorist groups and joining their people in a democratic and inclusive society.

At the international level, we fully support Ambassador Khalilzad's efforts to pave the way for inter-Afghan dialogue for peace. We also welcome all those initiatives taken by other friends that could help start an Afghan owned and Afghan led peace process in which the Afghan people will be represented by their elected government.

We also encourage our neighbor Pakistan to play a constructive role by supporting security and peace in Afghanistan; that will in turn result in enhanced regional stability and economic cooperation; that will benefit all the region including Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman and colleagues,

Afghanistan shares a long border with the three OSCE Participating countries in Central Asia namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Our security and stability is deeply interconnected with each other. On top of the immediate threat of terrorism, threats arising from cross-border criminal activities including drugs trafficking have been the major

concerns for our countries. I am sure we can do more to address our common threats by engaging bilaterally and through platforms like OSCE.

Excellencies,

Afghanistan is grateful for the OSCE assistance in providing training and capacity building opportunities for Afghan Police and custom officials in the field of border security and management. We strongly believe that continuation of such assistance will improve border cooperation, reduce cross- border crimes thus enhancing trade and interaction between Afghanistan and other countries in the region.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.