

Your Excellency Mr. Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,  
Your Excellency Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland,  
Your Excellency Mr. Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland,  
Your Excellency Mr. Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, Minister of Finance of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,  
Your Excellency Doborah Lyons, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAM,

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

It is indeed a great honour for me to address the Geneva 2020 Conference on Afghanistan devoted to the theme, “*Peace, Prosperity and Self-Reliance.*”

We thank the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Finland, and the United Nations for convening this Conference in spite of the challenges and disruptions caused by the ongoing pandemic.

This Conference, which is aimed at committing the Afghan government and the international community to a shared development objective for 2021-24, reflects the resolve of stakeholders to support Afghanistan in its sustained efforts for peace, prosperity and self-reliance.

Founded in December 1985, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) today encompasses almost every sphere of development activity, having a bearing on the life and livelihood of its peoples. Over three and half decades of its existence, SAARC has made progress toward the attainment of its objectives.

Afghanistan joined SAARC in April 2007. Afghanistan’s entry into SAARC changed the region’s geographical configuration, linking South Asia to central Asia and beyond. In this regard, we recognize the importance of Afghanistan as a land bridge among the regions and the significant role it can play in promoting effective inter-regional cooperation. Afghanistan is a valued member of the SAARC family and has been a generous host to many SAARC activities.

As a regional grouping of South Asia, SAARC deeply values all the efforts being made by the Afghan Government and its partners for promoting peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan. In spite of these efforts, ensuring peace and security in Afghanistan continues to remain a major challenge, requiring sustained collective efforts by the Afghan Government and the international community. It is in this context that we heartily welcome the convening of this important Conference.

I am confident that this Conference will prove to be an important milestone for further strengthening Afghanistan’s cooperation with its partners. With the continued support of the international community, Afghanistan will embrace enduring peace and prosperity. A secure and stable Afghanistan is vital for sustained peace, security and prosperity in the region.

I wish the Conference great success.

Thank you.