Draft Statement by H.E. Prof. Salamat Azimi
Minister of Counter Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Special Segment - 59th Session of CND

Vienna, March 14th 2016

In the name of Allah

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, please allow me to express my congratulations to you and other members of the Extended Bureau of the 59th Session of CND on your election. It is a pleasure for me to be part of this special segment in preparations for the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem.

The UNGASS 2016 will be an important opportunity to shape our collective efforts in light of the new challenges, trends and realities in addressing the world drug problem. We are glad to see that considerable efforts have been made throughout the preparatory process under the leading role of the CND and the UNGASS Board with a view to having an inclusive process.
We are also glad to see that Afghanistan has had the opportunity to serve as the First-Vice Chair of the Board. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to continuing its active participation in this process including in the Special Session. We hope that our deliberations in this special segment as the final stage of the preparatory process will help us agree on what we expect from the UNGASS including from the outcome document.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to 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, despite the security threats in most of the poppy cultivating areas, 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. As a result of continued efforts by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, law enforcement agencies and other line ministries, poppy cultivation decreased to 183,000 hectares in 2015. This is a great achievement not only for Afghanistan but also for our international partners.
We have also made considerable law enforcement and operational achievements during 2015. 256.5 tons of different types of narcotics were seized during 2491 detection and seizure operations which shows 18% increase compared to the previous year. In 2015, 2844 drug traffickers were arrested which shows a 6% increase compared to the previous year. Furthermore, 32 laboratories were destroyed, 592 vehicles and 315 weapons were detected and seized during this period. Additionally, 32.5 tons of precursors and 46 kilograms of amphetamine were seized. Unfortunately, 22 members of the police force lost their lives and 28 members of the police force were injured during these operations. In 2015, 37 civil servants, and a number of foreign citizens were arrested and brought to justice.

97% of poppy cultivation has occurred in the most insecure provinces in the south, east and western parts of Afghanistan which encounter security threats. This is an indication of the fact that there is a direct link between poppy cultivation, activities of the opposition armed groups, drug trafficking networks and terrorist groups across the region and the wider world, as all of them continue to benefit from narcotics to finance their activities including targeting and killing civilians in Afghanistan and around the globe. If the security situation deteriorates in Afghanistan, not only the poppy cultivation will increase but the insecurity will also spread to the rest of the region and the world. So this growing link including at a regional level needs to be addressed under an integrated approach.
We believe that beside the security aspect, poppy cultivation, production and trafficking are also linked to several other factors including high demand in the regional and global markets; trafficking in precursors; continuation of drug-related financial flows across the world; poverty; unemployment and lack of alternative livelihood for farmers. These factors along with the security aspect need to be given due attention under an integrated and balanced approach.

Alternative development is a very important aspect of drug control. A lack of sustainable alternative livelihoods and increasing opium prices in recent years have encouraged farmers to increasingly cultivate poppy. Any approach without focusing on rural development and sustainable livelihoods for farmers will be ineffective in fighting narcotics in Afghanistan and in this context, infrastructure development and access to markets for alternative products are very important.
Additionally, drug demand at both regional and international levels and trafficking in chemical precursors into Afghanistan need to be addressed in an effective manner.

Mr. Chairman,

Regional cooperation remains key in addressing the drug problem. We appreciate the work of the existing regional cooperation frameworks in support of counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan and the region including the Paris Pact Initiative, the Triangular Initiative, the AKT initiative and the CARICC. We will host the next Ministerial Meeting of the Triangular Initiative at the level of heads of counter-narcotics agencies from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in Kabul in a few weeks.

We believe that there is need for greater cooperation and coordination between these sub-regional and regional cooperation frameworks. In this context, I believe that while the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process can benefit from the experiences of these cooperation frameworks, it can also provide new opportunities for regional cooperation in addressing various aspects of the drug problem in our region.
Mr. Chairman,

Intensified efforts are needed to put into practice the commitments made under various international documents including drug-related resolutions based on the principle of common and shared responsibility. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on the provision of technical assistance and equipment to the most affected countries by the world drug problem.

I would like to reiterate that despite many challenges, the Government of Afghanistan on its part is committed to taking steady steps including in areas such as preventive measures with respect to drug demand reduction, eradication, alternative development and countering the trafficking networks under a comprehensive and balanced strategy.

To sustain our achievements and to address the new challenges and emerging trends related to the drug problem, we have developed our new National Drug Action Plan based on a balanced, comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable approach. The new action plan 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.

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Afghanistan, however, cannot alone address this menace of regional and international dimensions. While we express our gratitude to all of our international and regional partners for their continued support to our counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan and the wider region including through the UNODC Country Program for Afghanistan as well as the Regional Program for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries, we continue to need your technical and financial assistance in support of our new drug action plan.

Mr. Chairman,

In the end, let me highlight here a number of important priorities:

- Blocking the financial resources of drug traffickers and terrorist groups and their affiliated networks in the region and at international level.
- Increasing the capacity of the counter narcotics agencies in Afghanistan including improving detection and operational capacities and providing required equipment for detection, seizure, arrest and control;
- Helping decrease drug addiction in countries in the region including Afghanistan. Afghanistan is facing an alarming addiction rate as there are more than three million drug users in Afghanistan that makes up 11.1% of our total population.
- Increasing the capacity and effectiveness of regional initiatives in the area of counter narcotics and improving coordination among them.
- Controlling precursors and their diversion in countries of origin in a more effective manner and preventing the trafficking of precursors into Afghanistan.
- Support long-term and sustainable alternative development programs in the context of broader economic development agenda, which includes poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and job creation.

جانب رئيس،

در پایان، اجازه دهید تا یکبار دیگر، برخی از اولویت‌های مهم ذیل را بر جست نامیم:

- مسدود کردن منابع مالی قاچاقپران مواد مخدر و ترویج و تیکه‌های مرتبط با آنها در کشورهای منطقه و جهان.
ارتقای ظرفیت تهدید های مبارزه علیه مواد مخدر در افغانستان جمله بهبود ظرفیت‌های کشفی و علمیانی و فراهم آوری تجهیزات مورد نیاز برای کشف، ضبط، دستگیری و کنترل کمک به کاهش اعتیاد به مواد مخدر در کشورهای منطقه‌ای جمله افغانستان. کشور ما با مبنا بالای اعتیاد مواجه است و بیشتر از 3 میلیون مصرف کننده مواد مخدر در افغانستان وجود دارد که در حدود 11.1 فيصد نوس کشور را تشکیل می‌دهند.

افزایش ظرفیت و مؤثریت ابتكارات منطقه‌ای در زمینه مبارزه با مواد مخدر و بهبود هماهنگی در میان آنها کنترل مؤثر بر پریكورسها و انحراف‌آنها در کشورهای مبدا و جلوگیری از فراگیری آنها به افغانستان، حمايت از برنامه‌های درازمدت و پایدار مبتنی بر جامعچرب اجتاحت و سه تر اکتشاف اقتصادی که شامل فقر، اکتشاف زیرناها و ایجاد شغل باشد.

I would like to, once again, express my gratitude to the Commission and to the UNGASS Board for this opportunity and I hope that next month during UNGASS in New York we will witness a milestone in our collective efforts in addressing the world drug problem based on the principle of common and shared responsibility.

Thank you,