

**Remarks by Amb. Najibullah Alikhil,
Director General, Security Cooperation and Border Affairs, MoFA,
Afghanistan,
At the OSCE Asian Contact Group Meeting on
Vienna, June 09, 2017**

**Mr. Ambassador Pohl,
Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, it is a great privilege to be back to Vienna and participate in the OSCE Asian Contact Group meeting. Let me thank Ambassador Pohl Chair of the Group for convening this important meeting and bringing us together to discuss this very pressing issue.

As a country suffered massively by terrorism and violent extremism for decades, Afghanistan is always welcoming any initiative aiming to partner in the fight against this menace, our common enemy.

Dear Colleagues,

Today I intend to speak about Afghanistan and its immediate surrounding where terrorism and violent extremism not only continue to take a heavy toll on Afghan people but it intends to threaten the entire region and the global community. The violent extremist groups do not know borders, and from Kabul to Manchester, from Paris to Berlin and other parts of the world, they are behind the terrorist attacks. Just last week the terrorists carried out a massive truck bomb explosion in the heart of Kabul in Diplomatic area near the German Embassy which resulted to the killing and wounding of hundreds of civilians.

Distinguished participants,

Islam as religion of peace has been practiced in Afghanistan for centuries and it was never used to provoke violent extremism or suicide attacks, because such phenomenon has nothing to Islamic teachings. Unfortunately, the past four decades of war and violent conflict in particular during the Taliban regime, and the ongoing global war on terror, have had a devastating impact on Afghanistan and its citizens. Consequently, radicalism and violent extremism has grown up and now it is considering one of the major threats to the Afghan society and the region.

Excellencies,

Afghanistan's population is among the world's youngest and fastest growing, half its population is under eighteen and more than three-quarters under forty. This young generation is facing with many challenges; the poor conditions of life, unemployment, poverty, and frustration about their future, are among the main reasons that the violent extremist groups have taken advantage to recruit the vulnerable youth for committing suicide attacks and violence in Afghan society. These groups are using both traditional and modern tactics to encourage youth for violence. They use messages, CDs, cell phone ringtones, and appeal to the parents to encourage their sons to join armed struggle (Jihad) against the infidels and to be proud of their sons who sacrifice their lives for their religion and country. They have been taught to believe that this life is temporary and one must invest in life after death and jihad is the fastest way to lead one to eternal life in paradise.

Dear colleagues,

The region we share with Pakistan has the highest concentration of terrorist network anywhere in the world. Afghanistan is fighting

against 20 local, regional and international terrorist networks. The violent extremist organizations that we are confronting by are not just Taliban. There are four groups - first. Afghans including Taliban and Haqqani; second Pakistani such as LeT, JeM, TTP; third regional networks like IMU, Ansarullah, ETIM, and fourth international such as Daesh and Al Qaeda.

Our response to these groups, we can make peace and reconciliation with the Afghan groups based on certain principles, but cannot reconcile with the other three groups. The just two days ago Kabul Process conference with the participation from at least 23 countries and international organization has been a crucial event in our efforts for peace.

The extremists groups operating in Afghanistan are trying to find sanctuary to reach their destinations beyond the country. While Al-Qaeda and Daesh pursue a global Jehadi agenda, LeT, JeM and TTP are aimed against India. Regional actors such as IMU, ETIM, and Ansarullah are increasingly threaten Central Asia, Russia and China. Therefore our fight against terrorism and violent extremism is not just for our security but on behalf of the region and the world community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What is more important, most extremist groups continue to enjoy the facilitation and orchestration services in our neighbor-Pakistan. The existing radicalized religious schools (Madrasas) in this country have become a key element in recruiting young boys for violence and terrorist attacks. The violent extremism and terror infrastructure in the region and some certain state and non-state actors are using these schools as a tool for their political goals and undermining Afghan society and the entire region.

It is estimated that there are more than 150 thousand religious schools in Pakistan most of them are training and recruiting violent extremism. These Madrasas spread radicalization and violence, and the graduates are encouraging to join Taliban and other extremist groups.

Speaking on the spread of violent extremism in our region, we should consider the three interconnected threats which are challenging the national security of Afghanistan and the region. The instability in Afghanistan is the result of the evil axis of three elements namely violent extremism, criminal economy and state sponsorship of terrorists. These three have come together to threaten Afghanistan and pursue their goals beyond the country, and to expand the criminalized economy with narcotics, use its proceeds to finance terrorism.

Dear Colleagues,

The key point as lessons learned from Afghan experience are of vital importance to shape national, regional and global responses to the menace of terrorism and violent extremism. A common strategy against a common enemy is the only way to save our nations, our region and the world community.

In order to counter violent extremism and empowering youth in this direction, the Office of the National Security Council of Afghanistan is developing a national strategy. A steering committee has been formed with the participation of civil society. This strategy will identify the factors associated with radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism, and the ways and means in countering this menace.

In pursuing this goal, the media of Afghanistan is playing a major role in countering violent extremism by highlighting the Afghan people's

criticism of terrorist actions. In addition, the people in particular youth have been involved in various activities such as debates, cultural and sport events. During recent years, we have developed and implemented several programs aimed preventing and countering violent extremism. A number of good practices including initiatives for reforming and developing religious curricular, and counter-messaging through registered mosques, have been established.

In 2014, the government supported Moderation Center of Afghanistan has been created which promotes interfaith communication and moderate interpretation of Islam. The National religious scholar Council has also been created which is working to spread moderation through Afghanistan's religious institutions. The Government attaches high importance to the educational system of the country, schools and madrases should become the breeding ground for peace and conflict resolution activists rather than for violence. The nongovernmental organizations and civil society are playing an important role to encourage youth for nonviolence and focus on shared historic and cultural values, and unity. The most effective messengers are coming from the victims, mothers, former extremists, local and influential religious leaders who denounce violence and suicide attacks.

Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues,

Afghanistan attaches high value to its partnership with the OSCE and we are very grateful for the OSCE valuable contribution to Afghanistan in various fields including border management and security, and drugs control. We share a long border with the OSCE three participating states in Central Asia namely Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and therefore the security and stability of our countries are deeply interconnected with each other.

We share not only long borders, but common history, culture, religion, common values and common concerns. There is a great potential for our countries to share the best experience and practices in empowering youth of our societies in countering violent extremism. It would be necessary to convene various workshops, seminars and gatherings among the youth organizations and the civil societies on this issue. We believe that the OSCE and its participating states as well as the Asian partners for co-operation can play a major role and contribution in materializing such events, and Afghanistan is very keen to benefit from such initiatives in the future.

Thank you