

**Sixth Ministerial Conference of
'Heart of Asia'- Istanbul Process**

Amritsar, 4 December 2016

Your Excellency Mrs. Sushma Swaraj

Your Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani

Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a matter of great honour and privilege for me to address the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the "Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process" being held in the beautiful and historic city of Amritsar. I will like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Indian side for their hospitality and excellent arrangements for the meeting.

As the previous distinguished speakers underlined, CICA strongly believes that a stable and prosperous Afghanistan is crucial for peace and stability not only in the region but for the entire world. Afghanistan occupies a very crucial place on the historical Silk Road, which makes Afghanistan as "Asian Roundabout"- a central point of interconnection of peoples, goods and services. However, today Afghanistan is trying to tackle some very important challenges, which no country can be able to face alone. It is absolutely necessary that the international community should help the people and the Government of Afghanistan in meeting these challenges in a holistic way and build an enduring, stable and prosperous democratic state.

CICA, as you would be aware, is a forum for promoting peace, security and stability in Asia through dialogue, interaction and Confidence Building Measures. Afghanistan is a founding member of CICA. Right from the time of its inception, CICA has encouraged the Member States to forge close cooperation with Afghanistan, including in the area of combating terrorism, illicit drug production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and their chemical precursors as well as for reconstruction of the country. CICA Member States

have been extending humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan.

CICA is also trying to address the problems faced by Afghanistan through the mechanism of Confidence Building Measures. In accordance with the Catalogue of confidence building measures, CICA is implementing CBMs in military-political dimension, economic dimension, environmental dimension, human dimension and fight against new threats and challenges, that include terrorism and illicit drug production and trafficking. Afghanistan is the co-coordinator for confidence building measures in the areas of new challenges and threats. It is hoped that these measures will augment the international efforts aimed at peace, stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Istanbul Process is playing a very important role in reconstruction of Afghanistan. Participating countries are striving to cooperate with Afghanistan in countering problems like illicit drugs, terrorism, as well as providing help in its development process. What distinguishes Istanbul Process from other initiatives in Afghanistan is that it is a regional initiative and takes into account the problems that could have impact on the entire region.

I will like to mention in this regard that there are commonalities among the confidence building measures of the Istanbul Process and the confidence building measures of CICA. It is possible to develop a synergy between the common strands of the respective confidence building measures of the two forums. CICA, on its part, will be very happy to cooperate and join its resources with the Istanbul Process in the process of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan in order to help revive this country as a stable and prosperous member of CICA family and the international community.

Thank you!