

**Statement by the Danish Head of Delegation at the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference on 4 December, 2016 in Amritsar, India**

What happens in Afghanistan has profound regional and international repercussions.

A stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is in itself a goal worth striving for. But stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan is also pivotal for the stability and development of the region as a whole.

Peace and prosperity in Afghanistan would offer Afghanistan's neighbours quiet borders, infrastructure for transportation between countries in the region as well as access to markets, products and raw materials. In addition it would support the return and reintegration of Afghan nationals and IDPs.

This is why a strengthened partnership between Afghanistan and its neighbours is in the interest of everyone in the region and beyond. And why we welcome any process – formal or informal - that can facilitate contacts and cooperation between countries in the region.

Denmark is a staunch supporter of Afghanistan's stabilisation and development. At the Brussels-conference on Afghanistan Denmark reconfirmed its commitment and pledged approx. 243 mio. USD for the period 2017-2020. This is supplemented by a solid Danish contribution to Resolute Support of approx. 100 soldiers.

Denmark also integrates regional aspects in our cooperation with both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Furthermore, we support a durable solution to the returning of Afghan refugees.

Long term stability, peace and prosperity in the region require that the processes are owned and driven by the involved countries. Heart of Asia is an important framework for such regional cooperation. And the declaration – which we welcome – is an important symbol of the will to cooperate.