

**Statement of the Vice Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia,
Mr. Mikheil Janelidze**

The Seventh Regional Economic
Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan
(RECCA-VII)

Ashkhabad, November 14-15, 2017
Excellencies, Minister of Foreign Affairs of
Turkmenistan and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I would like to start with expressing the
highest appreciation and gratitude to the

Government of Turkmenistan for hosting the Seventh Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, an important event for economic reconstruction and enhancement of cooperation between regional countries. Turkmenistan is a country promoting peace and stability in the region and in the world and greatly contributes to the relevant dialogues which we support fully in all relevant formats.

I am honored to participate in this conference and I thank my dear colleague, Mr. Meredov for inviting me.

We are gathered here today to discuss once again how to join forces to support Afghanistan on its path towards building stable and democratic state. The Government of Georgia works closely with the Government of Afghanistan on bilateral level to expand friendly and positive cooperation agenda and we stand ready to

continue our contribution in multilateral formats.

The regional cooperation is essential for economic development and stability that Afghanistan and the region needs. But for economic development and stability we need peace and security.

Georgia strongly supports peace, stability and the establishment of secure environment in Afghanistan and wider Middle East region. The growing influence and violence perpetrated by terrorist groups, is a matter of great concern for all of us. Georgia condemns terrorism in all its forms and supports international community and Afghan Government in its fight against it.

To put things concisely - we either sink or float together and therefore we should act together.

Georgia and Afghanistan have enjoyed close partnership within the scope of ISAF and Resolute Support Mission.

Despite the fact that we have sustained significant casualties (32 Georgian military personnel were killed in Afghanistan), we remain committed to our contribution to the shared security. Georgia maintains 870 servicemen in the Resolute Support Mission and stands ready to keep the same number and composition of forces in RSM throughout the spring of 2018. We have been supporting not only militarily, but also financially to the development of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

And we believe that Georgia's cooperation in economic, trade and other spheres of mutual interest with Afghanistan and countries of the region still needs to be intensified. Further development of the interconnectivity,

especially in the field of transport, is of strategic importance.

Georgia and Azerbaijan representing a gateway between the Black and the Caspian Seas, a corridor which now bridges five world regions via high speed railways, shipping, roads, fiber optics, pipelines, a thoroughfare which serves also as a conduit for values, principles, norms, trade agreements and institutions. The certain elements of hardware and the software of interconnections meets in South Caucasus. Today, a container from some remote place in Europe to China covers the distance in less than 20 days using south Caucasus as a transit corridor. And this is only the beginning. Georgia's port of Anaklia – the only Deep Sea Port on the eastern shores of the Black Sea that can host Panamax type vessels – will be a game changer. We are emerging as a

transport hub linking several regions of Europe and Asia.

Georgia is a reliable transit partner and important actor of transport axis in the region. We are committed to actively participate in the major strategic projects and initiatives. In this context, Georgia's membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank acquires a special significance and we deem that the potential of the new Silk Road has to be timely and fully explored.

To this end, we pay particular attention to our participation in the **New Transport Route (Lapis Lazuli)** initiated by the Government of Afghanistan and strongly supported by Turkmenistan. Inevitably, the signing of the agreement will significantly contribute to the development of cooperation between the member states of the project in the field of trade and transport. We are convinced that

an important part of region's future lies in new corridors and projects like Lapis Lazuri.

I would like to highlight that just in about two weeks, on November 28-29, we are organizing Tbilisi "Belt and Road" Forum in cooperation with the Government of China. The Forum will allow us to further discuss the ideas, regional cooperation projects and business opportunities together with our partners. In this regard, it would be a pleasant opportunity for me to welcome many of You in Georgia.

I should note that Government of Georgia is continuously implementing legislative and institutional reforms to ensure more economic opportunities.

Georgia has created one of the best investment climates - effective public services, corruption free government and transparent business environment, which was reflected in

international institution's ratings and continues to improve. I will not talk about all of the indices, but I would just briefly mention that the **World Bank's "Doing Business 2018"** placed Georgia at **9th position** in "EASE OF DOING BUSINESS" (out of 190 countries), well ahead of many OECD member, developed economies.

I would like to express my country's readiness to share our experience with regard to these successful and internationally recognized reforms in different areas with our friends and partners.

Let me once again to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this Conference and to all of you for close and fruitful cooperation.