

**Annex**

**Opening remarks by Secretary Foreign Affairs  
at the Prime and Co-Prime Mover Consultations**

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Good morning,

As Chair of the Prime and Co-Prime Mover consultations I extend a warm welcome to all of you, distinguished delegates from ACD member countries. I wish all of you a pleasant and fruitful stay in Sri Lanka. We have a formidable task ahead of us today. I look forward to working closely with all of you, in keeping with a spirit of friendship and cooperation. Incidentally, this happens to be the first multilateral forum that I am privileged to Chair after assuming duties as the Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.

The Chair of the Coordinating Group has reported that the Group met on Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and had substantive discussions. I wish to take this opportunity to place on record my deep appreciation to the Coordinating Group consisting of the Coordinator-Thailand, the Past Chair-Kazakhstan, future Chair- Iran and of course my colleagues from Sri Lanka for all the hard work that they have put in to prepare

comprehensive recommendations of their discussions. This would make our task today much easier.

I would like to take this opportunity to also place on record my sincere appreciation to the Royal Thai Government as the Coordinator of ACD for their unstinted support and guidance given to Sri Lanka, which has enabled us to prepare for the 8<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting in Colombo. Similarly, I wish to thank the Republic of Kazakhstan for sharing their experience as well as submitting the Progress Reports of the 20 sectors of cooperation.

I am sure you have been briefed about the ACD Breakfast Meeting which took place in New York on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009 on the margins of the UNGA. The valuable contributions made by the distinguished delegates made it all the more successful. These deliberations have been carefully taken in to consideration in the preparation of the Colombo Declaration. It is heartening to note that the theme of our Meeting which is “Spirit of Asia: Global Economic Recovery and Development Prospects” was well received at the New York Meeting, where the delegates acknowledged that this theme was very opportune and timely.

Characterized by positive thinking and a non institutionalized frame work to satisfy the comfort level of the member countries, ACD now comprises 31 participating countries. There are now 20 areas of functional co-operation. Whilst participation is on a voluntary basis, many member countries have offered to be Prime & Co-Prime Movers for these cooperation projects. The participation is based on each members comparative advantage and comfort level. Members can join in at any time they deem ready. In this manner, every member country has a sense of participation and willingness while no country feels secluded or marginalized.

However, it is opportune to examine whether these projects are creating strong cooperation across Asia. The harsh realities of economic survival in the intensely competitive modern world must necessarily drive us to informed introspection and critical analysis.

The time has come to ask ourselves some candid and searching questions. I think you will agree with me that project cooperation has to show more tangible, concrete results and move faster in terms of programme deliveries in the different areas of our work programmes. It is a critical time and we should not shy away from asking these vital questions.

Our eventual success will need active participation of all the Prime & Co-Prime Movers. We will during the course of the day, discuss in detail the state of

implementation of our 20 areas of cooperation. Prime & Co-Prime Movers in ACD have to realize the essence of long term sustainable development, with a particular focus on the improvement of the quality of life of our people and alleviating poverty. Towards this end, there are projects ranging from poverty alleviation to human resource development and from enhancing agricultural performance to environmental education.

The fruits of economic progress must be made available to each and every country, to every city and indeed, most importantly to every village. In many of our countries the vast majority of our people still reside in rural areas. We simply have to find ways and means of ensuring that they too become stakeholders and partners of the development process. Mechanisms have to be established to develop national strategies involving the complementary participation of a strong, market driven but socially responsible private sector and a robust public sector.

As a matter of priority the promotion of small and medium scale enterprises will have to be encouraged as they have the potential of becoming the bedrock of the economy.

In conclusion, let us remember that ACD has been designed for all stakeholders to play a pro-active role in regional cooperation and economic integration. Let us use

today's Prime & Co-Prime Mover Consultations to open more windows of opportunity for fruitful cooperation between member states of ACD and the peoples of our region – a region rich in history and tradition with enormous potential for concerted development, if we all put our best efforts into making our Forum a success.

Thank you