

Royal Norwegian Embassy in Afghanistan

**TASK FORCE ON REGIONAL ELECTRICITY COOPERATION
IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA**

Kabul, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 November 2007

Keynote address by the Ambassador of Norway in Afghanistan

Mr First Vice President Massoud, ministers, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

On behalf of the Government of Norway, it is my privilege today to congratulate the Government of Afghanistan for hosting the first meeting of the Task Force on Regional Electricity Cooperation in Central and South Asia. Norway is following closely the process which started with the Bishkek Declaration of 27 April 2007. As a fellow participant to the Energy Charter process, Norway is proud to contribute to the success of this series of events on facilitating cross-border power trade between Central and South Asia which she sees as an essential factor in contributing to increased living standards, peace, stability and economic prosperity not only of the Afghan people but also for the people of the region.

The Energy Charter Treaty is a multilateral framework for energy co-operation and integration which promotes efforts to build a legal foundation for energy security based on the principles of national sovereignty, open markets and sustainable development. The Treaty focuses on promoting energy integration by facilitating cooperation and assistance among its member states, encouraging free trade in energy including transit through pipelines and grids, helping the flow of cross-border investments and promoting energy efficiency. Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, China, Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan, Russia, Iran and Pakistan are all participants to the Energy Charter process.

Afghanistan possesses important indigenous energy resources of natural gas, coal, oil and hydroelectricity, mostly untapped. Moreover, the country's strategic location between energy rich Central Asia and the Middle East and the consumers of South Asia predestines Afghanistan to become a major transit route for energy, thereby strengthening Afghanistan's position as one of the leading players in the energy sector in this region.

On behalf of Norway, allow me to congratulate you Mr First Vice President and your Government for progressing speedily towards membership of the Energy Charter Treaty. In line with the Kabul Declaration of 2005, we believe that the Afghan Government's initiative to seek membership to the Energy Charter Treaty will go a long way towards achieving the economic targets set in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the "Afghan Compact". Participation in the Energy Charter process represents a strategic opportunity for Afghanistan to maximise its potentials; strengthen its national energy industry; signal its

readiness for improved international cooperation; stimulate investor interest in its energy sector; and build confidence and energy security with and among its neighbours. Today's meeting is just one example of the many benefits that a common membership to the Energy Charter Treaty might bring about. I wish all success to this first Meeting of the Task Force on Regional Electricity Cooperation in Central and South Asia. Norway will be proud to continue to support this process including in its implementation phase.

Thank you

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