



**Report of the 17<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting (MM)**  
**Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021, 10:00 a.m. (Istanbul Time)**  
**Held Virtually**

**Chair:** Republic of Turkey

**Attendance:**

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Kingdom of Bahrain, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Kingdom of Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, State of Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Nepal, Sultanate of Oman, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, State of Palestine, Republic of the Philippines, State of Qatar, Russian Federation, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Singapore, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Republic of Tajikistan, Kingdom of Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Uzbekistan, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The list of delegations appears in ANNEX I.

- (1) The 17<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting took place virtually on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 in Ankara, and attended by all ACD Member States, 30 of which were at the ministerial level.
- (2) The meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, under the theme "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism". He welcomed and expressed appreciation to all distinguished delegates to the meeting, praising all Member States of their contributions to the preparation of the draft Ankara Declaration during the Senior Official's Meetings. The Chair stressed Turkey's unique role in providing the connection between Europe and Asia, and mentioned that Turkey declared Asia Anew initiative in 2019 where the country aimed to re-connect with Asia. The Chair also underlined its intention to make the ACD more relevant. The Chair added that preparing ourselves for vaccines and the aftermath of the pandemic would be essential for building more resilient economies and tourism sectors in our continent, stressing the importance of innovative policies and solidarity as keys to success. H.E. Çavuşoğlu added that Turkey had been among the first countries to reopen under the "Safe Tourism" concept, praising the country's timely and innovative measures. The Chair also addressed the need to settle pending agenda, including the ACD Blueprint 2021-2030 and the Guiding Principles for the Functioning of the ACD Secretariat, stressing the need to conclude these documents for adoption to mark the ACD 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2022. He then expressed his appreciation to the State of Kuwait for hosting the Secretariat in Kuwait City, and thanked the Secretary General and the Secretariat for their continuous support. The statement of the Chair is attached in ANNEX II.



- (3) The Chair called for adoption of agenda. (See ANNEX III)
- (4) The ACD Secretary General, Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, expressed appreciation to the Republic of Turkey for chairing the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting and its efforts for the preparation thereof, including at the SOM level. SG then made a report by reiterating the initiatives and commitments of the Member States and the Secretariat by sharing the successful hosting of the virtual activities. He reported on unfortunate postponement of a number of confirmed activities due to COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretary General further announced that all activities would be reflected in the ACD Annual Report 2020, which was expected for circulation shortly after the Ministerial Meeting. He urged the Member States to keep the number of activities high in 2021, encouraging all Member States, including Prime and Co-Prime movers to consider organizing any forms of activities. The Secretary General continued with his intention to pursue the Secretariat's initiative in organizing the ACD Food Festival, and a reception to celebrate ACD Day on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021. He emphasized the need for all ACD Member States to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, preferably with a series of activities starting this year onward. He also reminded the Member States of the continuous relevance of the concept paper, titled "ACD in the Next Decade", with recommendation for the ACD Ministerial Retreat as a venue to set guidance for, among others, the Blueprint 2021-2030 and the ACD Vision for Asia Cooperation 2030. The Secretary General further recommended Member States to host meetings of Public Health Ministries to address the pandemic, among other issues, which would be compatible with public health diplomacy and the theme of this Ministerial Meeting. Moreover, while recognizing the leading role of the Republic of Turkey for extending its chairmanship until September 2021, the Secretary General further addressed the need for Ministerial Meeting to consider assigning SOM to deal with the pressing issue of future chairmanship in order to ensure the continuity of leadership and the notion of voluntarism with commitment. The Secretary General concluded the report expressing appreciation to the State of Kuwait for its continuous cooperation and support provided to him and the Secretariat, all ACD Member States for their assistance through their embassies in Kuwait, and the State of Qatar as the past chair and its commitment in hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACD Summit. The report by the Secretary General is attached in ANNEX IV.
- (5) All Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed appreciation to the Republic of Turkey for its chairmanship and for hosting the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting. They further appreciated the Chair for extending its chairmanship until September 2021. Appreciation also went to the State of Kuwait for providing premises and facilities to the Secretariat. All delegations commended the State of Qatar for its commitment to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACD Summit in the second half of 2021, and appreciated the Secretariat for its continued support and assistance to Member States.
- (6) With the theme "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism", all delegates discussed and exchanged their economic and social effects due to the pandemic, and shared their views on possible ACD collective efforts to deal with the challenges faced due to COVID-19. In particular, safe, easy, affordable access, and fair distribution of vaccine was key to fast recovery of Asian economies, as well as of the tourism sector in



the new normal. The Ministerial Meeting concurred that ACD was an important multilateral platform in that continued close cooperation and collaboration among the Member States were essential to down play the impact of the pandemic, and that the ACD countries had potential to galvanize their respective tourism industries. They viewed that sharing of best practices and knowledge, and learning from experiences among the Member States, especially on the measures and mechanisms undertaken to fight against the pandemic, were significant instruments to enhance health security and sustain recovery. The discussions also placed great importance on the priority areas of cooperation and gave special attention to multilateral cooperation in the economic, health and tourism, as well as the six areas of cooperation. Many delegations reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate through the six pillars of cooperation while stressing the needs for Member States to invest more in such pillars, especially for those who were Prime and Co-Prime movers. Science, technology and innovation, research and development, as well as culture and tourism, should be focused since they would contribute to fast recovery of the tourism sector amidst the ongoing pandemic. Some delegations recognized the importance of deepening cooperation with other organizations in the area of public health and medical systems for future crises. Suggestions and recommendations to establish ties with other regional organizations, such as CICA, World Health Organization, World Tourism Organization, and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) were also called upon for exchange of information and experiences.

- (7) Many delegations shared their measures undertaken during the pandemic in their countries, where focuses were made on stabilizing the situation in their countries and opening up of borders. The Meeting noted that the driving forces to revitalize tourism industry in Asia were public and private partnership, innovation and digitalization, research and development, technology transfer to the health sector, and strong health protocols.
- (8) Health Security was highlighted by one delegation through the promotion of 3H-society, namely healthy, high standards, and hygienic, referring to healthy pollution, high standards in economy, and hygienic and sanitary clean society. He also suggested to promote Bio, Circular and Green Economy (BCG) for sustainable development, which would complement the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, in Asia in the post COVID-19 era.
- (9) Another delegation suggested that its country, being a food-surplus country, would contribute to regional food security by working with other Members to get access to new markets in Asia including the Middle East.
- (10) Reviving and rebuilding the tourism sector was brought up as means to ensure jobs and to protect cultural and natural heritage. That delegation mentioned that its country was focusing on tourism promotion as a part of Three-Ts strategy, namely “Trade, Tourism and Technology” to achieve full potential of the tourism industry.
- (11) An idea was introduced to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, namely 1.) defining ways of cooperation in the area of COVID treatment and vaccination, and 2.) developing a cooperation plan in the new normal.



- (12) As a Prime-Mover in science, technology and innovation, the delegation concerned reaffirmed its commitment to contributing to the realization of the goals in this area, stressing that its highly digitized infrastructure helped the country to respond quickly during COVID-19 crisis and kept the society open for its people to enjoy their daily lives wish social distancing rules.
- (13) Bahrain's commitment was reaffirmed to hosting the ACD Meeting with other Secretaries General of regional and sub-regional organizations.
- (14) One delegation commented that ACD needed to stay committed to cooperation, reiterating that the forum has remained committed to promoting trans-Asia exchanges and cooperation and building an Asian community. This delegation stated that Asia had been an important engine for global economic growth while stressing that ASEAN became its largest trading partner in 2020 and the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) had injected strong impetus for the economic recovery of the region. The same delegation also commented the need to focus on anti-pandemic cooperation, as well as the need to jointly promote economic recovery and the need to tackle non-traditional security challenges.
- (15) The other delegation commented that it had provided foreign aid of over USD 1.54 billion and the country had helped reinforce community health systems by establishing core medical facilities in Asia and Africa. This delegation also commented that it would continue its support for the establishment of the ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases in the region.
- (16) Upon invitation to join the meeting as guest of the Chair, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) made her remarks by raising three policy priorities for the ACD Member States;
  - a. enhancing cooperation across members in transport and trade sectors, namely the freight transport policy, to ensure seamless flow of goods, especially for the landlocked countries. In this regard, reference was made to the UN Model Treaty on the Framework of Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific where ACD Member States should look into for consideration;
  - b. greening the post-COVID-19 recovery and focus more on climate mitigation and adaptation with renewable energy; and
  - c. focusing on increasing exchanges of best practices, knowledge and experiences across Member States for policy makers and governments to learn from each other, and collaboration was especially required in the areas of connectivity, technology, and SDGs. Developing this technical ties and cooperation would support the ACD to further promote and support implementation of regional solutions-oriented projects.
- (17) The Chair then called for the adoption of the Ankara Declaration and appreciated Ministers and all Heads of Delegations for the positive discussion during the Ministerial



Meeting and for sharing their experiences and measures undertaken during COVID-19. The Chair also expressed appreciation to all ACD Member States for their contribution throughout the Ministerial Meeting.

*\*Remark\**

The Secretariat received a copy of statements from 22 delegates as appear in ANNEX V.



## ANNEX I

	Member State	Head of the Delegate
	Turkey ( <b>CHAIR</b> )	Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu – Minister of Foreign Affairs
1	Cambodia 10.22-10.25	Prak Sokhonn - Cambodia Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
2	Kazakhstan 10.26-10.29	Mukhtar Tileuberdi - Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
3	Thailand 10.30-10.33	Don Pramudwinai - Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
4	Nepal * 10.34- 10.37 (*then Hon. Min. will attend Nepal specific UN meeting)	Pradeep Kumar Gyawali - Minister of Foreign Affairs
5	Bhutan 10.38-10.41	Dr. Tandi Dorji - Minister of Foreign Affairs
6	Brunei Darussalam 10.42-10.45	Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof - Second Minister of Foreign Affairs
7	Kuwait 10.50-10.53	Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah - Foreign Minister
8	Laos 10.54-10.57	Saleumxay Kommasith - Minister of Foreign Affairs
9	Myanmar 10.58-11.01	U Kyaw Tin - Union Minister for International Cooperation



10	Palestine 11.02-11.05	Dr. Riad Malki - Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
11	Tajikistan 11.06-11.09	Sirojiddin Muhriddin - Minister of Foreign Affairs
12	Uzbekistan 11.10-11.13	Abdulaziz Kamilov – Minister of Foreign Affairs
13	Oman 11.14-11.17	Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi - Minister of Heritage and Tourism
14	Bangladesh 11.18-11.21	Md. Shahriar Alam, State Minister for Foreign Affairs
15	Singapore 11.22-11.25	Mr. Chee Hong Tat - Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Transport
16	United Arab Emirates 11.26-11.29	Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh - Minister of State
17	Afghanistan 11.30-11.33	Mirwais Nab - Deputy Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs
18	India 11.34-11.37	Ms. Riva Ganguly Das - Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs
19	Indonesia 11.38-11.41	Mr. Mahendra Siregar - Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs
20	Kyrgyzstan 11.42-11.45	Nuran Sadyrovich Niyazaliev - First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
21	Malaysia 11.46-11.49	Dato' Kamarudin Jaffar - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs



22	Mongolia 11.50-11.53	Mr. Batsumber Munkhjin - Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
23	Republic of Korea 11.54-11.57	Lee Seong-ho - Deputy Minister For Economic Affairs
24	Viet Nam 11.58-12.01	Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Van Thao
25	Bahrain 12.02-12.05	Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa - Undersecretary of International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
26	Russia 12.06-12.09	Ms. Evgeniya Chukhnova - Deputy Head of Russia's Federal Agency for Tourism
27	Saudi Arabia	Muhanna Salih Abalkhail (Ambassador) - General Director of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
28	Iran 12.10-12.13	Mohammad Javad Zarif - Minister of Foreign Affairs (video message)
29	Pakistan 12.14-12.17	Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi - Minister of Foreign Affairs (video message)
30	Philippines 12.18-12.21	Teodoro L. Locsin Jr.- Minister of Foreign Affairs (video message)
31	Sri Lanka 12.22-12.25	Dinesh Gunawardena - Minister of Foreign Affairs (video message)
32	China 12.26-12.29	Luo Zhaohui - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (video message)
33	Japan 12.30-12.33	Kokuba Konosuke - Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs (video message)



34	UNESCAP 12.34-12.37	Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana - Executive Secretary
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## ANNEX II

### **OPENING STATEMENT BY THE ACD CHAIR H.E. MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies, Dear Secretary General,

I welcome you all to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

Our intention was to host you in Turkey. Unfortunately, the pandemic did not allow us to hold a physical meeting.

Today, I am addressing you from Brussels, where I am having talks with the EU, NATO and Belgian officials.

In a way, this has a symbolic meaning.

Turkey, as the easternmost country of Europe and the westernmost country of Asia, plays a unique role in providing the connection between the two continents.

While we have a deep integration with the West, we do not detach ourselves from our proud roots in Asia.

We are devising new strategies to best position ourselves in this era frequently characterized as the “Asian century”.

For this, we declared our Asia Anew initiative in 2019.

We aim to re-connect with Asia with stronger bonds.

As we take pride with the rise of Asia, we will keep working with all of you to make this organization more relevant to this rise.

Dear Colleagues,

Our Chairmanship coincided with a historic global crisis.

The pandemic hit all our societies and economies.

Countries dependent on trade, tourism, foreign remittances and hydrocarbons felt the effects even more.

The impact on the tourism sector was particularly harsh. -We therefore chose the theme of this Ministerial as “the New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism”.



With the advent of the vaccines, we all started preparing ourselves for the aftermath of Covid-19 and new normal.

It is time for reflection. The pandemic has proven that without innovative policies and solidarity, we cannot win. -This is also valid for building more resilient economies and tourism sectors.

During the pandemic, Turkey was among the first countries to reopen for tourism.

Thanks to our timely and innovative measures, such as the “Safe Tourism” concept, we were able to host nearly 15 million visitors last year.

Keeping our hopes for a better 2021, we are ready to share our best practices.

Dear Friends,

As the ACD celebrates its 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we need to re-energize this forum.

The “Ankara Declaration” that we will adopt today will be an important roadmap for us.

I would like to thank all Member States for their contributions to this important document.

I also commend the good and hard work of our Senior Officials in the process leading up to the Ministerial.

They should keep consultations throughout the year and conclude pending agenda items, including the negotiations on “the Blueprint 2021-2030”.

This important document will lay the ground for action in the next decade under the 6 pillars of cooperation of the ACD.

We should complete our work on “the Guiding Principles for the Functioning of the ACD Secretariat”.

The need for a comprehensive set of rules of procedure for the operation of the ACD as a whole has become clear.

We should also initiate work on this document and have it adopted by 2022 to mark the ACD’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In the coming period, our Chairmanship will steer the work of the ACD towards translating our 2030 vision into action.



To that end, I encourage the Prime Movers and Co-Prime Movers to increase their activities.

Turkey would also like to join these Movers.

Before concluding, I express our deepest appreciation to Kuwait, as the host country, for their gracious support in facilitating a smooth operation of the ACD Secretariat.

I also would like to commend Secretary General Danvivathana and his team for their professional work.

I am confident that with your valuable contributions, today's Ministerial will bring fruitful outcomes.

Thank you.



## **ANNEX III**

### **-Programme- 17<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting (21 January 2021)**

#### **Morning Session (10.00-13.00 UTC+3)**

- Welcome remarks by the Chair (Republic of Turkey)
- Statement by the Former Chair (State of Qatar)
- Adoption of the agenda
- Report of the ACD Secretary-General
- Report on the first meeting of the ACD Chambers of Commerce and Industry by TOBB President (as the Ministerial side-event)
- Statements by Heads of Delegation of Member States

#### **Afternoon Session (13.00-15.00 UTC+3)**

- Statements by Heads of Delegation of Member States (continued)
- Remarks by the Executive Secretary of UNESCAP
- Adoption of the Ankara Declaration
- Closing remarks by the Chair (Republic of Turkey)



## ANNEX IV

**Report by Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana**  
**Secretary General, Asia Cooperation Dialogue**  
**17<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting (held virtually)**  
**21 January 2021**

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*Your Excellency, Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, ACD Chairman,*  
*Excellencies,*  
*Distinguished Delegates,*  
*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Republic of Turkey for chairing and making all efforts in the preparation for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting, including at the SOM level. Due to the pandemic, it is with regrets that we are not able to see your beautiful country, but the efforts undertaken by the Chair to prepare the Draft Ankara Declaration for adoption today has shown a remarkable commitment to our forum.

At the beginning of 2020 we received a number of confirmed activities to be hosted by Member States. However, all had to be postponed, including the ACD Food Festival which the Secretariat initiated to organize for the first time in Kuwait. Even with much uncertainties and challenges, there were some activities held virtually, including a virtual high-level discussion on “Leveraging the Effects of the Pandemic Towards Regional Cooperation in Asia” by the Chair, Conference on “the New Normal for Higher Education Across Asia: Post-COVID World and How Universities in Asia Respond” organized by ACD University Network (ACD-UN), a virtual Conference of the ACD Tourism Dialogue under the theme “Mitigating Covid-19 Pandemic Impacts Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism” by the Republic of Indonesia, and Green Ecological Grain Storage Technology Training Workshop for the ACD countries by the People’s Republic of China, held from 17<sup>th</sup> November to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Detail of activities will be reflected in Annual Report 2020 to be circulated to Member States next week. In the Report, it appears that more initiatives and activities need to be organized



under the six pillars of cooperation. I would like to encourage all Member States, including the Prime and Co-Prime movers, to consider organizing any forms of conferences and activities, particularly projects, to revitalize and re-energize our forum. Nonetheless, the Secretariat launched a Facebook page on ACD Day on 18<sup>th</sup> June. I wish Member States would follow and share our Facebook page to friends of ACD to raise our profile and footprint.

I would like to stress that the Secretariat wishes to pursue our initiative on organizing the ACD Food Festival once the situation can be controlled, and to hold a reception to celebrate ACD Day on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021. In this regard, I hope all Member States may commemorate 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year, if possible, with a series of activities in their respective countries starting this year onwards.

Excellencies,

At the ACD Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA 74 in September 2019, I made my recommendation that a Ministerial Retreat should be organized to discuss further the concept paper, titled "ACD in the Next Decade" which had received preliminary comments at that time. The Retreat will also serve as a venue to set guidance for the Blueprint 2021-2030 and the ACD Vision for Asia Cooperation 2030.

I made another recommendation before formal SOM that meetings of line ministries be encouraged which should include public health ministries, whether at the SOM level or the Ministerial level, or both, to address the pandemic, among other issues, in a broader perspective. This proposal is compatible with public health diplomacy and pertinent to this year's theme of "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism". I am glad that this idea is incorporated in the Draft Ankara Declaration awaiting final adoption by Ministers today thanks to the able Chairmanship of Turkey and the ACD spirit of compromise.

There is a pressing issue of future chairmanship which should be addressed properly and in due course, especially when we are going to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ACD in 2022. I already made my suggestion during the formal and informal SOM sessions, and I would like to recommend to Ministers to kindly consider assigning SOM to deal with this matter in order to ensure the continuity of leadership and the notion of voluntarism with commitment.



On my official and personal note, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the State of Kuwait for their continuous support provided to me and the Secretariat, and to the ACD Member States for cooperation and assistance through their embassies in Kuwait. Last but not least, I would also like to extend my appreciation to the State of Qatar for its past active chairmanship and for its commitment in hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit.

Thank you very much.



## ANNEX V

**Remarks**  
**By H.E. Mr. PRAK Sokhonn**  
**Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and**  
**International Cooperation**  
**At the 17<sup>th</sup> Asia Cooperation Dialogue Foreign Ministers' Meeting**  
21 January 2020, Ankara, Republic of Turkey,  
Via video conference

*Thank you FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu,  
Dear Colleagues,*

1. Cambodia commends Turkey's chairmanship of the ACD over the last two years and truly appreciates Turkey's graceful offer to continue holding the Chairmanship in 2021 to ensure the ACD's continuity during this COVID-19 pandemic.

2. This Ministerial Meeting under the theme "New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism" sends a strong message of ACD's collective response to overcome the COVID-19 and its collateral effects. With its constant mutation, the virus is not going away any time soon and so the need to reinforce our capacity to assist our peoples to adapt to the New Normal is of utmost importance. We must focus on an effective and comprehensive recovery process so that our regional and global supply chains, our cross-border trade, investment, international tourism and people mobility are facilitated to the maximum possible.

3. As many sources of vaccines are now available, we must be committed to a vaccine multilateralism in order to ensure that these vaccines are accessible and affordable under the spirit of "leaving no one behind". I take this opportunity to thank China for providing Cambodia 1 Million doses of vaccines. This gesture truly reflects the ACD's solidarity at its best.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

6. As a Co-Prime Mover on Tourism, Cambodia believes that culture is an invaluable asset that holds both intrinsic and universal values across space and time. Leveraging culture in tourism has become a core pillar of our engine of economic growth and development. Cambodia is keen to welcome all delegates to visit our Angkor Wat temple complex and discover its many wonders, when the pandemic is under control, of course.

7. To that effect, our Ministry of Tourism is now developing, as part of our mitigation strategies, a roadmap for Tourism Recovery during and post COVID-19 pandemic. This roadmap lays out measures to be executed by a special tourism working group in order to monitor the outbreak and make sure that businesses implement all the health protocols and directives.



8. Moreover, to support the SMEs in the tourism industry we are providing relief measures such as loan facilitation schemes, rental fees reductions, and other measures aimed at ensuring their continued operations under the current difficult circumstances. Cambodia will restart safe and responsible tourism activities by strictly following the guidelines and protocols recommended by WHO and our health authorities in order to rebuild trust and confidence for domestic and international travelers.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

9. The ACD has come a long way. Over the past 19 years, we had witnessed constructive cooperation and close collaboration. Under the ACD spirit and guided by the principles of shared interests, Cambodia stands ready to work with ACD partners to further advance the ACD process and its contribution to the post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery in our region and beyond.

10. As the Host country of the 13th ASEM Summit this year, Cambodia will continue to voice our full commitment to multilateralism in order to combine our forces to overcome the COVID challenges and achieve the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

Thank You!



**Remarks by the Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Foreign  
Affairs**

**of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. M. Tileuberdi  
at the 17<sup>th</sup> Council of Foreign Ministers of the ACD  
(January 21, 2021)**

**Chairman Mevlut Chavushoglu,**

**Distinguished colleagues, Excellencies,**

At the outset, I would like to thank the Turkish Chairmanship for organizing the ACD Ministerial Meeting.

I hope that today's meeting will further contribute to the ACD development and help enhance cooperation among Member States.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Over the past few decades, Asia has become a dynamic region in the world and has shown impressive growth. Its enormous economic potential has become a driving force behind the global development and stability.

Currently, the entire world is experiencing the coronavirus pandemic, which caused instabilities in the international financial and foreign exchange markets, had negative implications for the global economy, exacerbated the well-being of peoples and impeded close contacts between states.



Moreover, the pandemic has affected the tourism sector and many countries that receive significant revenues from the incoming foreign tourists.

In such circumstances, we need to take a comprehensive approach to counter new challenges and manage difficult situations.

Our top priority should be to search for new ways to enhance partnerships in investments and technologies, and deepen business ties. It is high time for us to transform the global challenge into new opportunities, especially in the tourism sphere.

It is important that the ACD covering the most part of Asia cooperate with specialized organizations, fora and various multilateral processes. This would help to advance economic prosperity and move forward the goals of the ACD.

In this regard, as the CICA Chair, Kazakhstan suggests to explore establishing ties between the ACD and CICA Secretariats to jointly discuss the possible ways of interaction in various spheres, including tourism, which is one of the important CBMs (*confidence-building measures*) in the CICA.

We also attach great importance to cooperation in World Trade Organization (WTO). Therefore, we as the host of the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference (*to be held in June 2021*) invite your delegations to attend this important event.



## **Distinguished colleagues,**

Kazakhstan is convinced that in order to counter contemporary challenges, we all need to double our efforts to expand economic cooperation, develop modern transport networks, create new commercially viable projects, find effective dispute management mechanism and increase people-to-people ties.

In this regard, we propose the following:

**First**, we should expand cooperation with international and regional organizations and fora to exchange information and experience on current projects in the fields of healthcare, tourism and investment opportunities;

**Second**, we could continue facilitating visas and helping restore and increase the number of flights connecting Asian capitals and business and financial centers;

**Third**, we may encourage coordination of policies among the ministries of tourism, transport and health to develop coherent travel policies and procedures. The appropriate meetings could be hosted and facilitated in the ACD framework. The efforts should be aimed at restoring and supporting the tourism industry;

**Fourth**, ACD is to focus on development of digital business opportunities for small and medium-sized companies in the tourism sector.



Before I conclude, let me reiterate our willingness to continue cooperation within the ACD framework. The Ankara Declaration that we will adopt today lays out concrete steps for us to take to move forward towards landmarks and milestones of the ACD.

I am confident that as a result of our consistent efforts, the ACD will evolve as an effective platform for the development of mutually beneficial trade and cooperation, thus helping to ensure Asian prosperity.

**Thank you for your attention.**



**Statement by Hon. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal at the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) (Virtual, Ankara, 21 January 2021)**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Hon. Ministers,  
His Excellency the Secretary General of ACD,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good Morning and Namaste!**

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciations to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for successfully steering the organization and hosting this meeting. I commend the Secretary General of ACD and his team at the Secretariat for the excellent preparation.

Nineteen years ago, in 2002, we founded the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) with the objective of promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and interdependence among Asian countries and improving the quality of life of our people. I believe, today's meeting will be yet another milestone in generating further impetus to the ACD process towards this direction.

As we confront with the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 pandemic, the theme of the meeting "*The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism,*" carries a significant meaning for the new normal that we have to live with.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The pandemic has caused a colossal damage everywhere disrupting our lives, livelihoods, and economies. It has also hugely impacted the hard-



earned development gains, including achievement of SDGs. Tourism, undoubtedly, is the hardest-hit sector by this pandemic.

Nepal has placed top priority to protect people's lives from the disease and hunger. We have initiated necessary policies and programs to provide budgetary relief, incentives, and stimulus packages to the affected people and sectors, including the tourism sector.

Nepal has scrupulously been executing safety, health and sanitation protocols in all tourism related activities supported by awareness programs at people's level. Domestic and international flights are being gradually opened ensuring compliance with proper health and security measures. Our focus is to save jobs and keep the economy afloat, and revive the travel and hospitality industry following new set of norms and health protocols.

We are keen to work with fellow member states in boosting the testing, tracing, screening and treatment of the Covid-19 patients. Synchronized and effective systems need to be put in place for testing of international travellers at the source, transit and destination countries to reduce the health risk and develop confidence of the travellers.

Close cooperation among the member states as well as partnership with private business is critically important for bringing the tourism sector to normality, particularly while opening international borders, flights, and peoples' movement.

Sharing of best practices, knowledge, skills and experiences in this regard would also be highly crucial so as to sustain the new norms in the new normal and prevent sudden upsurge of the pandemic.

In parallel, we need to ensure easy and affordable access to vaccines and other essential medical items to check the virus and gradually return to the normalcy.

**Mr. Chairman,**



As an emerging global economic powerhouse, Asia assumes the leading role in global trade, supply chain, and innovation. Blessed with abundant natural and human resources; and, being a rich mosaic of diverse history, culture, civilization, geography, economies and political systems; the continent truly holds a high potential for socio-economic development, technological advancement and prosperity.

Development and improvement of quality of infrastructure is a key to build connectivity in ACD region, economic integration, inclusive growth and people-to-people contact. For a landlocked country like Nepal, ensuring all modes of connectivity will be the key enabler to narrow the development gap and achieve equitable and inclusive growth.

Equally vital would be the promotion of investment and business activities in such priority areas as agriculture, energy, connectivity, tourism, education, science, technology and innovation, as well as sustainable development.

It is imperative to enhance cooperation and collaboration for mitigation and adaption of the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Nepal accords high priority to regional cooperation. We have full confidence on principles, values and goals of ACD. We stand ready to proactively engage with the fellow Member States to advance the ACD process.

We believe that ACD can play a significant role in strengthening mutual trust, forging common understanding, and promoting cooperation and collaboration among the Member States for peace, stability, shared development, and prosperity of the Asian nations.

I thank you all.



**(Virtual) 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)**  
**Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021**

*Statement by H.E. Lyonpo (Dr.) Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan.*

Your Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

1. I have the honour to convey the warm greetings of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and that of the Government and people of Bhutan to this virtual august gathering.

2. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate the Republic of Turkey for assuming the Chairmanship of ACD. Mr. Chairman, we are confident that ACD will gain further momentum under your able stewardship. I would like to assure you of our full support and cooperation in furthering our common goals.

Excellencies,

3. My delegation welcomes “The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism” as the theme of the Seventeenth ACD Ministerial Meeting. Starting as a public health emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved into an economic and a human crisis of unprecedented proportions. As governments locked down in an effort to contain the pandemic, economic activities have been disrupted, leaving millions of people jobless, pushing them into poverty and hunger, and causing a downturn in the world economy.

4. For a landlocked country like Bhutan that relies heavily on imports, border closures and transport and other restrictions are taking a heavy toll on trade and manufacturing activities. The impacts on the economy and the livelihoods of people have been severe. The GDP has fallen to an unprecedented low of negative 2.1 percent.

5. The industry most affected is tourism which is our largest source of revenue after hydropower. Imposing travel restrictions on incoming tourists from 7



March 2020 effectively shut down the tourist industry affecting more than 50,000 workers. They comprise 16 per cent of the economically active population and their loss of livelihood is estimated to have adversely affected 150,000 people in a country of 750,000.

6. With the service sector accounting for 43 percent of GDP of which tourism comprises about a third, the urgency to reopen our borders for tourist and trade is felt acutely through all sections of the society.

7. However, with the pandemic still continuing to spike in countries around the world, reopening the tourism industry has to be done in a phased and safe manner. The national efforts in reviving and rebuilding the tourist industry in the new normal should be supplemented with greater cooperation among the ACD members in areas such as sharing of information on best practices pertaining to health standards; implementation of policies and measures to bolster confidence of domestic and international visitors; guidelines on creating a safer and healthier environment to protect both the tourist and the local staff and digitalization of services among others.

8. Collaboration among the members is critical not only for safe reopening of tourism sector, but to bring far reaching structural changes in the tourism sector with an objective to build a resilient, inclusive and sustainable tourism in the new normal. The tourism policy of Bhutan based on High Value and Low Volume to ensure sustainability could be used here as a reference.

Excellencies

9. When the region and the world is faced with great difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACD needs to align itself to address such unprecedented challenges and other emerging priorities. We need to make use of this forum as an avenue to turn our vast potential into mutual benefits and pool our individual strengths together to make a stronger Asia.

10. Bhutan fully supports the Ankara Declaration, which underscored the urgency for stronger cooperation among the ACD member countries to make COVID-19 vaccines easily available at fair rates and in combating and preventing infectious diseases. Cooperation in health sector is the need of the hour which will complement the members' effort in defeating the virus that has devastated their communities and economies. In this regard, an early meeting of the ACD Health Ministers would be most welcome to provide guidance on the matter.



11. Bhutan highly values the role played by the ACD in strengthening cooperation among Asian countries, and the progress made in the diverse fields in the past decade. I wish to applaud the Prime Movers and Co-Prime Movers for their hard work and contributions to foster cooperation in their respective priority pillars. It is through such concrete activities that the ACD will be able to transform Asia into a continent of peace, progress and stability underpinned by inclusive and sustainable development as envisaged in our vision 2030. Bhutan on our part remains fully committed to the shared goals and aspirations of the ACD

12. In conclusion, I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Republic of Turkey for the initiative to organize this virtual ministerial meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary General for updating us on the progress made since our last ministerial meeting in 2019 and the secretariat for the excellent documentation for the meeting.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!



**(Statement by Kuwait Delegation)**

Your Excellency Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey,  
Your Excellencies honorable ministers,  
Your Excellency Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, Secretary-General of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue,

At the outset, I am pleased to express my thanks to the Republic of Turkey for hosting the Seventeenth Ministerial Meeting of the ACD. In this regard, I would like to extend my thanks to the State of Qatar for their efforts during their chairmanship of the Sixteenth Ministerial Meeting of the ACD, as well as my gratitude towards the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and ensuring the seamless coordination between member-states.

Excellencies,

Our meeting takes place in exceptional and delicate circumstances following the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. In this regard, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and my best wishes for a speedy recovery for all those who are undergoing treatment.

The ramifications of the pandemic have cast a long shadow over every aspect of our life and have threatened to disrupt the security and stability of our countries. Increased cooperation has become necessary in order to meet these global challenges and ensure the safety of our citizens.

Excellencies,

The State of Kuwait places a great emphasis on the Asia Cooperation Dialogue in its ability to bring the nations of the continent closer. The ACD is the only forum that brings together all the countries of Asia. Kuwait actively encourages the work of the ACD based on its firm belief that our countries must act together in order to be capable of realizing the hopes and aspirations of our peoples. Kuwait has the honor to be the first to hold ACD meeting on all levels; the first ACD Summit, the ACD Ministerial meeting, and has the privilege to host the ACD Secretariat.



Excellencies,

In light of the challenges that ACD members are currently facing, we must work together to create the appropriate atmosphere for increased cooperation for the benefit of our peoples. A positive step in this field was the conference held yesterday, 20 January 2021, by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of member-states of the ACD.

This meeting provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the challenges we are all facing. It also provides the opportunity to lay the groundwork to achieve the goals drawn up by the 2030 Vision of the Kingdom of Thailand, which was approved during the Second ACD Summit.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for its efforts and I hope that our goals will succeed for the good of all our countries and our peoples.

I thank you all

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.



**Speech by H.E. U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation  
of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of  
the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)**

**Thank you Dear Hon. Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu,  
Excellencies,**

At the outset, I wish to thank Republic of Turkey for chairing this virtual ACD meeting.

We are meeting today when the whole world is confronting multitudes of challenges including rising threat to multilateralism, geopolitical tensions, existential climate crisis, and above all, the current COVID-19 pandemic which has disrupted economies, livelihoods and social fabric of peoples in every corner of the world.

It is a sad truth that COVID-19 is reversing our hard-fought gains towards achieving sustainable development. We, therefore, must turn this COVID-19 into an opportunity to renew our commitment to multilateral and regional efforts to build a more equitable, inclusive, sustainable and resilient society.

Much as it has resulted in the loss of human lives, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected every sector, especially the global tourism



and hospitality industries amid the global travel restrictions. As the tourism industry has been one of the major contributors to our GDPs for many of our ACD Member States, we cannot have a better choice than this year's theme for this dialogue, "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism".

**Mr. Chair,**

I am happy to witness that the ACD, born almost two decades ago, has made gradual advancement in cooperation and partnership especially in the priority areas based on its unique principles of informal dialogue, inclusiveness, and complementarity among us. In this regard, further strengthening cooperation in alleviating the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 will be crucial to achieve the objectives of the ACD.

Having rich history, diversity, cultural richness and natural beauties, our region has huge potential to rejuvenate tourism industry. We believe that promotion of intraregional and interregional tourism is important as this sector not only contributes to our economy but also enhances understanding and friendship among our peoples thereby



fostering peace, harmony and stability in the region. In this regard, I am encouraged to see that some Member States have launched Green corridor or travel bubbles. Myanmar is making necessary preparations to revive the tourism industry by implementing bilateral and sub-regional safe travel schemes, as and when the COVID-19 situation subsides.

Coordination in economic responses is also crucial for ACD member countries. We should encourage complementary investment flows, unimpeded trade and free flow of goods and services. Strengthening of intra-regional trade and regional value chains is also vital for diversifying export markets.

Being an agro-based and food-surplus country, Myanmar will be happy to contribute to regional food security by working with other ACD Member States to get access to new markets in Asia including the Middle East for our agriculture and marine products. In our efforts to control this pandemic, we should not allow to disrupt regional food supply chain during the present and future health pandemic and crisis.

**Mr. Chair,**



The Ankara Declaration which we will be adopting today will serve as a roadmap for our future cooperation. On our part, Myanmar stands ready to work closely with other fellow ACD members in implementing future work of the ACD to achieve our common objectives.

Thank you.

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**Statement by Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh in the  
17th Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)**

*at 13:00 pm (Bangladesh Time) on 21 January 2021, Virtual Mode*

Hon'ble Chair, H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

Distinguished Ministers of the ACD Member States,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum and greetings from Dhaka.

It is an honour and privilege for me to join the 17th Ministerial Meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) even amid this global crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic. At the outset, let me pay my deepest respect to the memory of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The cherished dream of independence of Bangladesh came true due to his charismatic and visionary leadership. His clarion call of independence on 7 March united and inspired the Bangali nation to fight for liberation. That is why UNESCO included the historic 7th March speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the "Memory of the World International Register" in 2017. It is a matter of joy that celebration of the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation and observance of golden jubilee of our independence coincide this year in 2021.

I extend my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the current ACD Chair, the Republic of Turkey and the ACD Secretariat for their commitments and excellent efforts to arrange this virtual meeting.

I take the opportunity to welcome the initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) to designate 2021 as the International Year of Health and Care Workers (YHCW) at the 73rd World Health Assembly. I hope that an effective and safe vaccine against COVID-19 will be equally accessible which can help us to return to "The New Normal".

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Excellencies,

As a proud Bangladeshi I can say, Bangladesh has a host of natural treasures such as sea beaches, lakes, rivers, hills and forests etc. that offer significant value for tourist attractions. The Chittagong Hill Tracts with its scenic waterfalls and green hills, the world's longest uninterrupted sandy Cox's Bazar sea beach and the largest Sundarbans mangrove forest are the most popular tourist attractions in Bangladesh.



During winter season, Bangladesh becomes a charming place for migratory birds. Mainly, plenty of habitats for migratory and seasonal birds have made our country a paradise for ornithologists and nature lovers. Obviously, these geographical facts and features have established Bangladesh as a desirable destination for the tourists around the world.

Bangladesh is also rich in handicrafts and readymade apparel industry. For example- Jamdani, a flagship of Bangladeshi traditional handicraft has been recognized as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO back in 2013 due to its special characteristics, quality and reputation. Jamdani is one of the surviving ancient patterns of legendary Muslin. There is a saying that the Muslin woven in Bangladesh is so soft and fine that six yards of the fabric could pass through a single ring of the index finger! During the 18th century Muslin was highly popular in Europe and the Middle East.

Unfortunately, according to a very recent report, the total loss of tourism sector of Bangladesh is around \$2 billion in the end of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of Bangladesh has made special allocation in the budget of FY 2020-21 to recover the losses of the tourism sector.

Public private partnership, innovation & digitalization, strong health protocols in promoting tourism would be the key driving forces to make ACD region the top tourist destination. It is my fervent hope that, with the support of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the ACD Member States will be able to build sustainable, resilient and well-diversified supply chains.

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Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to seek your kind cooperation in settling Rohingya crisis. We are still grappling to arrange accommodation for around 1.1 million Forcibly Displaced Rohingya people. I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that due to the presence of a huge number of Rohingya people, environmental degradation is taking place in Cox's Bazar area which is one of the major tourist spot of Bangladesh. Bangladesh expressed her deep political will and sincere commitment to settle Rohingya crisis through bilateral and multilateral approach. Thank you for your support, so far you have extended.

Two centuries ago, the world abolished slavery by the power of humanity. We also pledged that genocide will happen “Never again” in the world. So, it will only require our true willingness to stop all kinds of misanthropic activities such as terrorism, genocide and all sorts of violence.

Excellencies,



In my concluding remarks, I deeply appreciate the offer of the State of Qatar to host the long awaited 3rd ACD Summit in 2021. Bangladesh is keen to provide all possible assistance to strengthen the ACD secretariat as well as to appoint diplomats in future.

I thank you all, Excellencies, for your time and for your kind attention.

Joy Bangla!

Joy Bangabandhu!

May Bangladesh live forever!

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Intervention by Mr Chee Hong Tat,  
Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Transport,  
at the 17<sup>th</sup> Asia Cooperation Dialogue Ministerial Meeting,  
21 January 2021

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my appreciation to the Republic of Turkey for its strong Chairmanship, and the commendable work by the Turkey MFA and the ACD Secretariat in organising this meeting virtually.

Singapore was one of the 18 founding members of the ACD when it was established 19 years ago. Since then, the ACD has grown to 35 members today. With its core values of voluntarism and openness, the ACD process has enabled diverse member countries to share experiences and find solutions to common challenges.

This is especially pertinent right now, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause unprecedented disruptions. No one could have predicted the scale of the challenges we now face. Businesses, especially tourism and air transport, have been hard-hit. Many jobs have been lost. It is therefore timely that our meeting is based on the theme, “The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism”.

I am pleased to note that the Ankara Declaration promotes cooperation to address key issues such as the development and fair distribution of vaccines for all, as well as maintaining open and uninterrupted supply chains. This is a constructive document that clearly sets out our common priorities. Singapore supports a fair and equitable distribution of vaccines. No one is safe until everyone is safe. Without us banding together as a global community, COVID-19 will continue to affect livelihoods of people around the world. Vaccines offer hope. Committing to “vaccine multilateralism” is the only way for us to achieve a speedy recovery through solidarity and science.

Meanwhile, we have to address the severe economic impact the pandemic has had on the global economy, including Singapore. As a small and open economy where our trade is nearly three times our GDP, Singapore holds no illusions that we can ride out the current situation alone. For decades, we have benefitted from a free, open and rules-based multilateral trading system. Economies are deeply inter-connected and inter-dependent.

We must secure our common path to recovery by strengthening an open and inclusive ecosystem for global trade. We have to maintain connectivity and keep supply chains running. Finally, we will work towards reopening air travel with



the necessary public health safeguards in place. These steps will mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Against this challenging backdrop, cooperation has become even more important. We will continue to share our experiences and provide technical assistance and training to our partners through the Singapore Cooperation Programme. This includes areas where Singapore is strong in, such as Public Administration, Civil Aviation and Water Management. I am confident that by working together, the ACD will be able to make a smooth and expeditious transition to a New Normal. Thank you.



## **Statement of HE Ahmed Al Sayegh Minister of State**

21 January 2021

### **3rd ACD Ministerial Meeting Asia Cooperation Dialogue**

#### ***Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen***

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Chair of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), the Secretary-General, the ACD Secretariat, and fellow member states for arranging and participating in today's event.

I also wish to commend the ACD for convening this Ministerial Meeting under the theme "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism".

This is indeed a timely topic, which is of crucial importance as we chart a positive path forward to recovery.

Similar to that which has been experienced by all other ACD member states, the United Arab Emirates' tourism and travel sectors have been heavily impacted by the ongoing global pandemic.

While I must concede that this has been a challenge of unprecedented scope, the UAE Government is confident that our country is truly on the path to a nascent recovery.

In this regard, the UAE very much looks forward to safely and openly welcoming the world to Dubai Expo 2020 later this year.

Expo 2020 will serve as a launching pad for the international community to build back better and stronger after the pandemic, and will offer an unparalleled opportunity to share lessons, solutions, and ideas for a better future.

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I believe the UAE has much to offer to our fellow ACD member states in respect to health and tourism best practice in the context of this so-called "new normal", and in striking an effective balance between the protection of life and livelihoods.

Key to our approach has been the implementation of a highly effective testing and tracing framework. Throughout the pandemic, the UAE has had one of the highest per-capita testing and vaccination rates in the world.



Furthermore, the rapid mobilization of health resources and consistent public communications messaging has played a critical role in protecting the well-being of the public and tempered the more devastating health impacts of this virus.

Most recently, the UAE has led the way in the rapid roll-out of safe and effective vaccines. With over 20 percent of the country's total population already receiving at least one vaccination dose, and with the goal to vaccinate over half of the UAE's population by the close of March, the UAE Government is certain that the worst days of the pandemic are potentially over.

Despite these achievements, I wish to underline that the UAE's response to COVID-19 is by no means limited to actions taking place within our borders.

The fact that the international community is in this fight together pervades all elements of the UAE's broader approach to COVID-19. We will continue to do all we can to support other countries in addressing this challenge.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The UAE, as a prime mover in the interrelation of food, water, and energy security pillar, remains committed to promoting progress in these crucial areas, particularly in the context of the recovery from COVID-19.

If anything, the ongoing global pandemic has reiterated to us all the vital need to foster and expand multilateral cooperation. In this regard, the UAE is dedicated fully to supporting the ACD's vision of harnessing our diverse strengths for a more prosperous and inclusive future. In order for us to succeed in our fight against COVID-19, it is essential that we increasingly leverage multilateral platforms such as the ACD to increase cooperation and constructive dialogue to address what is without doubt a shared global challenge.

I very much look forward to today's discussions and to working closely with all of you as we seek to curb the worst impacts of the pandemic on our communities and economies.

I am confident that through our dialogue we can develop new and effective measures to ensure a rapid and effective economic recovery, and a safe and resilient future.

Thank you.



**Remarks by**  
**Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**  
**H.E. Mirwais Nab**  
**At the 17<sup>th</sup> Asia Cooperation Dialogue Ministerial Meeting**  
**Video-tele Conference**  
**January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

Check against Delivery

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**H.E. Sedat Önal, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey and chairman of the meeting;**  
**H.E. Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, Secretary General of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue;**  
**Honorable Ministers;**  
**Distinguished Participants;**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

I begin with thanking the Turkish Chairmanship for convening today's meeting.

For the past 19 years, Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) has made great efforts to fulfill its tasks of building trust among its Member States and promote dialogue, peace, security and prosperity in our region and the continent. Afghanistan as a Member State appreciates and praises such efforts and has the honor to be a contributing member of this important Dialogue.

Sadly, we are not able to meet in person for this auspicious meeting due the COVID-19 pandemic, which is nothing but an unprecedented common threat to the people of the world in recent times. Yet, it has brought the countries and regions of the world closer than ever before to jointly address this plague.

We strongly believe that only through closer regional cooperation we will be able to address our common challenges and explore new opportunities and areas of collaboration.

As the ACD is a significant and effective platform for cooperation in sectors such as economy, culture, trade, finance and energy; we need to further enhance our cooperation in order to address not only the challenges of poverty, rapid population growth, climate change, extremism, radicalization, illicit drugs trafficking and terrorism in Asia, but also the new threat of COVID-19.

The fight against the spread of the pandemic in Afghanistan is by far more difficult compared to many other parts of Asia and the world, as we are also addressing the manmade plague of terrorism. We have been working closely with our regional and continental partners to address these two challenges, and I would like to thank all of the Asian states for their support during the pandemic times as well as their support of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned Peace Process.

We also call upon all Member States of ACD to condemn the barbaric and draconian attacks carried by the Taliban against the innocent civilian of Afghanistan.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the COVID-19 has negatively affected all fields of life, tourism which is a great tool for economic development of the countries in our continent, has seen no difference. Many touristic Asian countries have suffered from the pandemic which has left a great toll on their economies.



The Afghan tourism has faced a far greater challenge beside the COVID-19, that of insecurity and instability.

The 40 years of imposed wars in Afghanistan have devastated the tourism sector of the country. We should remember that prior to the imposed wars, Afghanistan used to be a top touristic attraction and destination in Asia.

We hope that the ongoing peace negotiations in Doha will result in a political settlement that will ensure the constitutional rights of the Afghan people and provide a secure environment for tourism in Afghanistan.

Tourism will not only improve people-to-people connectivity in Asia, but also enhance cultural exchanges between the countries of the continent. In order to normalize and facilitate tourism among ACD member states, we should work closely to simplify the visa procedures for all member states, and promote regional connectivity for smooth traveling of tourists.

**Distinguished Participants,**

In conclusion, once again Afghanistan renews its commitment to work closely with all its partners in Asia, within the ACD framework as well as bilaterally to achieve the important goals of this organization.

We look forward to engage in future ACD initiatives and activities, and wish a COVID-19 free 2021.

Thank you!



## **Statement by Secretary(East) at 17th Ministerial meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue, Ankara**

January 21, 2021

**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,**

It is a privilege to speak at this 17th ACD Ministerial meeting which has aptly chosen the theme "New normal and safe and healthy tourism."

The unprecedented challenge posed by the Covid-19 pandemic has severely tested the resilience of all nations and has brought out the indivisible aspect of human existence, calling for a coordinated response that goes well beyond national boundaries. Strong multilateral cooperation is critical in our collective fight against the pandemic as also for a global economic recovery.

Though it is difficult to visualize a new normal, Asia, the birthplace of major religions and civilizations of the world, which can proudly lay claim to natural connectivity due to historical & civilizational links, is taking this challenge head on. In the 'new normal', while we work to revive old businesses to bring back livelihoods, we must also focus on innovation and complementarities, and explore new business models.

Tourism has suffered significant losses due to the pandemic. It is now a priority for us to revive and rebuild this sector for ensuring jobs as well as for the protection of our cultural and natural heritage. India is focusing on tourism promotion as a part of Three-Ts strategy which includes "Trade, Tourism and Technology". I am confident that India with its geographical diversity, world heritage sites and niche tourism products like cruises, adventure-sports, eco-tourism and medical would rise to the occasion to achieve full potential of tourism industry.

Currently, our focus is on vaccines and rapid testing, so essential for travel normalcy. At this time, we need to strengthen our efforts aimed at the development of equitable and universal access to diagnostic tools, treatments and vaccines in order to promote safe and healthy tourism. India stands ready to collaborate with our partners in the international community towards achieving this goal. We have already supplied Covid related assistance to over 150 countries. Beginning January 20th, vaccines from India have started reaching our neighbourhood under grant assistance to Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Seychelles, reflecting India's commitment to use its



vaccine production and delivery capacity to help all of humanity to fight the COVID19 pandemic.

Excellencies, the multiple challenges ranging from the pandemic to terrorism, cyber crimes and conflicts over resources and territory, call on us to be more pro-actively engaged with each other to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Even amidst the ongoing pandemic, terrorism continues to pose a critical threat. We must cooperate to eliminate terrorism in all its forms, for terrorists do not believe in a nation, state or nationalism. Another area where we can gain from multi-faceted cooperation to address common challenges is the Indo-Pacific region with ASEAN at its centre. The Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 calls for a free, open, inclusive and a rules-based Indo-Pacific region, which promotes Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).

As the world's most dynamic and economically-vibrant region, Asia has the potential to serve as a growth engine for the rest of the world and contribute to global economic recovery in the post-pandemic scenario. In addition, there are deep cultural connections, like the common thread of Buddhism, which can be further reinforced to enhance connectivity in the region.

India has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote connectivity in Asia like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its further extension to Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam. Through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), we hope to bring positive global climate action as well as make infrastructure disaster resilient. In addition, India has extended development assistance worth US\$ 15.9 billion to Asian countries, covering transport, power generation and distribution, agriculture, manufacturing industries, health-care, education and capacity building.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Government of Turkey for steering the work of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) as the Chair and for hosting the 17th ACD Ministerial Meeting.

**Thank you.**



**STATEMENT BY  
H.E. DATO' KAMARUDIN JAFFAR  
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF MALAYSIA  
AT THE 17TH ASIA COOPERATION DIALOGUE MINISTERIAL MEETING  
21 JANUARY 2021 | TURKEY  
"The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism"**

**His Excellency Ambassador Sedat Önal,  
Chair of the 17th ACD Ministerial Meeting**

**Excellencies,**

**Assalamualaikum and a very good day.**

First and foremost, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Your Excellency for chairing this meeting.

2. We would have met in Ankara, if not for the COVID-19 pandemic which has nearly brought the international travel and tourism industry to a standstill.

3. The theme for this meeting "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism" is timely, given that tourism is among the worst affected sectors due to COVID-19. The pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis in the entire tourism ecosystem. The global economy's uncertainty demands all countries to find a way to balance between health and economy; and to rethink how the tourism industry would be in the future.

**Excellencies,**

4. Like other countries, Malaysia's tourism sector was badly affected by the pandemic's devastating impact. Tourism is the third-largest contributor to Malaysia's economy. Malaysia lost an estimated 25 billion dollars in 2020, due to travel restrictions, partial lockdown, and stringent border controls.

5. To revitalise the tourism sector during and post-pandemic, the Malaysian government has provided incentives and assistance that can be utilised by the tourism industry players. Among the stimulus packages provided includes 234 million dollars under the National Economic Regeneration Plan for tourism financing facilities in order to finance



transformation initiatives by SMEs in the tourism industry, which will enable them to remain viable and competitive in this new normal.

6. Malaysia also recently launched the National Tourism Policy 2020-2030, which aims to revive the tourism industry and reestablish Malaysia as the preferred tourism destination globally. This new policy includes strengthening competitiveness; encouraging sustainable and inclusive tourism sector development; and proper planning for future disasters.

7. Currently, Malaysia has begun its tourism recovery efforts through several vital strategies such as restoring confidence in travelling; reviving domestic tourism; and maximising tourism resources.

8. On the international fora, Malaysia is continuously exploring potential solutions through bilateral discussions with several countries to establish travel bubbles within designated green zones. On this note, Malaysia hopes to explore possible travel bubbles with ACD Member States through the ACD platform.

### **Excellencies,**

9. There is indeed an urgent need for all of us to re-strategise and revamp our approaches in the tourism sector. It is a challenging task as we try to balance the economy and health between livelihood and safety. The tourism industry will need to start preparing itself to restore travellers confidence by improving health screening and hygienic measures. The usage of modern technology and digitalisation would go hand in hand with the current circumstances.

10. As tourism and culture are among the six priority pillars of ACD, Malaysia remains optimistic and believes that ACD is one of many regional platforms that could develop innovative solutions and collective action to revitalise our tourism industry post-pandemic through a coordinated approach.

### **Excellencies,**

11. Malaysia is the co-prime mover of the ACD's Education and Human Resource Development Pillar. Through Asia e University (AeU), Malaysia offers AeU-ACD Scholar Awards for students in ACD Member Countries, offering scholarships to study business



administration, management, and ICT. With its thirteen years of experience in the higher education field, AeU is willing to explore the possibility of conducting and creating courses related to tourism, particularly post-pandemic tourism.

12. Malaysia hopes that ACD Member States will promote AeU and encourage your students to pursue their study at AeU.

### **Excellencies,**

13. In this unprecedented times, Asia and ACD Member States are facing tremendous challenges. Malaysia welcomes the proposal of the new ACD Blueprint 2021-2030. Malaysia hopes that the new Blueprint would assist Member States in addressing some of the current global challenges. In this regard, Malaysia looks forward to participating actively in the drafting of the new ACD Blueprint.

14. Malaysia also welcomes the Ankara Declaration and believes that it would serve as a foundation for ACD to become a more robust and dynamic regional platform. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Chairman and distinguish Member States that have contributed ideas and commitment to ensure the Ankara Declaration's adoption.

15. Finally, I wish to reiterate Malaysia's commitment towards ACD. Malaysia would continue to work closely with all ACD Member States and Dialogue Partners to achieve a prosperous and resilient region.

Thank you.

OIC and Regional Cooperation Division (ORCD)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia  
19 January 2021



**INTERVENTION BY H.E. MR. MUNKHJIN BATSUMBER,  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF MONGOLIA,  
AT THE XVII MINISTERIAL MEETING OF  
THE ASIA COOPERATION DIALOGUE**

(21 January 2021)

Mr.Chairman,  
Excellencies,

- I wish to extend my Government's sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the excellent organization of the first ever virtual Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.
- Mongolia firmly believes that the ACD as one of the leading mechanisms to forge a mutually beneficial cooperation in Asia.

COVID-19

- It has been one year since the world has started to strive through arduous challenges of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.
- Today public health emergencies stemmed from COVID-19 is changing the world, we live. Coronavirus can infect anyone and does not wait for anything. Thus, COVID-19 requires from us speed, agility, flexibility and most importantly a new mindset for deeper collaboration.

Multilateral/ACD cooperation vs. COVID-19

- The COVID-19 outbreak has not only exposed the fragilities and failures of the international system, it has also clarified the essential importance of global cooperation and its actors more than ever. We need a networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism in which the United Nations and its agencies, the international financial institutions, regional organizations and other relevant structures work together with stronger institutional links.
- In this connection, I find that the ACD Ministerial meeting is taking place at a right time and providing us with an opportunity to have a dialogue on mitigation of the COVID-19 impacts.
- The most distractive consequence of COVID-19 is nations are losing their close ties due to a year-long isolation with travel bans and multiple restrictions.
- Thus, there are two priority areas of cooperation for the ACD countries which I believe important:
  - Defining ways of cooperation in the area of COVID-19 treatment and vaccination, and



- Developing a cooperation plan in post-COVID époque of “new normal”.
- We believe that information, resource and experience sharing is still important for the COVID-19 diagnostics and treatment.
- We are of view that vaccines should be a global public good and we support COVAX and similar initiatives. Otherwise we cannot beat the virus and we cannot recover altogether from the pandemic. Until everyone is safe, no one is safe.
  - Among ACD countries, there are both vaccine producers and consumers. It gives us even more chance to support each other and work toward ensuring an equal and concurrent access to COVID-19 vaccine.
  - Yet, countries will be responsible for the vaccination of their own population. Hence, it should be also worthwhile for the governments of the ACD Member States to exchange their information and experience in defining vaccination strategy, plans, and guidance of the large-scale vaccination deployment.
- Though it remains uncertain when the borders will be re-opened, the countries need to be prepared for resuming their trade and economic cooperation in a “new normal” condition. In this regard, it is important to strengthen the confidence-building mechanisms not only in traditional political and military spheres, but also in health and medical fields. I am underlining it because during the pandemic, my country implemented rather successful measures to build health confidence with our immediate neighbors and we were able to maintain necessary trade relations. We must trust each other.

#### Tourism and Connectivity:

- We welcome much “The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism”, the main theme of this meeting. Indeed, one of the most affected sectors by the pandemic is travel and tourism.
- According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2020, international tourism declined over 70 percent, back to levels of 30 years ago. Asia and the Pacific experienced more than 80 percent decrease in arrivals in 2020<sup>1</sup>. It is especially unfavorable to the ACD countries, as many of them are the top tourist destinations not only in Asia but also in the world.
  - Digital tourism, local tourism and other types can be surely developed further. But development of digital tourism takes time; then its initial investment or R&D cost is high particularly for developing countries like us.

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<sup>1</sup> Impact assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak on international tourism <https://www.unwto.org/impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-on-international-tourism>



- In any case, we need to rethink our ways of cooperation within the six pillars of ACD Vision 2030 including the physical presence-sensitive sectors such as Tourism and overall Connectivity.
- In conclusion, I would like to express my hope that this meeting will have productive deliberations and its outcome would contribute not only to the development of the Asian region, but also to rebuilding of the post-pandemic “new normal” then “new future”.
- Thank you for your attention.

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## **Remarks by Lee, Seong-ho**

**Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea**

**17<sup>TH</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting, January 21, 2021**

Your Excellency Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is truly an honor to have you at the 17<sup>th</sup> Asia Cooperation Dialogue and I would like to thank the Government of Turkey for organizing this virtual ministerial meeting today. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Turkey for the acceptance of its Chairmanship until September 2021 and to Kuwait for its continuous support for the ACD Secretariat.

Since last year, we have seen unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still wreaking havoc on multilateral cooperation. With the recent news on the rollout of vaccines, the end of the tunnel seems within our reach. But the vaccines are not a panacea to solve the current global governance crisis. We need to spur new momentum into global governance with enhanced multilateral action to bring the pandemic to an end and prepare for the post-COVID-19 era. I believe the ACD will continue to give us a valuable opportunity to find ways to make this happen. Especially, we need to put great emphasis on promoting safe and healthy tourism in the ACD member countries, ahead of the major international events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 and EXPO Dubai 2020. The Republic of Korea, as a staunch supporter of multilateralism at global and regional levels, is ready to contribute to the endeavors.

As a prime mover in science, technology and innovation at the ACD, the Republic of Korea remains committed to contributing to the realization of the goals in this sphere. Korea was one of the first to be hit by COVID-19. But thanks to our highly digitized infrastructure, we could respond quickly and have managed to keep the virus at bay, while keeping society open



and allowing people to enjoy their daily lives with social distancing rules. We have also kept our borders open to the greatest extent possible not to hinder international travel.

Amid the pandemic, we have witnessed many cases of success and failures in other countries. These stories made us realize that without transparently, openly shared facts and trust based upon them, any advances in technology are deemed pointless. Beyond our cooperation on either the vaccines or the therapeutics, building trust is imperative for us to realize that our response and cooperation is based on facts and evidence, and that the technologies are not intended to undermine these basics. Korea is therefore ready to continue its commitment and support for capacity building of the ACD countries in this field.

Changes could bring out both risks and opportunities. I believe the times call for proactive diplomacy to manage future risks and use these opportunities the most to achieve peace and prosperity. I am sure that is the spirit in which we all meet today.

So I hope this aspiration is fully shared by all the participants gathered here for today's meeting.

Thank you.



## Remarks of

**H.E. Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa - Undersecretary of  
International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain  
At the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting  
(Videoconference)  
21 January 2021**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to participate by video conference in this **ACD 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting**. I am confident it will set the stage for greater cooperation between our countries in the years ahead and is particularly timely as the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the outset, **may I congratulate the Republic of Turkey on assuming the Chairmanship**, wishing you every success during your tenure. May I also convey greetings of H.E. Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Alzayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, whose previous engagements have prevented him from taking part in this important gathering, wishing this meeting a successful outcome.

Excellencies,

As a founding member of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue, and an active participant since its inception, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its commitment to the objectives, roles and principles of the Dialogue.

We in Bahrain are **keen to develop the ACD's activities, and we greatly appreciate the ACD Member States'** plans that have been put forward to achieve the ACD objectives across a range of fields. We look forward to the ACD's support for the preparation of the ACD Meeting with other Secretaries General of regional organizations in Asia to be hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain, as the first interphase between the ACD and potential development partners.

Today, the **ACD continues to demonstrate that it is an important platform for enhancing and exchanging cooperation, to strengthen trust among Member States,**



which is all the more welcome and necessary, **as Member States share experiences in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

In this context, I welcome this opportunity to briefly set out the Kingdom of Bahrain's comprehensive response to COVID-19. In doing so, I want to underline that our approach has always been based on the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to safeguard the health and welfare of all those in the Kingdom with emphasis to safeguard vulnerable groups, to limit the spread of COVID-19, and to raise awareness among all parts of society.

As a result of these measures, coupled with the cooperation and support of Bahrain's population and the selfless efforts of thousands of volunteers, no lockdown or curfew has been necessary and with more than 7,000 volunteers who participated in the third phase of the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinical Trial, joining our brothers in the UAE in the Phase 3 trial following promising results from the first two phases in China.

Finally, I want to reaffirm the importance Bahrain places on combating and defeating this pandemic, as is clearly demonstrated in our precautionary and preventive measures, which have been recognised by international organisations such as the WHO. In doing so, I **also want to highlight Bahrain's determination to provide free, comprehensive and high-quality care, treatment and vaccination for all residents and expatriates in the Kingdom of Bahrain,** based on His Majesty's firm belief in the shared values of humanity and brotherhood amongst people.

In closing, may I thank you, Excellencies, for giving me this opportunity, and assure you of the Kingdom of Bahrain's continued, full and strong support for the ACD. I look forward to learning more of other countries' experiences, and wish all of you, and your peoples, safety and good health in these challenging times.

Thank you.



**Statement (virtual) by**

**Foreign Minister Dr. Javad Zarif**

**At the 17th Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue**

**21 January 2021**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

My dear brother Mevlut,  
Distinguished Colleagues;

Allow me to express our sincere appreciation for the excellent arrangements by our Turkish friends. My special thanks to you, brother, for your able chairmanship, and my thanks to our distinguished Secretary General and his team.

Our rich and millennia-old Asian civilizations can empower us to collectively strive through Asia Cooperation Dialogue to bring about a new paradigm of global relations based on inclusion, dialogue, friendship and moderation. For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran has put forward initiatives—such as a Regional Dialogue Forum for the Persian Gulf region, as well as the “Hormoz Peace Endeavour” (HOPE)—to facilitate confidence-building and cooperation in this strategic but turbulent neighborhood. There are similar initiatives to promote dialogue in other parts of Asia. The ACD’s “priority pillars” for cooperation may be inserted into such regional initiatives all across Asia.

Dear Friends,

As we all entered 2021 still struggling against the COVID 19 pandemic, for Iran (and few other nations) the challenge has been severely compounded by a barbaric economic terrorism imposed on Iran by the now-disgraced Trump regime. Donald Trump and Mike Pompeo’s blatant and open attempts to deprive the Iranian people from food and medicine amid a global pandemic fits the text-book definition of a grave crime against humanity. Now that the American people themselves have thrown these sociopaths into the dustbin of history, we expect the international community, particularly our ACD partners, to finally reject Trump’s economic terrorism by stopping to observe his unlawful sanctions imposed on my people. Let me now turn to our theme, “The New Normal, Safe and Healthy Tourism”. As the Covid-19 pandemic understandably triggered an unprecedented and massive disruption to



international travel and tourism, the Asia-Pacific region were among the first to suffer from the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic, registering a 72% drop in international passenger arrivals. We fully support the ACD in its assisting tourism and tourism-enabled sectors to survive, and to even emerge stronger. Our Ministry of Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Handicrafts, as well as other relevant Iranian organizations, are prepared to consider, and contribute to, the ACD-sponsored activities in this regard.

Before concluding, I would like to highlight the importance of the ACD Secretariat. We believe that our 20-year-old ACD now deserves a stronger and more professional, institutionalized Secretariat. We highly appreciate the generous hosting of the Secretariat by Kuwait, and we support ACD decisions to strengthen the Secretariat in light of the evolving needs of our Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.



**Draft Remarks**  
**17<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting (Virtual)**  
**21 January 2021, Ankara**

Honourable Foreign Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to participate in the 17<sup>th</sup> Virtual Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ministerial Meeting.

I wish to congratulate the Republic of Turkey, the Current ACD Chair and the Foreign Minister of Turkey H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, for successfully leading ACD during these extremely challenging times of Covid-19.

Let me also express my deepest appreciation for the State of Kuwait for hosting the ACD Permanent Secretariat. We are particularly appreciative of the role of ACD Secretariat and Secretary General, Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana for organizing this important meeting. I am particularly appreciative of the role of in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that the Asia Cooperation Dialogue process has now been successfully transformed into a robust institutional mechanism for dialogue and discussions among the member states on issues of mutual interest. The commendable regularity of ACD meetings is a manifestation of its vibrancy and the faith manifested in the Asian community and its prospects.

The COVID Pandemic is a grim reminder to all of us that we need to work together and cooperate on issues of common interest. The pandemic has devastating repercussions on sustainable development and developing countries need more resources for responding to the pandemic and financing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

Now is the time to come forward and coordinate our actions, benefit from each other's experiences, and pool our resources by bringing governments, scientists and research institutions together to provide a better and secure future to our people.



On our part, Pakistan is open to sharing its own experience in effectively combating the pandemic and keeping the total cases and fatalities relatively low, as compared to regional countries. Our approach towards fighting the pandemic has been internationally acknowledged.

Our calibrated policies of ‘whole of the government approach’, ‘smart lockdown’ and ‘balance between lives and livelihoods’ abetted in not only curtailing the effect of the virus but also keeping our economy afloat.

We set up a National Command and Operation Center as a nerve center to synergize and articulate unified national effort against COVID-19. Moreover, we strengthened our welfare assistance programmes and extended all possible financial support to the most vulnerable segments of the society.

Our policy of ‘smart’ rather than complete lockdown prevented rapid community spread, protected the poorest from the worst fallouts of the lockdown, and helped stabilize the economy. We also did not leave our expatriates alone in this difficult hour and carried out a massive repatriation exercise for Pakistanis abroad due to closure of the international airspace and airports. Bringing back Pakistanis from more than 70 countries around the world was the largest repatriation operation in the history of our country.

Globally, the international community has taken some commendable steps to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19. But much more needs to be done – particularly for the poor who are hit the hardest, both in rich and poor nations.

Prime Minister Imran Khan was the first leader to highlight the importance of providing fiscal space to developing countries through provision of debt relief. In this spirit, the Prime Minister initiated a “Global Initiative for Debt Relief” to address debt vulnerabilities of the developing nations and to help create fiscal space for them to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and achieve sustainable development.

Nevertheless, the battle against the pandemic cannot be won unless the vaccine for COVID-19 becomes a public good so that it is easily and equitably accessible to each and every stratum of the society.

Excellencies,

Asia remains the fastest growing region of the global economy. However, we still continue to face challenges like poverty, food security, water scarcity, inadequate



health facilities, illiteracy, climate change and natural disasters. ACD is based upon the realization that these challenges can be overcome with our collective efforts.

A key element in our capacity to respond to these challenges is connectivity. A seamlessly connected Asia will be an Asia which is economically vibrant, politically stable, financially integrated, and culturally appreciative of its diversity. The ACD Blueprint 2021-2030 and the Road Map for ACD Regional Connectivity are important milestones in this respect, which need to be put into action.

Excellencies,

I am happy to note that we have successfully established a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Connectivity. We look forward to early convening of the inaugural meeting of the Executive Committee of this Joint Working Group.

In line with its obligations as the Prime Mover for Connectivity, Pakistan is at the center of efforts to connect our region. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under the “One Belt One Road” initiative, has the potential to connect South Asia with Central Asia and West Asia. It will provide high speed corridors from up-country to port cities, reducing travel time and operating costs.

Excellencies,

We believe that the theme “the new Normal and safe and healthy Tourism” will not only foster networking and improve connectivity but will also help in promotion of Tourism in the ACD member States. Being Co Prime mover of Tourism and Culture, Pakistan will extend all possible support to ACD’s agenda on Tourism and Culture. Promotion of multi-faceted tourism is one of the prime goals of Pakistan today.

It must be mentioned here that tourism in Pakistan has immense potential by virtue of our splendid cultural diversity, rich heritage and natural beauty. Pakistan has been blessed with four seasons, landscapes ranging from the snow-capped peaks of Himalayas to alpine meadows of Hindukush ranges, and from vast Indus plains to enchanting seashores. Moreover, a plethora of historical, cultural and religious heritage sites are scattered all over the map of Pakistan.

Pakistan is an active contributor of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), Indian Ocean Tourism Organization (IOTO) and Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).



I am also pleased to inform you that Pakistan is also preparing to host the ‘World Tourism Forum’ this year to showcase the country’s tourism potential and attract investment

Furthermore, to enhance trade and tourism, we have recently liberalized our visa regime. We have also launched e-visa system and provided lucrative incentives for foreign investors. The National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB) has been constituted and the Tourism Development Endowment Fund has been established.

### **Excellencies,**

In the end, I would like to reiterate that Pakistan firmly believes in ACD’s founding values of openness, consensus, voluntarism, respect for diversity, proactivity and result-oriented approach. We are fully committed to ACD’s Vision 2030 and the **Ankara Declaration** and welcome the establishment of ACD Permanent Secretariat in Kuwait.

We must seize the remarkable opportunity that ACD provides for making Asia a continent of stability, progress and prosperity.

I thank you all.

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**STATEMENT OF FOREIGN SECRETARY TEODORO L. LOCSIN, JR.**  
17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue  
21 January 2021

**Excellencies**

**Honorable and Distinguished Officials and Guests**

**Friends,**

**I convey my utmost appreciation and gratitude to our Chairperson Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Government of Turkey, the ACD Secretariat and its host Kuwait, for organizing the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting and the very first virtual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.**

**It is heartening to see that since the notion of an Asia Cooperation Dialogue was first raised in Manila in 2000, and formally established in Bangkok in 2002, the ACD has made substantial progress as an Asia-wide dialogue for economic collaboration and development. Now, the 35-nation strong ACD is at the cusp of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022.**

**We support the adoption of the Ankara Declaration that manifests our collective resolve to forge ahead with our work with greater vigor and stronger resolve /in the pandemic.**

**It's been a year since the pandemic broke out, disrupted the world and wreaked havoc on the world's economies. It was preceded by the greatest upsurge of growth in memory among many economies. Ironically this only widened income inequalities further.**



**They became more pronounced as the pandemic dragged on, with no signs of slowing down. It has set back our efforts to dismantle barriers to trade and investment flows and ease travel.**

**Our theme, “*The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism,*” focuses on the first and possibly worst casualty of COVID-19 — tourism. And just when a rebound seemed imminent with vaccination underway, it was met with greater pushback as new COVID variants emerged and countries plugged their borders again. The tourism industry maybe the last to fully recover, if at all unless it gets the needed attention and action from collective endeavors like the ACD. Our very energetic Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat remains positive that tourism will recover “with the strong support of stakeholders and partners” — especially by collective endeavors like this one.**

**Our president has said that we have to defeat the virus everywhere for anyone to be safe anywhere. We do this by strengthening partnerships like the ACD.**

**In the face of the pandemic, we must give hope to our peoples. We join our partners in the ACD in conveying this hope and rebuilding public trust in our recovery programs and such collective endeavours as these. Thank you. (END)**



**Country Statement by Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena,  
Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka  
17<sup>th</sup> ACD Ministerial Meeting, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021**

1. His Excellency Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Foreign Minister and Chair  
Dr Pornchai Danvivathana, Secretary General  
Distinguished delegates,
2. I am pleased to address the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue virtually held in Ankara.
3. At the outset, I wish to convey my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for hosting this distinguished gathering despite the ongoing pandemic, virtually, so that the work of the ACD does not get disrupted and the momentum is not lost despite setbacks.
4. The strong mandate given by the people of Sri Lanka to His Excellency the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa's *Visions for Prosperity and Splendour* at the presidential election in November 2019 has reinforced Sri Lanka's commitment to a friendly and Non-Aligned policy with a focal point on commitments to our peers in Asia through fora such as the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.
5. I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretariat of the ACD, spearheaded by his Excellency the Secretary General and his able team at the Secretariat for the institutional support extended towards the achievement of goals of the ACD. I also take this



opportunity to acknowledge the continued generosity of Kuwait for hosting the ACD Secretariat.

6. Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The ACD is in its early stages of institutional building while undertaking mutual beneficial work programs under six pillars of cooperation with an ACD Blue Print corresponding to ambitious work plan in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to promote inclusive growth in the region.

7. As a Co-prime mover of the pillar of Science, Technology and Innovation, Sri Lanka is aware of the transformative impact Science, Technology and Innovation could contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

8. The importance of this pillar was amply demonstrated as the world embraced in various degrees the “new normal” from the beginning of 2020, with a view to adapting to the disruption that the pandemic created in all aspects of human activities. It proved to all member states the need to invest more in this important pillar, by creating platforms of knowledge sharing in order to recover collectively as it is a global issue.

9. Excellencies and distinguished delegates

Sri Lanka welcomes the initiative of Turkey in organizing the first virtual Conference of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue Member Countries. Sri Lanka



too, fielded a business delegation of chamber members led by the Export Development Board of Sri Lanka to this important platform. We believe it is timely and will provide the much needed vigor in boosting trade between Member States and to keep the supply chains moving.

10. I am happy to note that the Ankara Declaration focuses on mitigating the adverse effects of the pandemic and as to how to coordinate the recovery efforts as a regional organization through collaboration. As I speak, Sri Lanka has opened its borders with few restrictions created by the pandemic and has welcomed foreign visitors to the country. This was achieved with much consultation, preparation and following of best practices, keeping the safety and security of our own citizens as paramount and that of the visitors.
11. Sri Lanka Government made special provisions and granted concessions to the services sector which is affected severely by global restrictions on travel. With a view to revive the travel industry, Sri Lanka took positive steps to open up gradually while being cautious.
12. I am sure many of the member states whose economies are also dependent to a greater part on tourism will understand the burden placed on Governments to ensure the safety and security of all those involved in the industry. But then again, we as



governments have to revive this sector under strict regulations and adapt to the new normal.

13. To do so we need to collaborate with each other transparently and understand each other's strengths and weakness and support in finding solutions as we evolve with the dictates of the pandemic.

14. Finally , I would like to express Sri Lanka's fullest support to the Chair, the Republic of Turkey in its endeavors and further promote the ACD objectives in the interest of the region.

Thank you.



Statement by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOKUBA  
Konosuke on the occasion of the 17th Asia Cooperation Dialogue  
ministerial meeting

Your Excellency Minister Cavusoglu, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished participants, I am KOKUBA Konosuke, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. I am delighted to participate in this ACD ministerial meeting under the leadership of Minister Cavusoglu despite the resurgence of COVID-19 infections. I also appreciate Turkey, the ACD secretariat and those who endeavored to organize this event.

ACD is a forum of inclusiveness and diversity, joined by countries from the Middle East to East Asia. Regardless of the uncertainty due to COVID-19, I believe this region still has tremendous economic potential.

In relation to today's theme, COVID-19, which has spread worldwide since last year, is affecting societies and economies throughout the whole of Asia. Even as of the end of January 2021, confirmed cases and the number of deaths are still increasing and the effect on the daily lives is enormous.

Today, I will focus on the "countermeasures against infectious diseases" and "cross-border travel", which are the keys to "The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism", the theme of this meeting.

This crisis once again reminded us of the need for global solidarity. To overcome this crisis, we must realize a "united world", not a "divided world",



in the face of this challenge. In our fight against the pandemic, it is important to aim at achieving Universal Health Coverage, where no one's health is left behind, guided by the principle of “human security”. Therefore, Japan has been promptly taking multi-layered efforts: first, addressing the current crisis of the pandemic; second, strengthening health and medical systems for future crises; and, third, generating an environment that is resilient to infectious diseases. Japan has provided foreign aid of over 170 billion Japanese Yen or 1.54 billion USD.

Also, Japan has helped to reinforce community health systems by establishing core medical facilities, promoting networking among them, and training health workers, in Asia and Africa. In the ASEAN region, Japan continues to provide support for the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases.

Furthermore, it is also important to utilize the resources of the private sector. For example, Japanese and Turkish companies work in collaboration to construct an urban hospital in Istanbul, Turkey under PPP, and it opened earlier than planned to receive and treat COVID-19 patients. We will continue to work together with governments and the private sector to overcome this difficult situation.

A new society in the post-COVID era cannot be created without reviving the damaged global economy and realizing economic growth. To bolster economic activities in developing countries, Japan is implementing the COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan of up to ¥500 billion, or US\$4.5 billion, over the course of two years.



With the growing concern worldwide over the new variant of COVID-19 with higher infectivity than before, we can never be optimistic about the impacts caused by the virus.

There is no change in Japan's position that we continue to establish a system in future so that more people will be able to visit Japan safely through more accessible procedures while carefully watching the situation regarding the infection in and out of Japan.

It is indispensable to accomplish a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law in ensuring the peace and prosperity of this region and the world. The importance of such vision has become more evident than ever in this time when every country has to work together to fight against COVID-19. In this regard, it is encouraging for us that at the last ASEAN-Japan Summit Meeting, we affirmed that both the AOIP and FOIP share relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation.

ACD, which covers the whole of Asia including ASEAN, the linchpin between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Middle East, which links Asia to Africa, is an "open and inclusive" forum. Japan will work together with ACD participating countries to overcome this plight.

Last but not least, this summer, we will hold the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. We are currently working together to advance our preparations for the Games that are safe and secure as well as inspiring as proof that humanity has defeated the virus. Also, we intend to make these Games an opportunity to send out a message to the world of our



vigorous reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake ten years ago thanks to the support from the international community.

Let me once again express my gratitude to Minister Cavusoglu for leading fruitful discussions throughout the series of meetings.

Building upon the outcome of this meeting, Japan hopes ACD cooperation becomes even more meaningful and relevant.

Thank you.

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