

CONNECTING AFGHANISTAN TO THE REGION AND TO THE WORLD: INAUGURATION OF OPTICAL FIBER CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN

BY DR. EHSAN BAYAT, January 14, 2021

After a year of an unprecedented pandemic challenge that has impacted our ability to connect with each other all across the globe, I am delighted to be celebrating our work that connects Afghanistan with our friends in Turkmenistan, and to the rest of the world.

When Afghan Wireless embarked on the journey to build Afghanistan's largest nationwide fiber network, we did so with the goal of realizing President Ghani's vision to transform the country into a hub of digital data connectivity for Central Asia. Today marks an important milestone in the building of a digital silk road across the region with Afghanistan at its center; a road that will connect millions of Afghans to the digital economy.

Our world-class optical fiber between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan represents Afghan Wireless' fifth and sixth international border connections including to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

From Mazar to Jalalabad, and from Kabul to Kandahar to Kunduz, communities across the country are benefiting from high-speed connectivity. And now our connection to Turkmenistan through Torghundi and Aqina will enable Herat and western cities to become Afghanistan's next major bridge for digital transformation.

However, the impact of Afghan Wireless' project should not be measured in kilometers of fiber laid, or megabytes of data transmitted, or even money invested. It should be measured by the industries revitalized, the local businesses boosted, the jobs created, the pace of economic development and the enhancement to critical services in health, education, commerce and finance.

This project could not be delivered without Afghanistan and Turkmenistan working together. Afghan Wireless' optical fiber connection between the two countries that we are celebrating today is a powerful testament that when we work hand in hand with our neighbors, not only do we strengthen our countries individually, but we also strengthen our region together.