

**Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process: Deepening Cooperation for Sustainable
Security and Prosperity of the 'Heart of Asia' Region**

Beijing, China, 31 October 2014

Beijing Declaration

1. We, the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives from 14 'Heart of Asia' countries, joined by 16 supporting countries of the Istanbul Process, as well as high-level representatives from 12 international and regional organizations, held the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan in Beijing, China on October 31, 2014. The conference was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, and H.E. Mr. Zarar Ahmad Osmani, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
2. We express our gratitude to H.E. Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, and H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for attending the opening ceremony of the 4th Ministerial Conference.
3. Recalling the outcomes achieved in the previous three Ministerial Conferences in Istanbul (2011), Kabul (2012) and Almaty (2013), we reaffirm our commitment to follow the purposes, principles and objectives established in these conferences. We agree that the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process is an important platform for regional cooperation and security and prosperity in Afghanistan and the 'Heart of Asia' region as a whole.
4. We believe, at this critical juncture, that Afghanistan is undergoing multiple transitions, the 4th Ministerial Conference is a crucial opportunity for enhancing cooperation through achieving consensus among the 'Heart of Asia' countries and the wider international community on achieving lasting peace, sustainable security and economic development in Afghanistan and in the 'Heart of Asia' region.
5. We reiterate the importance of respecting Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We believe that a peaceful, stable, prosperous and friendly Afghanistan is not only in the interest of the country and its people, but also conducive to peace and stability of the 'Heart of Asia' region as whole.

6. We congratulate the people of Afghanistan and their new government for the successful conclusion of the elections and the establishment of the National Unity Government. We are looking forward to working together with the new Afghan government and further strengthening our relationship with Afghanistan as a constructive and friendly partner in this region. We believe that the new government will make every effort to continue to successfully lead the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process and realize its objectives in building confidence and enhancing cooperation for a secure and stable Afghanistan and the region.
7. Taking note of Afghanistan's crucial role as the land-bridge in the 'Heart of Asia' connecting South Asia, Central Asia, Eurasia/Europe and Middle East, we commit to work together to support the new National Unity Government of Afghanistan to realize Afghanistan's potentials as viable trade and transit hub for development of the region, and play its role as a constructive partner for enhanced regional security and stability.
8. We acknowledge that 2014 is a crucial year for the security and political transition of Afghanistan and commit to firmly support Afghanistan for a peaceful and stable decade of transformation. We are heartened by the steady political transition through the presidential elections, and security transition from ISAF to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). We commit to maintain the input into the capacity building and support of the ANSF in order to ensure the security transition, which is an important element towards regional security, continues smoothly. We urge all parties to honor their commitments made in Tokyo, Chicago and London.
9. We believe an inclusive reconciliation in Afghanistan and curbing of external interferences are the surest path to lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. We support an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned inclusive peace and reconciliation process to realize national development, peace and security of Afghanistan as a necessary outcome of reconciliation. We call on the Taliban to renounce violence, cut ties with all terrorist groups and institutions supporting these groups, and respect the Afghan Constitution. We call on all parties to encourage the Taliban towards reconciliation.
10. We believe that the Afghan led peace and reconciliation process is important for consolidating peace. We support the initiation of the reconciliation process as soon as possible. We welcome the contribution by the 'Heart of Asia' countries to this process.

11. We reiterate that terrorism and extremism pose a serious threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan, other countries of the 'Heart of Asia' region, and beyond. We reiterate our agreement that terrorism, extremism, and separatism and linkages among them pose a serious challenge to many of our countries as well as the region and beyond, which can only be addressed through our concerted efforts. We affirm our determination to enhance regional cooperation to dismantle their sanctuaries and training bases, cut off their sources of funding, combat arms, lethal goods smuggling, and strengthen border control in the region and beyond. We strongly condemn all forms and manifestation of terrorism, particularly those targeting innocent civilians.
12. We recognize that the issue of Afghan refugees is a strain on the social and economic development of the regional countries. We commend Pakistan and Iran for their efforts in hosting millions of Afghan refugees, in the spirit of good neighborly relations, over the past several decades. In this regard, we call on the international community to provide further support and assistance to Afghan refugees to enable their voluntary repatriation and resettlement in Afghanistan in a safe, timely and dignified manner.
13. We understand that economic development, along with mutual respect, is key to stability of a region. As Afghanistan is entering the decade of transformation, an economically self-reliant Afghanistan can play an important role in trade and economic connectivity in the region. We believe that through our sincere cooperation in the region and continued support of the international community, Afghanistan will be able to take advantage of its geographic location and rich resources that can significantly contribute to enhance trade and development in Afghanistan and the 'Heart of Asia' region. Therefore, we commit to pursue opportunities to enhance regional economic cooperation and call upon the rest of the international community to fulfill their commitments to the long-term development of Afghanistan.
14. We recognize that promoting regional economic cooperation, transport connectivity, infrastructure development, trade facilitation and people-to-people exchanges is among the top priorities for cooperation under the Istanbul Process. We support the initiation of the projects compatible with these priorities, including those complementing existing multilateral programs and efforts taken by the 'Heart of Asia' countries, regional

organizations and other structures to facilitate effective infrastructure linkages with Afghanistan, to enhance and promote economic connectivity, development and integration within the 'Heart of Asia' region and to build a community of common interest and destiny. We recognize the role of cultural heritage as a catalyst for social and economic development. We, the 'Heart of Asia' countries, commit to take an active role in the construction of infrastructure in East-West transport corridors with effective North-South infrastructure linkages with Afghanistan and South Asia.

15. We acknowledge and appreciate the valuable interest and contribution of the supporting countries and the supporting regional and international organizations in the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process. We encourage them to take an even more active role in supporting the implementation of the CBMs and utilizing this process as a platform to catalyze the implementation of the infrastructure projects, which can benefit the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan and the 'Heart of Asia' region.
16. We appreciate the central coordination role the United Nations has been playing in the international operations of providing assistance to Afghanistan. We look forward to the United Nations support to Afghanistan during the transition period. We also emphasize stronger coordination and collaboration with the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process by the supporting regional and international organizations.

POLITICAL CONSULTATION:

17. We firmly believe that increased political mutual trust and deepened regional cooperation are the foundation for peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region. The 'Heart of Asia' countries and supporting countries should be guided by the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state in any manner inconsistent with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, as well as non-interference in internal affairs of other countries, good-neighborly relations and peaceful coexistence, among other principles enshrined in the Istanbul Ministerial Declaration of November 2, 2011. We also support a regional consensus on non-interference, which is critically important for stability in Afghanistan and the region. We reconfirm the direct task of the Almaty Ministerial Declaration that appealed to use the Istanbul Process to build a common

platform of shared regional interest for the sake of the 'Heart of Asia' region.

18. We reiterate that terrorism, violent extremism, narcotics, illegal trade and transfer of arms and munitions, as well as lethal goods and their precursors, human trafficking, illegal money transfer and laundering, and smuggling of natural resources and goods pillaged during the conflicts are challenges that are interlinked and threaten the security and stability of the 'Heart of Asia' countries. Therefore, we need to employ multipronged strategies and sincerely commit ourselves to fight these common challenges and enhance regional security. In this context, referring to paragraph 10 of the Almaty Declaration, we suggest that the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) discusses ways of developing and fostering relevant measures to prevent and monitor the illicit cross border movement of arms, munitions, lethal explosive substances and precursors, which are used by terrorist networks in the 'Heart of Asia' region.
19. Recognizing the central role of governments in combating terrorism and safeguarding regional security, we commit to cooperate and enhance our information-sharing mechanisms with relevant government institutions that are responsible for combating terrorism, violent extremism, illicit drugs, and border security and control, in the 'Heart of Asia' region.
20. In order to strengthen cooperation towards enhanced regional security in the 'Heart of Asia' region, we commit that at each Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) we focus on specific issues/topics that pose a common threat to the security of the 'Heart of Asia' region, and these discussions should be continued at subsequent Senior Officials Meetings (SOM), with active engagement by participants, to help develop common solutions to those shared threats and opportunities.
21. As stipulated in paragraph 9 of the Almaty Ministerial Declaration, terrorism is a serious common threat to the regional and international security that needs our concerted efforts to overcome this menace. We encourage the countries of the region to continue to enhance cooperation, in order to address these challenges, including through exchange of ideas and task the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and government experts to identify topics for discussion and provide recommendations.
22. Realizing that security and economic development are closely intertwined,

we ask the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) to identify and discuss ways of resolving political, technical and economical obstacles, which prevent the materialization of regional economic projects that are beneficial to Afghanistan and the region.

CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

23. We reiterate that cooperation on the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) is an important element of the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process, which provides a practical means for building trust and a win-win situation through cooperation. The implementation plans for the six CBMs were endorsed at the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of Feb 2013, in Baku and adopted at the Almaty Ministerial Conference in the areas of: i) counter-terrorism; ii) counter-narcotics; iii) disaster management; iv) trade, commerce and investment opportunities; v) regional infrastructure; vi) education, are now under implementation. During the Senior Officials Meetings (SOMs) in New York (September 2013), Delhi (January 2014) and Beijing (July 2014), the progress towards implementation of the six prioritized CBMs were reviewed and recommendations were made in order to enhance them. We endorse the CBM Action Plans for 2014-2015. A brief status description of each of these CBMs is annexed to this document. (Annex 1).
24. We appreciate the unremitting efforts by the lead countries and participating countries of the six CBMs' Regional Technical Groups (RTGs). We reiterate that all parties will follow the principles of regional leadership, regional ownership and consensus. We encourage greater participation from supporting countries. We also encourage use of the various mechanisms to finance implementations of the CBMs activities.
25. We acknowledge the important role played by the Regional Technical Groups (RTGs) in prioritizing and following the CBM activities. In this context, we ask the lead countries of each CBM to at least convene two of these meetings each year, one within 2 months of each Ministerial Conference and the second no later than 4 months prior to the following Ministerial Conference.
26. We recognize the important facilitating role of lead countries in the implementation of the CBM activities, as per paragraph 20 of the Kabul Ministerial Declaration of June 14, 2012. We encourage all the CBM participants to proactively take on and implement the prioritized activities.

We also encourage the participating countries of the CBMs to proactively seek out prioritized activities for each CBM and implement them, where necessary with assistance from supporting countries.

27. We ask the lead countries of each CBM to provide a report and recommendations from the Regional Technical Groups meetings, held under each CBM, to the Senior Officials Meetings (SOM) in order to inform the Senior Officials about its technical discussions, results and recommendations.
28. We express our gratitude and appreciation to the government of the People's Republic of China for hosting the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process in Beijing. We thank H.E. Mr. Li Keqiang, the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China and H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for addressing our meeting to promote regional cooperation and confidence building.
29. We welcome with gratitude the willingness of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the next Ministerial Meeting of the Istanbul Process in 2015 and in this regard decide that the Fifth Ministerial Conference will be held in Pakistan in 2015.
30. This declaration was adopted in Beijing, China, on October 31, 2014 by the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives of the 'Heart of Asia' countries of the Istanbul Process. (Name list attached as Annex 2).
31. This declaration was welcomed and supported by the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives of the supporting countries of the 'Heart of Asia'-Istanbul Process, and the high-ranking representatives of the relevant international and regional organizations. (Name list attached as Annex 3).