

## **The Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process**

### **Senior Officials Meeting, 26 April 2016, New Delhi**

#### **Report**

The fourteenth Senior Officials Meeting of the Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process was held at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on April 26, 2016.

Representatives of the participating and supporting parties attended this meeting. His Excellency Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan co-chaired the meeting along with H.E Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary of the Republic of India.

His Excellency General Vijay Kumar Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs of India declared the theme of this year's Heart of Asia Process, "Addressing Challenges, Achieving Prosperity" in his inaugural speech. He added that "we in the region are aware that the situation in Afghanistan, owing to its location at the Heart of Asia, has enormous bearing on regional peace, security and economic growth". He continued "for our stable and prosperous region, a strong, peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan is an imperative". He touched upon the historical role of Afghanistan in regional connectivity and reaffirmed that a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan will be a bridge of connectivity between East and West, Central and South Asia.

In addition, H.E. General Singh expressed the need for addressing the challenges together in order to achieve progress and prosperity together. He elaborated that this is not only in Afghanistan's interest, but also in the interest of the region as a whole.

His Excellency Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan in his opening remarks, expressed his appreciation to the host country for their warm reception and hospitality in Delhi. He stated that India as one of the key participating countries of the Heart of Asia has actively supported this process through its leadership role in the Trade, Commerce and Investment Confidence Building Measure (TCI-CBM).

H.E. Deputy Foreign Minister Karzai elaborated that despite our progresses of the past 15 years, there are serious evolving security challenges that confront all of us those should be addressed through sincere and result-oriented regional cooperation.

H.E. Deputy Minister Karzai, Emphasized on the importance of genuine and all-inclusive regional cooperation. He referred to the lack of political will on the part of certain regional states that don't act in unity with Afghanistan and other cooperative Heart of Asia countries has emboldened our common enemies, who undermine the peace, stability, and prosperity of all of us on daily basis. H.E. Deputy Minister Karzai continued that the dangerous and complex situation that we are in needs our collective and determined efforts to find a durable solution.

Then, His Excellency Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto stated that security cooperation through intelligence and information sharing

should be at the top of the region's agenda, as security means opportunities for economic growth. He reaffirmed UNAMA's support to the Heart of Asia Process and its relevant CBMs.

The SOM was conducted in two sessions. The representatives of the 'Heart of Asia' countries and the United Nations attended the morning session and the representatives of the supporting countries, and regional and international organizations joined the afternoon session. The objective of this meeting was to assess the CBMs progress and renew commitments of the participating and supporting parties to the process.

### **First session**

The First session began with an inaugural speech by H.E. General V.K. Singh, Minister of State of Republic of India for External Affairs. After the adoption of the agenda, H.E. Mr. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan delivered his opening remarks that followed by the speech of the UN SRSG for Afghanistan. After that H.E. Mr. Karzai, give an update on security situation in Afghanistan. H.E. Deputy Minister Karzai highlighted the lessons learned from the year 2015 which Afghanistan experienced transitions in different aspects. He also gave an assessment of security threats facing Afghanistan and said that the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has kept the door open for those who want to join the peace process and will defeat those who choose violence. Heads of delegations from all participating countries also delivered their speeches. H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, the Foreign Secretary of India briefed participants on the next Ministerial Conference to take place in India in December this year. He said that it is the responsibility of all of us to enhance security and stability in Afghanistan that is crucial for the security of our region.

He continued that this year as the host of the Ministerial Conference, India intends to host either on sidelines of the conference or / and in the run up to the conference, a number of related events and seminars on Governance, Constitution and Election process, Reconciliation process, Doing Business with Afghanistan, Transit Corridor and Energy Security, and Cultural events, concerning the three transitions underway in Afghanistan.

### **Second session**

The second session of the meeting was joined by representatives of the supporting countries and regional and international organizations. The co-chairs of the meeting, briefed the participants on the discussions of the first session. Representatives of the supporting countries and organizations reaffirmed their commitment and support for the Heart of Asia Process. They condemned the recent terrorist attack in Kabul and emphasized on peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. They stressed the need for a collective fight against terrorism and extremism, as well as addressing the issues of migration and human rights.

### **Progress of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)**

The lead countries of the CBMs briefed the participants about activities carried out under each CBM. Since Islamabad Ministerial Conference one Regional Technical Group meeting has been held under CT-CBM. Seven activities have been planned for the CBM for the year 2016-2017. Turkey has confirmed to host three activities.. Two Regional Technical Group meetings have been held under Education CBM and one Regional Technical Group meeting has been held under TCI-CBM. India confirmed to organize a number of events under the TCI-CBM those are listed below.

1. TCI-CBM portal development
2. Capacity building program/training modules on the WTO accession of Afghanistan in collaboration with UNESCAP, New Delhi
3. Conference and B2Bs on “Made in Afghanistan” in collaboration with Afghanistan Trade and Revenue Project (ATAR) of USAID, Afghanistan
4. Conference and exhibition on “Doing Business with Afghanistan” in collaboration with Afghanistan Trade and Revenue Project (ATAR) of USAID, Afghanistan
5. Training program on gemstone cutting and polishing