

The Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process

Senior Officials Meeting, 8 December 2015, Islamabad

Report

The thirteenth Senior Officials Meeting of the Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process was held on 8th December 2015 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Islamabad.

Representatives of the participating countries, supporting countries and regional and international organizations participated in this meeting. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan and H.E. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

H.E. Sartaj Aziz, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs in his opening remarks said that peace and stability in Afghanistan is in the interest of the entire region. He added that the Heart of Asia is an effective platform for regional economic cooperation and connectivity with Afghanistan at its center. H.E. said that as the process is becoming mature, more focus has to be on strengthening regional engagement and collaboration with a view to effectively combating the formidable challenges confronting the region, in the field of security as well as promoting regional economic interaction. H.E. stressed the need to collectively fight the menace of terrorism and extremism in the region.

H.E. Mr. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan in his opening remarks, expressed his gratitude to the host country's support for the process, said that the meeting takes place at a time that the region faces many challenges including growing of terrorism and extremism and lack of infrastructure for socio-economic development. He added that the wave of terrorist activities including the ISIS in various parts of the world is a very grave threat to humanity and called for collective

efforts to fight against terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestation to ensure a peaceful and prosperous region.

He said that Afghanistan attaches great importance to its relations with countries in the region and that Afghanistan remains committed to work closer with countries of the region to enhance cooperation in addressing common regional threats and utilize region's geographical position as a land bridge for socio-economic cooperation.

As per traditional practice, 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 discussion on the articles of the Islamabad Draft Declaration.

Morning session

In the morning session, representatives of the Heart of Asia countries and the United Nations exchanged views and deliberated on the articles of the draft Islamabad declaration.

Afternoon 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 morning session on the draft declaration. Representatives of the supporting countries and organizations provided their views/suggestions on the draft declaration. They also reaffirmed their commitment and support for the Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process and emphasized on peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, the need to collectively fight against terrorism and extremism, as well as addressing the problem 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 Beijing Ministerial Conference 3 activities under the Disaster Management CBM, 5 activities under Counter Terrorism CBM, 2 activities under Counter Narcotics CBM, 4 activities under Trade, Commerce & Investment CBM, 1 activity under Regional Infrastructure CBM and 2 activities under Education CBM have been carried out.

After in depth discussion and collaboration on the draft declaration, representatives of the Heart of Asia agreed on all articles of the declaration that would be adopted by the Foreign Ministers at the Ministerial Conference.