

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



December 02, 2018

Geneva Conference: A Reliable Path to Ensure Afghanistan's Transformation Decade

The National Unity Government and the international community met on 27-28 November 2018 at the United Nations in Geneva to renew their partnership and cooperation for Afghanistan's peace, prosperity and self-reliance. Delegations from 61 countries and 35 international organizations, and representatives of civil society, the private sector and the media attended the Geneva Conference on Afghanistan, co-hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United Nations. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, delivered keynote addresses. The conference was co-chaired by Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Finance Mohammad Humayon Qayoumi, and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tadamichi Yamamoto. At the end of Conference, Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the National Unity Government, concluded the conference.

Background

In 2011 at the Bonn conference on Afghanistan, the international community agreed on a "Transformation Decade" for the country. During this period, Afghanistan was promised very considerable amounts of international assistance so that the country could achieve self-reliance by 2024. At the Tokyo Conference in 2012 a system of high-level periodic reviews was put in place with ministerial meetings (invitation to Foreign Ministers because of the comprehensive and political nature of the meetings) every two years and senior officials meeting in the intervening years. The ministerial conferences in 2012 (Tokyo) and 2016 (Brussels) became major pledging conferences obtaining over \$16 billion and \$15 billion respectively for the years that followed. The next major pledging conference is in 2020.

The Tokyo conference (2012) also introduced the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) as a means to provide direction for the development of Afghanistan through mutual commitments between the Government and the international community. A system of high-level periodic reviews takes place via either the ministerial conference or the senior officials meeting every year. The senior officials meetings are held in Kabul and the ministerials are held outside Afghanistan in order to garner continued political support from capitals. The London Ministerial of 2014 strongly reaffirmed the continued support of the international community and continued monitoring the implementation of commitments by the Afghan Government.

The Brussels Ministerial of 2016 was a pledging conference and included political and strategic elements. The 2018 Geneva conference will not be a pledging conference like those in Tokyo and Brussels, but more focused on policy and strategy. In line with the Security Council mandate for the UN to coordinate international donor assistance to Afghanistan, the UN has been co-chairing ministerial and senior officials meetings. Following the senior officials meeting held in Kabul on 5 October 2017 the Afghan Government (President Ghani and the Minister of Finance) asked the United Nations to hold the ministerial conference of 2018 at its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The way forward

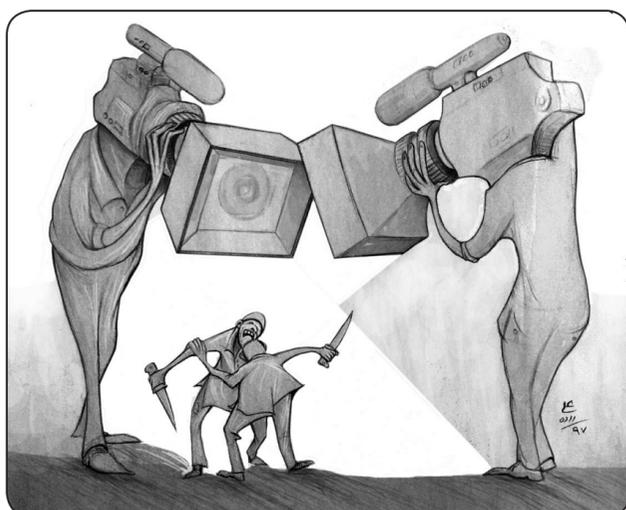
Afghanistan has taken tangible steps towards self-reliance since 2016. As a result, the report of progress achieved by the government since the Brussels Conference, including on enhanced public financial management and streamlined national budgeting; reviewed remaining challenges was warmly welcomed by the participants; And called for increased efforts to fight corruption and illicit narcotics, and promote peace, stability and the rule of law; and, adopted the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework. Afghanistan was ensured to be support on its policies strengthening national and subnational governance, regional economic cooperation and connectivity. The experience of Afghanistan shows that efficient and transparent monitoring and review of reform can further strengthen mutual accountability.

Afghanistan parliamentary and presidential elections were among the top agenda of the conference and the participants acknowledged that holding parliamentary elections in October 2018 was an important step in the consolidation of democracy. Presidential elections scheduled for April 2019 and future elections need to draw on the lessons learned in order to continually enhance the transparent, credible and participatory process to the benefit of all citizens.

Afghanistan peace process has started a new critical phase. As a result, participants called on all concerned to seize this opportunity for an Afghan owned and led peace process as the only viable path to satisfy the citizens' desire for an end to conflict, sustained and broad-based economic growth, and a more prosperous tomorrow. This can strengthen the Afghan government to achieve peace based on the important steps it has taken this year.

According to the decisions of the this conference, the senior officials will meet in 2019, and the next ministerial conference will be held in 2020 at which future commitments to Afghanistan's long-term development will be discussed in light of the government's achievements and growth agenda and the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework.

The international community strongly reaffirmed their continued support to the progress and the programs of the National Unity Government on peace, reforms and development and pledged to continue their support, aid and cooperation during the Afghanistan's Transformation Decade (2015-2024).



War in Yemen Inflicts Untold Suffering on Civilians

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Some high-level members of Security Council have stalled the UN resolution calling for a halt to the fighting for control of the port city of Hodeidah, the main entry point of supplies, and for guarantees from the warring sides for safe delivery of food and medicine to Yemen, where 85,000 young children died out of hunger and the lives of 14 million people are at risk of a famine.

Yemenis suffer severely as a result of war initiated by Saudi-led coalition forces, which are reportedly involved in gross violation of human rights and humanitarian law.

Airstrikes targeted Yemenis at weddings, funerals, and on school buses, killed thousands of civilians, including women and children. The Saudi-led airstrike on a school bus in August, which killed and wounded tens of children, was one of the worst-case event that outraged the public conscience. Meanwhile, ICRC said the coalition forces killed 55 civilians and wounded 170 in attacks on hospitals and fish market on August 2.

The coalition that has been fighting Yemen's rebels since 2015 acknowledged responsibility for the attack on school bus, but claimed the bus was carrying "Houthi combatants" and called it a "legitimate military action".

UN describes the war in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis in the wake of large-scale violation of humanitarian law.

The devastating war in Yemen has attracted more global attention recently as outrage over the killing of a Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul turned a spotlight on Saudi actions. With the acknowledgment of the kingdom that its officials were behind the gruesome murder, the kingdom of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) came under harsh global criticism. That is, the killing of Khashoggi battered MBS's image globally.

An Argentine Judge seeks to complain by Human Rights Watch against MBS for his involvement in the war in Yemen and Khashoggi's murder.

According to international humanitarian law, warring sides have to respect and protect the rights of noncombatants and attacks should be directed solely against legitimate military targets. Similarly, attacks on doctors, hospitals, schools, universities, and residential areas are strongly prohibited. Those who carry out indiscriminate attacks are war criminals and must be prosecuted. The "principle of distinction" outlaws attacks on civilians and urge all parties to distinguish at all

times and under all circumstances between combatants and noncombatants.

The "principle of humane treatment" requires that civilians be treated with respect and humanity at all times and their physical and mental integrity should be respected.

Moreover, the use of heavy weapons which cause unnecessary sufferings or lead to the destruction of residential areas or civilian properties are also prohibited.

To one's unmitigated chagrin, human rights and humanitarian law are violated widely in one way or another across the globe. The sufferings of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, the massive casualties of civilians in war-torn countries, mainly Yemen and Syria, etc. are highly outrageous. The blood of civilians, including women and children, is spilt without an iota of mercy.

In addition, women and children are starving to death in Yemen. The recent death of a Yemeni child, who was changed to a bag of bone due to serious malnutrition, shook the conscience of thousands of people around the world. The Saudi-led coalition and its Yemeni allies have imposed a raft of punitive economic measures aimed at undercutting Houthis. Those measures have led to public starvation, destruction of infrastructure, loss of jobs, weakening of currency, etc.

With this in mind, Yemen war must be stopped so as to free people from hunger and violence. It has been proved that war in Yemen will only lead to further deterioration and civilian casualties rather than resolving the issue.

Perhaps, the reason Saudi Arabia initiated military crackdown on Yemeni Houthis is to stop the spread of Arab Spring in its kingdom. That is to say, Saudi fears the spark from Arab Spring targets its territory. Therefore, it shows no tolerance to criticism and killing its dissident inside its consulate or attacking Yemen to accept a Saudi-backed government.

The international community must put pressure on Saudi-led coalition forces to practice upon the international instruments and rule of war and stop shedding the blood of civilians or targeting residential areas, schools and hospitals. Moreover, the war criminals should be prosecuted.

Since war is not a solution, the conflict in Yemen should be resolved through negotiation. Warring parties must put an end to the war and destruction in Yemen and settle the issue through peaceful means so as to stop further casualties.

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Continuous Economic & Military Pressure on Pakistan Pivotal to Bring Lasting Peace in Afghanistan

By: Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

Latest drop in value of Pakistani rupee to unprecedented level, which at present stands at Rs.162 to a US\$, is indicative of the extent of stress Pakistani economy is suffering due to the international embargo on military and economic assistance to that country. Despite numerous calls by US and NATO member countries to reign in her spree of activities in neighboring Afghanistan in support of terrorist groups and Taliban insurgents, aimed at weakening Afghan State and Government, Pakistan shamelessly continued military, financial and leadership support to these groups, resulting in killings and maiming of thousands of Afghan civilians, military and police personnel and members of international coalition forces every year. It is a pity to see Pakistani establishment turning blind eyes and deaf ears to unprecedented casualties due to their actions in Afghanistan, and to repeated calls by international community and regional powers to stop this blatant interference. These acts have also resulted in unprecedented miseries and suffering in Pakistan as well, including economic suffering, cut in military assistance and creation of social and political frictions between four provinces of Pakistan, the most serious of which include alienation of Pashoons and Baluchs. Pakistani military junta is in control of foreign policy of that fateful country, and civilian governments are established to play at the hands of military. Those leaders who resist military and their design are trapped in downward spirals with un-known future, just like the military has meted out to Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, the deposed leader of Pakistan Muslim League party. He had insisted on changes in Pakistan foreign policy and relaxation of the same from military grips. It seems Pakistani military establishments have not been able to learn from their mistakes of political events that led to their shameful defeats at the hands of Indian army and a breakup of the entire West Bengal province from Pakistani state in 1971. In addition, history of Afghanistan is indicative of one phenomenon: this country cannot be subjugated, defeated, made colony or annexed, major world powers have tested their metal with this aim in their mind, but were miserably failed and defeated. Pakistani military junta should have a realistic calculus at their hands before making any move to this direction. This fateful country is

surviving out of the blessings of IMF and other donor countries, let alone numerous other issues that Pakistan is facing internally. There is no logic in pursuing a goal to subjugate Afghanistan as their 'fifth province'. Afghans know how to sacrifice their lives for their motherland. Statistical figures, which are published every month, shows that hundreds of brave Afghan soldiers and police personnel die in battlefields and the number youths enrolling in army and police lines increases day in and day out. This is indicative of the love, patriotism and unity among Afghans, and this should be enough for Pakistani establishment to understand and change course while dealing with Afghanistan. A friendly and peaceful Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan in numerous ways, while the realization of a pity dream to subjugate and control Afghanistan can cause the entire State of Pakistan to disintegrate and plunge into chaos. Signs of this horrible demise are slowly appearing for Pakistan in the face of their continuous interference in Afghanistan.

There are misplaced assumptions within the leadership of Pakistani military junta that 'international economic and military embargo on Pakistan should not adversely impact Taliban and other terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan'. As the Pakistani state has invested so much time and resources in religious madrassas to bring up and train soldiers, they seem to have entangled in 'cost-sunk-bias'. In addition, Pakistani military junta has already endeavored to diversify support for Taliban insurgents, bringing in Russians, Uzbekistan, Qatar and Saudis in the foray to connect them with Taliban for direct contacts. They have been successful in this track as Russian, Uzbeks and Qataris have already invited Taliban for meetings on Afghanistan. Had these efforts been out of sheer goodwill and support for Afghan people and their country, they would have deserved standing ovations but alas, Pakistani state and military are in the midst of another 'deceit and lies'. All logical reasoning and conclusions lead to a scenario for Pakistan to adopt Afghanistan-friendly policies, and that can bring prosperity and development not only for Pakistan and Afghanistan, but for the whole region.

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