

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



June 23, 2016

SCO Summit in Tashkent

A meeting of the Heads of States Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is going to be held on June 23 - 24, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. This summit is going to bring together the heads of states of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The organization is expected to highlight its Jubilee Summit marking the organization's 15th year in its present form.

SCO summit was basically founded in 2001 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Afghanistan is not a member of SCO but it was given an observer status at the 2012 SCO summit in Beijing on June 06, 2012. Iran, Pakistan, India and Mongolia were also given observer status in the organization. Pakistan and India, however, are going to accede full membership status in this SCO summit as SCO agreed on their full membership. The main objectives of SCO include strengthening friendly ties among regional states, maintenance of peace, stability and security in the region, building a new, just and rational international political and economic order, launch joint efforts in combating terrorism, extremism, separatism and the menace of narcotic substances.

Afghanistan's relations with regional countries are undoubtedly very important. If it wants to be successful in the post withdrawal era, it has to tighten the ties with all the regional countries particularly, with China and Russia. Full membership of SCO can support Afghanistan in having better role in the Organization and at the same time take more advantages of cooperation and interdependence with the member countries.

Currently, Afghanistan is going through some very serious challenges regarding growing insecurity in different parts of the country. Taliban insurgents have continued their fighting in month of Ramadan as well and they have been able to gain the control of different districts in different provinces of the country. The northern parts of the country that used to be comparatively peaceful are now the main targets of the insurgents and certain districts in Kunduz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Jawzjan and Faryab have come under their control. In recent weeks, even the capital Kabul has experienced some very threatening attacks even in the most guarded parts of the city.

At the same time, the threats of growing number of Daesh (IS) recruits are also alarming. In order to face the dual challenge of fighting both Taliban and Daesh, Afghanistan would definitely require support from the regional countries, in particular. The SCO members can play a positive role in this regard and their dedicated attention concerning the growing insecurity in Afghanistan is of immense importance. Particularly, China and Russia can be of massive support in this connection. Both the countries have accepted the fact that the growth of Daesh in Afghanistan can be a regional threat, and they have also emphasized on a strategy to combat this threat. If this emphasis is turned into practical steps, it would greatly support in disheartening Daesh's growth in Afghanistan. Moreover, it is essential to see how the leaders of regional countries discuss the security issues being faced by Afghanistan in this SCO meeting. In similar fashion, to control the threat of Taliban and to support Afghanistan in making peace talks successful with them, the worth of regional countries cannot be denied. Afghanistan, to a large extent, has relied on the role of Pakistan in this regard. President Ghani in the beginning of his government strived for improved relations with Pakistan and emphasized on its role in holding peace talks with Taliban. Pakistan on the other hand showed willingness in this regard as well. Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) was formed for the same purpose and some sessions of this Groups were held but they did not bear the desired fruits. While these meetings were being held, certain misunderstandings developed between Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly, after the news of the death of Mullah Omar and then the deadly attacks in Kabul on National Directorate of Security. Afghanistan blamed Pakistan for not keeping its promises that were made in first QCG meeting and also blamed it for providing refuge to the Taliban network that is responsible for terrorism in Afghanistan. Recently, the border issue at Torkham has further dealt a blow to immediate possibilities of cooperation in this respect.

It is really imperative for the regional countries, especially SCO, to see the problem of insecurity in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a collective issue and must cooperate so that the issue is addressed properly and on time. They seem to realize that they require acting collectively to face this threat but it is important that they must be able to put in practice comprehensive strategy to tackle the situation. Words and promises alone have never and would never solve the issue of terrorism and insurgency. Practical solutions are the only way out of the quagmire that can swallow the whole region in no time. The leaders of the world in this SCO meeting have to keep this important fact in consideration for better and effective cooperation.



Restricting Muslims' Rights?

By Hujjatullah Zia

U.S. Republican Politician Donald Trump has capitalized on Orlando's episode and talks with more serious tone against Muslims. In response to the mass shooting, carried out by an American murderer Omar Mateen, who happened to be Muslim, Trump said that the attack was the work of a "radical Islamic terrorist" — and attacked both Obama and presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton for refusing to say the words "radical Islam" in their responses. He aired that the U.S. President Barack Obama should step down from presidency and if Hillary Clinton, after the attack, could not say the two words "Radical Islam" she had to get out of that race for the Presidency.

Following the Brussels attack on March 22, Trump elaborated on his suggestions for how to deal with radical Islam in the US, including banning Muslims from entering the U.S., weatherboarding and torturing suspects, and patrolling highly-populated Muslim neighborhoods.

Mr. Trump, who has been airing these views throughout his year-long campaign, further sharpened his attacks on Muslims after the weekend attack on a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, where an American Muslim gunned down 50 people.

Mateen entered the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, on June 12, 2016, and shot 50 people dead and wounded 53. He called that he pledged allegiance to the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Following the attack, Mateen's ex-wife, Sitora Yusufiy, said that during their marriage, Mateen was mentally unstable and would beat her and keep her completely separated from her family and also had a history of using steroids. His father is cited as having said, "This had nothing to do with religion." He said that he had seen his son get angry after witnessing a gay couple kiss in front of his family at the Bayside Market Place in Miami months prior to the attack, which he suggested might have been a motivating factor. Mr. Trump will have to notice that Muslims are the scapegoat of terror and bear the brunt of violence and bloodshed carried out by religious extremists such as ISIL, Taliban, Boko Haram and other warring factions. Since Muslims are the sacrificial lambs in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc. they are not responsible for terrorist acts. Oversimplifying Islamic tenets and attacking against a whole community on the basis of an individual's act, does not seem rational. Moreover, killing a particular group or a single person based on their race, caste, color, etc. is never justifiable in Islam. Respecting the rights and freedom of the public is a universal principle and, perhaps, all religions support them. Therefore, people's rights and dignity will have to

be respected and protected in any corner of the world regardless of their accidental backgrounds.

We believe in the statue of liberty, an icon of freedom and of the United States in New York City which was a welcoming sight to immigrants arriving from abroad. The seven rays on her crown are for each of the seven continents. This statue represents a democratic administration — where all citizens have equal rights regardless of their beliefs, race or sex. This torch-bearing statue intends to lighten the world, to greet people from all the seven continents with open arms. Hate mongering and banning a nation from the U.S. for an individual's acts will not be only against the spirit of democracy but also a slap on the face of the statue of liberty. Moreover, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, which was adopted in July 1776, points out the natural and "unalienable rights" of the individuals which are bestowed by the Creator and the basic ones mentioned as "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". After all, the U.S. President Barack Obama has urged Trump not to make Muslims across the world feel the West hates them, as doing so would have very dangerous consequences. He said it would be a mistake to make "young Muslims in this country and around the world feel like no matter what they do, they're going to be under suspicion and under attack."

It is believed that sarcastic rhetoric and emotional statements rather than rational words will be counterproductive. A politician has to avoid prompting sensations in public. It should be noted that violence is against the soul of Islamic sharia and all Muslims do not follow inflexible ideology. Unjust labeling will create a rift among the ethnic groups and does more harm than good. Hence, Trump has to eschew from sowing the seeds of hate and discrimination in the heart of younger generations. A vitriolic attack on Muslims or restricting their rights in social and political arena will put the America's democracy under question. If one considers Afghanistan, streams of blood are spilt every once in a while and Afghan police and civilians are widely sacrificed. It is believed that a large number of the militants are mercenary fighters rather than practicing upon an ideology. However, some lose their lives on the basis of his/her ethnicity or creed the same as some Black Americans are sometimes targeted by White ones for their dark skins. In short, I am seriously outraged when the blood of a Black is spilled for the dark skin of their color in South Carolina of America by a White gunman, when a number of civilians are shot dead in Paris or California by ISIL insurgents and when Muslim women are spat on for wearing hijab or a Muslim taxi driver being shot in the back on Thanksgiving by Christians.

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Uzbekistan - SCO: Cooperation for Peace, Stability and Progress

By Vladimir Norov

Uzbekistan is chairing at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization at present. Active preparations for conducting the meeting of the SCO Council of heads of state and other events on the highest level are underway in Uzbekistan.

It is deeply symbolic that this conscientious mission concurs with the 15th anniversary of foundation of the SCO. Mass-scale and consistent works, carried out in Uzbekistan, during the period of chairmanship serves to increase the authority of this organization, improving its activities, strengthening peace and security in the region.

It should be noted that in our ever-changing times the role and impact of the SCO in solving topical issues, ensuring security, stability and sustainable development has been growing. It is noteworthy that in the summit meetings of the SCO a particular attention is paid to strengthening mutual trust and good neighborliness among the member-countries of the SCO, developing close collaboration in political, trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural and humanitarian spheres, in ensuring peace, security and stability in the region.

Uzbekistan, which is one of the founders of the organization, as the chairman intends to strictly abide by the principles of continuity, as well as the consistent advancement of mutually beneficial cooperation that meets the interests of all members of the structure. In particular, Uzbekistan was in favor of further strengthening the role of the SCO as an effective institution on withstanding such threats for global and regional security as terrorism, religious extremism, separatism, drug and weapons trafficking, transnational organized crime.

In strengthening practical cooperation in the fight with these challenges and threats for security, our country attaches great significance to further improve the activities of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO, established in 2004 in Tashkent to coordinate the collaboration of Member States in this direction.

Uzbekistan also supports the preservation of the chosen course of the SCO according to which its activities are not directed against the interests of other countries, and this is enshrined in the Charter and other founding documents of the organization. Stressing the importance of elimination of bloc thinking and prevent transformation of the SCO into a military-political alliance the President of our country Islam Karimov also said about it on the Ufa summit in 2015. President of Uzbekistan also specifically noted the need for further strengthening the commitment to the main principles and goals.

The tenth meeting of the Council of heads of state of the SCO member-states on 11 June 2010 took its place in the history of the organization in relation to wide discussion of these issues. Alongside the heads of state of the SCO member-states, observers and states, invited by Uzbekistan, high-ranking officials from the UN, CIS and other international organizations took part at the meeting. The agenda of 2010 SCO Tashkent summit included the issues of improving the activity of the organization and its bodies, further development of cooperation among member-states in political, trade, economic and humanitarian spheres, in joint fight against terrorism, religious extremism and separatism, narcotics and weapons trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in strengthening regional security and stability as well as the situation in Afghanistan. The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov in his speech underlined that deeply thought-out, consistent and targeted process of development and increasing the authority of the SCO at an international arena, strengthening the role and opportunities of the Organization in achieving key goals—strengthening peace, stability and security, ensuring sustainable economic growth, enhancing cooperation in humanitarian and social spheres has been underway. Establishing partner rela-

tions with international organizations has been an important step in the SCO development. The joint declaration on cooperation between the secretariats of the UN and the SCO, signed during the visit of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to our country in April 2010, became an important document, laying the foundation of interactions of the SCO with this international organization. In the epoch of globalization and intensification of various threats, no single problem could be solved by a single state. In this regard cooperation of the SCO and the UN has opened wide road for joint activities in solving significant problems for the whole humanity. Such UN bodies as the Economic and social commission for Asia and the Pacific, Office on drugs and crime, have fruitful interaction with the SCO. Uzbekistan pays a special attention to multilateral trade and economic cooperation. In particular, the issues of transport communications have been acknowledged as a priority direction. In this regard the possibilities of Navoi free industrial-economic zone have been productively utilized. During the implementation of new joint projects in Central Asia, widening of construction of industrial enterprises, automobile roads, railways and air-transport communications, the significance of Navoi FIEZ will also rise.

Currently the main factor of sustainable development is not only extraction and processing of raw materials, but also organization of high-tech production, production of goods with high added value. In this regard Uzbekistan pays a particular attention to development and implementation of joint projects. At the 2010 Tashkent summit of heads of state of SCO member-states, the issues of developing interaction and sharing of information among financial institutions, banks, exchanged. In order to widen the scales of regional cooperation, the participants shared views on the issues of eliminating barriers for developing trade-economic relations, supporting and stimulating direct contacts between entrepreneurs. Development of investment cooperation in transport and communications, agriculture, high-tech spheres have been acknowledged as priorities. During the event, exchange of opinions on priority directions of multilateral strategy of cooperation within the frameworks of the SCO, minimizing negative impact and liquidating consequences of the financial-economic crisis, the issues of cooperation in economic and social spheres. Urgent regional and international issues were also high on the agenda. Participation of representatives of international organizations, alongside the heads of state of the SCO member-states and delegations of observer-states, demonstrate the importance and significance of these discussed issues. During the meeting the situation in Central Asian region, the issues of security, including ensuring information security, joint combat against information threats, were discussed in detail. The Tashkent declaration was adopted, the SCO rules of procedure and Regulations on the order of accepting new members to the Organization were approved at the summit. These documents are significant for development of the SCO and its members. Uzbekistan's determination of the SCO development strategy, its active position on many issues of international politics have yielded positive results. Wide-scale and consistent activity of Uzbekistan during the chairmanship period of the organization has played an important role in the success of 2010 Tashkent summit. Uzbekistan carried out a significant work on widening cooperation among the SCO member-states, increasing the international status of the organization. This was acknowledged by the SCO member-states. Next SCO summit will held in Tashkent 23-24 June 2016. In general, chairmanship of Uzbekistan at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has a special significance for the organization's development and further growth of its authority at international arena. This serves to strengthen and elevate to a qualitatively new level the cooperation among the SCO member-states to ensure peace, stability.

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