

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



March 13, 2018

Afghan Youth Involvement in Political Decision Making: Main Barriers and Drivers

According to the new estimations, nearly half of Afghanistan's population is under 18, making Afghanistan one of the largest youth bulges in the world. Considering the current situation of Afghanistan and the ongoing conflict in the country, youth can play a constructive role in solving the numerous problems Afghanistan faces because many of these problems have root in the traditional norms and values of the Afghan society. While the Afghan youth either embrace the democratic norms and values or at least can be integrated in this process because they can change their mindset and accept the democratic norms and values easily. However, their participation in the political discourses and decision making processes is very limited. Indeed, this puts into question the Afghan government youth inclusion policies and strategies in the political spheres and processes. Also, youth have been recognized for their creative skills and innovative ideas as well. The youth studies in different countries show that they can be a critical agent of change if they are put at the center of political change policies by the governments.

There are many factors that inhibit the inclusion of the youth in the political decision making processes in Afghanistan including unfavorable legal architectures, low economic conditions and different discriminatory practices. As a result, their involvement in the political process is informal and not yet well recorded that call for taking practical measures by the government.

Given the fact that Afghanistan is young in democracy and its political institutions are not well established, youth are not involved systematically in important decision making processes. Most often than not, the governments and policy makers in Afghanistan have been reluctant to include youth in the formal political systems due to the traditional nature of the Afghan society and legacy of the traditional governance system in the past. Nowadays, however; the involvement of the youth has improved in the political decision making in Afghanistan. Rising consciousness of the government and the external pressures including globalization and democratizations, are some of the important factors that the government puts more emphasis on the youth participation in the political and economic spheres of influences in Afghanistan now.

In Afghanistan, consistently youth are correlated with lack of experience. However, the experience show whenever they are given an opportunity they have proven that they are capable of leading and managing different organization in an effective and efficient manner. At the same time, this critical segment of the population is unemployed and lives in an extremely discrepant way of life. That is why some young peoples of Afghanistan get into violence than harnessing positive and real changes in their country. Also, it has forced the Afghan youth to leave the country and migrate to the western countries. Social scholars point out that this could be a response to their marginalization and social and economic exclusions in Afghanistan.

Recent population reports indicate that the youth accounts for more than half of the Afghanistan's population. However, regardless of their numerical importance and the historical relevance throughout the region, the Afghan youth have been neglected from political spheres. As a result of lack of political participation of youth in the country, most of the younger population is disorganized, unemployed, and vulnerable to radical ideas such that leading demonstrations against the government and even joining to the radical Islamic groups like the Afghan Taliban, ISIS and HN. However, there have been some improvements in the youth involvement in the decision making in Afghanistan and they have proven that they can perform their political roles in a more effective and efficient way. As a result, the government shall take some dramatic policy decisions to include the youth in the Afghan politics and the way they would be included in the political affairs of their country.



Tashkent to Host a High-Level Conference on Afghanistan

By Press Service

The global and regional powers, Afghanistan's neighbors will attend the Tashkent International Conference "Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Connectivity"

From the early days of his leadership of the country, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev defined building up constructive, mutually advantageous and good-neighborly relations with Central Asian nations and cementing security in this part of the world as the principal foreign policy priority. Uzbekistan's leader detailed the international community about his strategic vision for ensuring regional security and stability in September 2017 at the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City. In November later that year, during the Samarkand Conference "Central Asia: One Past and a Common Future, Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Mutual Prosperity", President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed a comprehensive program of joint efforts at the regional and international levels to secure enduring peace and stability in Central Asia, including Afghanistan. The policy implications of the speeches by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at those international forums, his examination of the current situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan and the prospects of developments have generated a reflective interest in the international community.

As the President has noted, "Central Asia, being in the heart of Eurasia, stands as a bridge connecting Europe and the Middle East, South and East Asia". The region is rich in natural resources. There is a unique cultural and civilization potential, which has had a decisive influence on the development of many countries and entire regions.

In the meantime, according to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Central Asia constitutes a crossing point of the interests of world powers, and the region adjoins the pivots of instability and conflict, experiencing the impact of all the downbeat processes occurring in the near and far abroad.

In this regard, the President of Uzbekistan was right in posing the question as to what developments the region can encounter. Will it go under the scenario of conflicts and confrontations or along the path of cooperation and progress? The answer is obvious, that is, everything depends, first and foremost, on the willingness of the Central Asian states to assume responsibility for the common future of the region.

Bordering on all countries of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is unswervingly interested in the region becoming a zone of stability, sustainable development and good-neighborliness. As Uzbekistan's leader has repeatedly stressed, peaceful, economically prosperous Central Asia is our most critical goal and key task. Meanwhile, it is impossible to achieve those objectives without addressing one of the most pressing regional and global issues, namely, the conflict in the neighboring Afghanistan, which historically and geopolitically is an integral part of our common region.

Peace in Afghanistan is bedrock of stability and prosperity of Central Asia. Speaking at the international conference in Samarkand, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated frankly that it is essential to refuse to divide the security threats into 'our own and those of others' and in fact adhere to the principle of indivisibility of security. A peaceful Afghanistan is able to ensure the shortest possible access for the nations of Central Asia to the harbors of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, to connect India, Iran and Pakistan with the markets of Europe and the Middle East. To this end, what comes to the fore of the problem is the formation of an extensive and solid international consensus on the basic issues of establishing peace and security in Afghanistan, supporting the efforts of Afghan-owned, Afghan-led process for national reconciliation in the country. Uzbekistan has always been and remains a fundamental advocate of a political settlement of the situation in Afghanistan, making its feasible contribution to the country's socio-economic development. In this regard, Shavkat Mirziyoyev's initiative to organize - on March 26-27 this year in Tashkent, jointly with the Afghan side - an international high-level conference on Afghanistan, "Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Connectivity", is an important part of the Uzbek leadership's overall strategy to provide for regional security and stability.

Our country has been an active party to almost all international forums addressing the Afghan crisis, including the Kabul Process, the Moscow Format, the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process, the International Contact Group

on Afghanistan, the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA).

During a UN Security Council session in New York on January 19, 2018, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan delivered a joint presentation of the forthcoming Tashkent forum. The conference in Tashkent is due following the second meeting of the Kabul Process that took place on February 28 this year in Afghanistan's capital. It will come to be a logical extension of the efforts undertaken by the international community to secure peace and stability in the country. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani are to deliver keynote speeches at the opening ceremony of the conference.

Among those invited to the Tashkent meeting are the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Special Representative of the Organization for Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, as well as foreign ministers of China, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, India, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

It is expected that the forum participants will convey their consolidated stance - at the regional and global levels - on the need for the soonest start of direct talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban Movement without any preconditions. The conference is projected to result in the adoption of Tashkent Declaration anticipated to reflect the following key points: First, the peace process ought to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and in accordance with the provisions of resolutions and decisions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council; Second, the guaranteed integration of the armed opposition into the political life of Afghanistan and its recognition as a legitimate political force is instrumental in the success of the peace process;

Third, the international community strongly opposes all forms and manifestations of terrorism without any distinction, and recognizes that the threats of transnational terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime are common challenges to stability and sustainable development both for Afghanistan, the region and the world as a whole.

The Tashkent Conference is to follow the first meeting of the new format of cooperation, Central Asia + Afghanistan ("C5 + 1"), designed to discuss specific areas of interaction between the Central Asian nations and Afghanistan. The activity of this format will contribute to Afghanistan's successful integration into the system of trade, economic and infrastructural relations with the states of Central Asia, the effective implementation of projects and programs of regional scale. Initiating to hold the Tashkent Conference, Uzbekistan by no means intends to confine itself to arranging it as a one-time event, but continue with vigorous efforts - both bilaterally and multilaterally - to promote a peaceful political process in Afghanistan. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's foreign policy strategy finds its application, Uzbekistan is becoming a proactive contributor to and constituent part of the political process for a peaceful settlement to the Afghan conflict. Worth underscoring once again that the principal role and responsibility in this process belongs with the Afghans themselves, who must determine and build the future of their country. The gracious goals set for the Tashkent Conference, as well as the participation in it of all permanent members of the UN Security Council, the SCO member states and the countries neighboring Afghanistan, including the five Central Asian nations, have been triggering a growing interest in the forum around the globe. A large group of representatives of the world mass media is expected to arrive to partake in the coverage of the event. We express hope that the outcomes of the international meeting in Uzbekistan's capital city will come to be a vital milestone in the stabilization of Afghanistan, in the delivery of prerequisites for its sustainable development, enhancement of the Afghan people's welfare and the latter's engagement in the constructive processes in the region and the world in general. The success of the Tashkent forum should demonstrate the ability of the region's states to resolve common grave issues through joint efforts by opening up extensive opportunities for peace and progress.

Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

China is a Major Country Full of Sunshine

By Liu Jinsong

Recently, China is convening the "two sessions", i.e., the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. This is a major event in the political life of the Chinese people. My Afghan friends expressed their congratulations to me and said that President Xi Jinping's governance of China for more than five years has received widespread praise from the international community and Premier Li Keqiang's "Report on the Work of the Government" has made important plans for China's next development. On this basis, they really hope to understand what good news the "two sessions" will bring to China and Afghanistan. Afghanistan is already in Spring, with the sense of Spring in the air, the sun shining brightly everywhere. There is no better word than "sunny" which can be used to describe current China and China-Afghanistan relations.

First of all, Chinese are sunny.

Like Afghanistan, China is an ancient civilization with a history of 5,000 years. The majority of Chinese people has belonged to farming society. Therefore, They love peace and have never intended to grab lands from other countries. Chinese people also values etiquette, and treat others with honesty, hospitality and positive optimism. "As heaven maintains vigor through movement, a gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection", "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". These two old sayings vividly reflect the Chinese philosophy. Anyone who visits China, either on streets, subways, high-speed railways, or in hotels, will always feel Chinese people's deep love for life as well as their spirit of hard-working and kindness. Chinese white-collar workers go to work every morning at 8 o'clock and come back at 10 o'clock in the evening. However, every young person has inexhaustible vigor and dreams of prospering the nation and getting their families rich. They are firmly convinced that the dream can only be realized through hard work and sweat. Polls show that more than 80% of Chinese youth believe their economic situation will be better than their parents. This is unimaginable in the United States, Japan and Europe.

Secondly, the present and future of China is sunny.

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which was held in October 2017, planned China's development goal from now on till 2050, and established the guiding ideology of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Comrade Xi Jinping was reelected as General Secretary of CPC Central Committee. Over the past 5 years, China's GDP has increased from more than 8 trillion USD to 12 trillion USD. The increment in last year was equivalent to the GDP of Australia. The proportion of China's economy in the world's economy has increased from 11.4% to around 15%, and its contribution to world economic growth has exceeded 30%, surpassing the total amount of the United States, Japan, and Europe. Over the past 5 years, a total of 66 million Chinese people found jobs in cities and towns, and 68 million people have

been lifted out of poverty, which is equivalent to the entire British population. Social pension insurance covers more than 900 million Chinese people, nearly three times more than the total population of the United States. The high-speed railway operating mileage is 25 thousand kilometers, accounting for two-thirds of the world's total. The forest area has increased by more than 100 thousand square kilometers, which is equivalent to Iceland's land area. China has 16 thousand new companies registered every day, and 770 million netizens in total. Nowadays in China, there are more than 4,200 high-speed trains are galloping, more than 80 million express parcels are sent to various places, nearly 80,000 cars are sold out and 220,000 films are being screened everyday.

China's economic growth rate is expected to be 6.5% this year, and its GDP per capita 5 years later is expected to exceed 12,000 USD. China's population in urban areas is expected to be increased by 11 million people this year, and its inflation and unemployment rate will be controlled within 3% and 5.5% respectively. China is already the largest export market for 43 countries. In November 2018, China will hold the Shanghai International Import Expo which is the first one among the major powers. In the next 5 years, China will import goods and services worth of 10 trillion USD, absorb foreign investment of 600 billion USD. Chinese investment in foreign countries will reach up to 750 billion USD, and outbound tourists will reach up to 700 million people, all these factors will bring immense benefits to all countries over the world. China has almost achieved the three-year goal of disarming 300 thousand military personnel, and is accelerating the military reform and striving for building the world first class military forces. Sunny also means making power operating publicly, governing the country according to the constitution, advancing the rule of law, and firmly fighting corruption. Over the past 5 years, China has tried 101 corrupt officials at the provincial, ministerial level or above. The next step is to consolidate the overwhelming trend of the anti-corruption struggle, establish a National Monitoring Committee, and lock power in the cage of the system, so that officials will be cautious because they have scruples in mind.

Thirdly, Chinese foreign policy is sunny.

China is a major country pursuing peace, actively learning and full of sunshine. Chinese Communist Party, or the CPC, always spares no efforts not only to pursue the happiness and satisfaction of Chinese people, but also to advance the cause of mankind. In the Constitutional Amendment just approved by the 13th National People's Congress of China, there is an emphasized statement saying that China's achievements in revolution, construction and reform era are inseparable from the support of the people from the world.

Meanwhile, another improved and strengthened statement is that China is adherent to the path of peaceful development and insists on the opening-up strategy for mutual benefit and win-win situation.

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