

(1) Central Asian...

Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini discussed relevant topics of the regional cooperation during the meeting.

Foreign ministers of the Central Asian countries welcomed the EU's intent to develop and adopt a renewed EU Regional Strategy in 2019 and expressed readiness of their countries to actively participate in the process.

Prospects of economic development of the region, regional cooperation in trade and economic, investment and technological, science and educational spheres were discussed as well during the meeting.

Special attention was paid to the stabilization of situation in Afghanistan and its social and economic development. (Trend)

(2) Tajikistan...

Representative for Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, as well as Deputy Secretary of State of the US for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon.

Special representatives of Great Britain, Germany, Italy, special adviser to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, special envoy of the Foreign Ministry of Qatar, NATO delegations, Collective Security Treaty Organization, representatives from France and the United Arab Emirates also participate in the conference. (Trend)

(3) Turkey Welcomes...

Lavrov underscored the importance of a constructive dialogue between Afghanistan and Taliban for peace and stability in the country.

Describing Ghani's call for Taliban as brave and concrete offer, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini dubbed it as an exemplary opportunity for peace. (AA)

(4) Lavrov Comments...

and stability by launching a constructive dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban movement."

The situation in Afghanistan has been deteriorating due to the growing activities of the Taliban and the Islamic State terror group (outlawed in Russia), he went on.

"The situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate," Lavrov said. "Since there is no intra-Afghan political process, the Taliban movement fully or partially controls about half of the country's territory and continues to conduct military activities and acts of sabotage. The growing presence of the so-called Islamic State, particularly in Afghanistan's northern provinces, causes special concern," the Russian top diplomat added. (TASS)

(5) Poland Promises...

did not reveal the number of additional soldiers being sent to the war-devastated country.

Afghanistan and Poland will celebrate its 90th anniversary of their diplomatic and political relations at a special ceremony during the ongoing year. (Pajhwok)

(6) New Balkh...

Police chief Mohammad Akram Sami said narrowing the distance between security forces and public would be his top priority.

He would enforce law and stop law violations and that security officials would strive to further people's confidence in police this way. (Pajhwok)

(7) China to Increase...

security situation of Bamyan and added his country would focus more on various investments in the province in future.

He said his country would support a stable, prosperous and de-

veloped Afghanistan and would work more for increased people to people contact between the two countries in future.

The Chinese envoy said he discussed with Bamyan governor the preservation of historic monuments and improvement of higher education in Bamyan and would send the message of the governor and the people of Bamyan in this regard to his government.

Bamyan governor Mohammad Tahir Zuhir appreciated Chinese government's aid and urged the ambassador to continue their assistance to the province.

He said the people of Bamyan wanted Chinese government to create a Chinese language department in the province and as well construct school buildings. (Pajhwok)

(8) 4 Members of...

and the injured were shifted to hospital by local people.

A day earlier, seven members of a family were killed in a similar incident in central Kapisa province. (Pajhwok)

(9) Ghani Meets...

by the government and the people of Afghanistan, she added.

During the visit both sides exchanged views on holding parliamentary elections, district council and presidential elections in Afghanistan, provide opportunities for vocational training, supporting women, combating terrorism and economic crimes, the statement said.

Before meeting Mogherini, Ghani addressed the Tashkent conference and said regional countries need to support Afghanistan's peace efforts especially as terrorists know no geographic boundaries.

In his opening speech at the conference, Ghani said that ties need to be strengthened with regional countries in order to fight terrorism, which is a common threat.

He said Afghanistan will do everything in its power to bring about peace and that the recent Kabul Process meeting had been a clear sign that Afghanistan wants to end the war and to show that international allies support government in its quest. Ghani called on all regional countries to support the Afghan-led peace process Afghanistan.

The president also discussed the military situation and said large operations have been carried out in the past two weeks to eliminate threats. He said the fight against drug smuggling has also been ramped up Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev also addressed the delegates and said the fight against terrorism was a common factor for the region and more cooperation was needed.

He also said more cooperation was needed with Afghanistan in the education sector.

On Monday, Afghan political leaders and members of the High Peace Council expressed hope and optimism that a renewed peace effort would emerge out of Tuesday's Tashkent peace summit. (Tolo news)

(10) Women Join...

"We want peace in our province and our country. Enough of war. We have lost our relatives. Now we request you (the Taliban) to join peace," said Shazia another female activist in the province.

These women said the Peace Convoy will travel to Nad Ali district, in the north east of Lashkargah City, to carry the message of peace to the Taliban.

"We are happy if peace comes and both sides stop the bloodshed because this war is not our war; it belongs to other countries. Our homes and properties have been destroyed," said Zarghona a protester.

"If someone wants war then they must go and fight foreigners. Stop making us widows and

making us cry over the death of our children," said Wak Anara, a resident of Helmand.

The movement is the first of its kind for peace.

On Monday, the Peace Convoy drove through the city of Lashkargah, brandishing posters carrying messages calling for peace. (Tolo news)

(11) Ghani Calls...

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Talking on the significance of the peace conference on Monday, Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah expressed hope that the conference would lead to sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

The Tashkent summit is expected to be attended by the UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, as well as the foreign ministers of China, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Turkey, India, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

"The conference which is going to be held at a foreign ministers level has major importance. We hope that the conference proves helpful in meeting the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan," said Abdullah.

This comes on the heels of the recent Kabul Process meeting where Afghan President Ashraf Ghani laid out a detailed peace offer to the Taliban.

The conference will be summed up by a Tashkent Declaration, that will reflect the main points of the discussion.

Uzbekistan hosted the first peace conference on Afghanistan in 1999. (Tolo news)

(12) Mattis Meets...

efforts in Afghanistan. We welcome your initiative to host a trilateral meeting of Afghan, Pakistani and Indonesian religious leaders. In light of your nation's multiethnic society, your voice in denouncing theological violence and your endorsement of the peace process shows the path to a lasting peace in Afghanistan, a country which has suffered far too long from war," he said.

This comes ahead of the Ulema meeting in Indonesia between religious scholars from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The meeting is expected to be held in Jakarta in the near future. The religious scholars are expected to discuss the ongoing war in Afghanistan and the campaign against terrorism, according to Afghan officials.

The war on terrorism and the ongoing turmoil in Afghanistan will dominate the agenda at the conference, said officials from the High Peace Council (HPC).

The HPC strongly supports the involvement of Indonesia for peace in Afghanistan and the timeframe for the conference will be announced by Indonesian officials sometime in the near future, according to officials.

Historically, Indonesia has been well-regarded for its quiet but decisive mediation role in conflict resolution processes in Cambodia the 1980s, as well as for its actions in achieving peaceful

resolutions to internal religious conflicts in Ambon and Aceh. (Tolo news)

Mushahidullah Praises France Role in Handling Climate Change Issues

ISLAMABAD - French Ambassador to Pakistan Marc Baréty Tuesday called on Minister for Climate Change Senator Mushahidullah Khan and discussed climate change issues.

The minister said that France is playing active role in tackling issued related to climate change, which also arranged Cop-21 successfully besides all security issues.

The minister appreciated the role of Martine Dorance ex. Ambassador to Pakistan for her collaboration on climate change.

"We are establishing Climate Change Council and Authority to involve provinces and private sector, and have started GharGharAikShajar plantation campaign," he added.

Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change RominaKhurshedAlam apprised the ambassador about upcoming expo on sustainable development.

"This expo aims to provide students an opportunity to display their projects on environment" she added.

She also highlighted some initiatives of the Ministry on urban forestation.

French Ambassador Marc Baréty offered assistance to reduce 20 percent carbon emissions according to its commitments.

Director General Environment Irfan Tariq informed the ambassador that Pakistan had submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that are called National Determined Contributions now.

The INDCs talk about 20 percent reduction in emissions. But this reduction depends on 40 billion dollars support annually.

"We are also developing a road-map to consult provinces on implementation process of INDCs in the light of our policies. We also hold twice a year meetings to review climate change policy implementation framework," he added. (Monitoring Desk)

Greece Gets Green Light for 6.7 Billion Euro Bailout Batch

ATHENS, Greece - Europe's bailout fund on Tuesday approved a 6.7 billion euro (\$8.32 billion) loan installment to Greece as part of its third international rescue program, with payment of the first 5.7 billion euros expected this week.

The European Stability Mechanism said the approval came after the Greek government completed a series of required reforms. The funds will be used to service public debt and clear domestic arrears.

"Today's decision ... acknowledges the hard work by the Greek government and Greek people in completing an extensive set of reforms," said ESM head Klaus Regling. The reforms were in tax policy, privatizations and the resolution of non-performing loans, among others.

The ESM said the initial 5.7 billion euros are to be disbursed Wednesday. The remaining 1 billion euros, to be used for clearing arrears, may be disbursed after May 1 if the country "makes progress in reducing its stock of arrears."

Greece has depended on billions of euros from international rescue loans since 2010, and its third bailout is due to end this summer. In exchange for the money, successive governments have had to implement often painful economic and structural

reforms, including tax increases and severe cuts to pensions and public spending.

Regling said he was "confident that Greece is on track to successfully exit the ESM program in August 2018, provided that the remaining reforms are implemented by the Greek government."

Greece's financial crisis has wiped out a quarter of the economy and led to persistently high unemployment, which continues to hover above 20 percent. The frequently unpopular reforms have also led to street protests. (AP)

Ex-NATO Chief Seeks Task Force to Clean Up Latvian Banking

LONDON - The former head of NATO has asked the prime minister of Latvia to create an international task force to guide the country in cleaning up its banking sector, which has been rocked by accusations of money laundering and bribery.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who has also been prime minister of Denmark and is currently deputy chairman of Latvian bank Norvik, wrote a letter calling for the creation of a group of experts from major Western institutions like the European Central Bank and U.S. Treasury.

He made the proposal last week in a letter, which was obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press, to Latvia's Maris Kucinskis.

Latvia's central bank chief is being investigated amid allegations of bribery and money laundering. And one of Latvia's biggest banks collapsed last month after the U.S. said it "institutionalized money laundering" and proposed cutting it off from the U.S. financial sector.

Latvia, which is a member of the European Union and NATO, has been the center of banking scandals for years as it became a hub for international banking, mainly from neighboring Russia and east European states like Ukraine. While offshore accounts are not necessarily illegal, much of that money has been proven to be laundered or obtained illegally.

The U.S. Treasury said in February that one Latvian bank, ABLV, processed payments that broke U.S. sanctions on North Korea, among other things. Concerns about the bank caused a run, leading to its collapse.

Latvian officials have described ABLV as a "non-resident" bank that was acting as a hub for deposits and payments to foreign clients mostly from the former Soviet republics, including nations like Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine.

In his letter, Rasmussen said the U.S. Treasury report had undermined progress in cleaning up Latvia's banking sector. He said that, amid reports of corruption among Latvian officials themselves, having an international group of experts would be the only way to restore credibility to the sector. The group of 5-10 "international luminaries" would meet at least four times a year, according to the proposal, to review the country's progress and submit publicly available reports to the Latvian government.

To curb money laundering, the Latvian government last week proposed to fast-track legislation to ban shell companies - front organizations that have no real business activity but are used mainly to move or contain money, often secretly. Businesses have taken advantage of shell companies to funnel billions of dollars through the small Baltic nation with the help of financial institutions like ABLV.

The government, led by Kucinskis since February 2016, said it wants to add amendments to existing laws to prevent and reduce the proportion of what it described as "risky transactions in the banking business." (AP)