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**EU Shows a Clear Stance in Afghan Peace Process**

Few days ago, Federica Maria Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, came to Kabul and met with President Mohammed Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. In a joint press conference with President Ghani, "she said that the EU union has clear plans for sustainable peace building to strengthening governance in Afghanistan." "The EU strongly supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process to preserve the achievements of Afghanistan attained in past eighteen years", she said. She said the European Union will continue supporting the Afghan peace process and that there should be a ceasefire in order to move forward the peace talks.

Mogherini articulated that EU support peace talks without any political agenda, and she summarized her main views in five steps: first of all, the Afghan government should be helped to establish a pervasive peace program. Second, comprehensive reforms need to take place in state institutions, especially in security institutions. Third, donations need to be made to fighters who stop fighting. Fourth, the trade has to be boosted among regional countries, and the level of economic cooperation should increase. Fifth, to implement these plans EU has the readiness to be considered as a guarantor for the peace process.

Meanwhile, President Ashraf Ghani said a big opportunity has been created for peace in the country and this opportunity can only be used by the elected government of Afghanistan. He indirectly pointed at recent pressures by some politicians and some countries in the region about peace and said that peace cannot be achieved through threats. According to him, stability in Afghanistan is in favor of stability in the region and the world. Ghani said the European Union has no other intention than seeing peace and stability in the world. He said the upcoming consultative Jirga will provide the opportunity for Afghans to decide about their future.

Ghani said Afghanistan is suffering from the violence which is the consequence of internal as well as regional and international conditions, adding that basis of the country's foreign policy is creating a positive vision among the international community towards Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Mogherini said the conditions for peace have been provided and that Afghans should move the process forward. "Time has come for the Afghans; all the Afghans without exclusion have to take the future of their country in their hands. "We will be at your side in this difficult but important journey and we should accompany the Afghan people and their democratically elected institutions in this particular moment of their history," Mogherini said.

The hopeful expression of the EU high ranking officials comes after Qatar long peace talks behind the closed door between which raised many questions in the country. Some expressed concerns over the outcome of peace process with Taliban, while other used the opportunity to propose interim government in the country. Domestic politicians also tried to use from the opportunity; some of them highlighted the interim Government while other prepared a long list to travel to Qatar to confiscate the peace process in their turbulent politic. With highlighting the peace talks, the public opinion was also distracted from presidential election to peace talks.

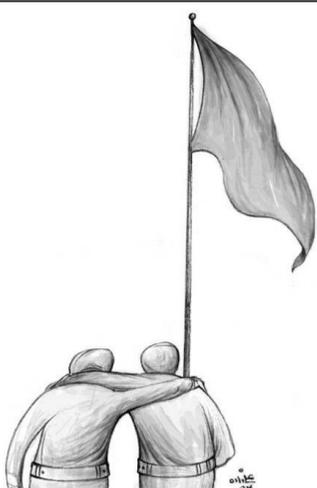
Unfortunately, some of the politicians showed their readiness to accept the Black Taliban sovereignty at the cost of undermining the current government. Supporting Taliban policy, they have disclosed their hidden desire in the public arena. What we, as a citizen of this land, need to ask them whether they consider the public interests in their expressions and political stances? If yes, according to which polls, do they consider the coming of the interim government after the May of this year in line with the wishes of the people? People who always call the maintenance of the current system, with all its shortcomings and deficiencies, are much better than the interim government. So, they should not use people for their personal interests.

The Mogirini's trip to Kabul clarified a lot of ambiguities and answered a lot of questions. Mogirini explicitly explained the angles of peace and its implications and supported Afghanistan's ownership for peace process. People say peace must be sustainable; sustainable peace comes when the peace process is inclusive and all citizens see themselves as a part of the negotiation process and their demands in the peace agreement are taken into account. Mogirini's trip to Kabul shows the inter-linked and unified stance of the EU and the US on the peace talks as allies. It is a positive trend in the Afghan peace process and can play a critical role to reach to a sustainable peace deal in the country.

People want the government to have a strong presence in the negotiation as an elected representative of people.

The achievements of the past eighteen years should be preserved and the constitution should be considered as the basis of peace process. Peace must lead to stability and security; if the peace does not provide people with security and stability, it does not pave the way for social welfare. People do not want to victimize the two decades achievements and democratic system for unclear peace as there is no real peace without democracy. Failure to hold elections means shutting down the democratic process and giving unnecessary privilege to the Taliban.

From the people's points of view, peace and war does not only depend to people of Afghanistan. Many of the problems have rooted in regional and international countries, and so they can contribute in advancement of peace process. So, running away from the problems are not good solutions instead of wasting time we need to solve the fundamental issues. EU and The US initiatives and plans are also consistent with people and government indicating the international acceptance of the government's approach to the issue of peace in Afghanistan.

**Small Pine Nuts, Great Friendship**

By: Liu Jinsong

On March 28th, I, accompanying H.E. President Ghani, attended the launching ceremony of a pine nut processing factory in Kabul Industrial Park. The pine nuts, pine nut processing factory and pine nut chartered cargos represent traditional agriculture, contemporary industry and modern trade respectively. The wonderful combination of these three elements represents the centenary dream of Afghanistan towards a prosperous and strong nation.

Around one year ago, during my presentation of the credentials, H.E. the President expressed his hope of exporting more Afghan pine nuts, saffron, pomegranates, carpets and marble to China. To be frank, the President is the most active and excellent salesman in Afghanistan. He spared no effort in increasing the income and job opportunities of Afghan farmers. I responded that, based on the traditional friendship of our two countries and its own policies, China would be willing to import more goods from Afghanistan. I joked that, there would be a lot to be achieved—we would do it step by step. Since one character in my Chinese name means "Pine tree", firstly, we could try our best to sign an agreement of Afghan pine nuts exporting to China this year.

Just like what we have witnessed, under the attention and guidance of our two national leaders, our two countries signed the agreement within only half a year. Since last November, when we started the chartered cargos for pine nuts, more than 15 million US dollars' worth of pine nuts have been exported to China by 64 cargo planes within 4 months. This is the reflection of "China Efficiency", and also another symbol of the China-Afghanistan friendship.

In 2018, the total volume of our bilateral trade increased by 27% against the gloomy global economy. The total export volume from Afghanistan to China exceeded 24 million dollars, which is 6 times that of 2017. What an amazing achievement! We should appreciate the guidance of President Ghani and President Xi Jinping, as well as the valuable efforts of government officials and commerce sector.

For more good news last year, the investment from China to Afghanistan was close to 10 million U.S. dollars, with a year-on-year growth of more than 50%. In 2018, more than 20 freight trains and 47 direct commercial flights travel between our two countries, which promoted the exchange of people, goods and information. Afghan products were quite popular at the 1st China International Import Expo held in Shanghai

last year. The exhibits couldn't be kept on the shelves before the closure of Expo. Benefiting from the Belt and Road Initiative and international connectivity, Afghanistan is no longer a landlocked country, and is expected to be the connection point of major economic corridors. Afghan featured products also take a better position in the global value chain.

Based on the prediction of eMarketer, a well-known market research firm, China is expected to become the world's largest retail consumer market this year, with a total market value of 5.6 trillion US dollars. In the next five years, China will import 8 trillion US dollars of goods and attract 600 billion US dollars of foreign investment, with the total outward investment reaches 750 billion US dollars. China's GDP growth rate is expected to be around 6-6.5% this year, and China is still one of the strongest and most stable economies in the world. In recent months, the Chinese economy has been operating steadily. The trend of steady operation, positive long-term tendency hasn't been changed. Two days ago, China and Italy signed the MoU on Joint Building the Belt and Road Initiative, and reached series of contracts worth of 2.5 billion Euros. It fully reflects the complementary potentials of China's markets and industries with the abroad, and the jointly construction of the Belt and Road Initiatives. As China further deepens its reform and opening up, and with the advancement of China and Afghanistan joint build the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the arrival of peace in Afghanistan, the economic and trade cooperation between our two countries will continue to advance to a new level.

Although the pine nuts are very small and the trade volume of pine nuts is not very big, it means a lot to the livelihood of thousands of Afghan people, and it is a reflection of open global economy and free trade, as well as the outcome of good neighborliness and cooperation of mutual benefit. When the Chinese people taste the sweet pine nuts, when Afghan practitioner enjoys more earnings, our two peoples remember not only the business, but also the brotherhood that established and deepened out of the ancient and new Silk Road. In the future, China will import more Afghan featured products, help Afghanistan develop its preliminary product processing industry, train more Afghan professionals, and will also contribute more to the peace reconciliation and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan.

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**A Low-Carbon Belt and Road**

By: Ma Jun and Simon Zadek

Discussions about climate action nowadays often focus on the largest past and current emitters. But, if one looks to the future, the biggest climate risks and opportunities lie in the more than 60 countries that have signed up to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The BRI, which China launched in 2013, is focused primarily on mobilizing capital for infrastructure investments and improving connectivity among participating economies, most of which are still relatively low-income developing countries. But while it is hoped that the BRI will spur a sharp acceleration in GDP growth and development across these economies, infrastructure and other investments associated with the initiative could also have profound environmental and climate consequences.

As it stands, Belt and Road countries, not including China, account for about 18% of global GDP and 26% of global carbon dioxide emissions. In the coming two decades, however, BRI countries' GDP average growth rate is expected to be twice that of the OECD, and investments in BRI countries are likely to comprise more than half of total investment worldwide. In the worst-case scenario, the BRI countries could account for over half of global CO2 emissions by 2050.

That possibility – set out in a forthcoming study that we co-authored – assumes that BRI economies stick to their current carbon-intensity trajectory, while the rest of the world reduces its emissions in line with the Paris climate agreement. In other words, if not managed in a climate-conscious way, development in the BRI countries would undercut efforts to meet the world's climate goals.

This is a risk that needs to be taken seriously. Though many global investors are becoming more sensitized to climate risks, and thus less attracted to carbon-intensive assets overall, BRI infrastructure projects are likely to be largely exempt from these pressures. After all, most BRI countries lack carbon-related obligations or incentives, including carbon-pricing systems that would show investors the shadow price of carbon-intensive assets. Moreover, these countries hold many of their carbon-intensive assets on public balance sheets, which are less likely to become "stranded assets."

In order to ensure that development in the BRI countries does not undermine the global climate agenda, meaningful steps must be taken to reduce substantially the carbon footprint of new investments in these economies. The window for action is narrow: investment decisions made in the coming few years will determine the carbon intensity of critical infrastructure and major real-estate assets that will operate

for decades.

By linking policy, finance, and the international community's expertise and technological resources, it is possible to lay the groundwork for low-carbon development in the BRI economies. To that end, three focused and interconnected actions should be pursued.

First, global investors must be convinced to adopt green principles for investments in the BRI region. Such an effort could include promoting the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road, introduced by China's Green Finance Committee and the City of London last November, in cities like London, Hong Kong, New York, and Singapore – the world's principle sources of capital. Requiring investors to disclose the carbon footprint of BRI infrastructure projects, rather than just the risk climate change poses to investments, would also make a difference.

Second, China could take more aggressive action to promote low-carbon investments in BRI countries, in line with the government's high-level commitments to advance sustainable development and its international climate leadership. For example, China could require all BRI investments by Chinese financial institutions and non-financial corporations to adhere visibly to specific green standards. This could be complemented by the creation of a low-carbon compact that includes leading Chinese and international companies carrying out BRI projects and providing green technologies to participating countries.

Finally, international organizations should increase their support to BRI countries for greening infrastructure development. Beyond environmental governance, such organizations should help to advance frameworks for green finance policy and increase their capacity for green public procurement. After all, while most BRI infrastructure investments still rely on international financing, over time, larger BRI countries' financial systems will increasingly shape the carbon intensity of domestic investments.

The BRI has the potential to invigorate developing economies and raise incomes for many millions of people. But we need to make sure that the benefits are not offset by unmitigated climate change. Now is the moment for China and the international community to work together to take concrete action to ensure that BRI investments are climate friendly.

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