

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



October 06, 2016

## Promises in Brussels Conference

In the ongoing Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, the International Community has reiterated its support for Afghanistan but it has also mentioned that the country would need to do more as far as efforts on transparency, security and human rights are concerned.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his address that the people of Afghanistan had been able to count on the help of the international community but also emphasized that the country would need to have a greater role played by women. He, though, welcomed the National Unity Government's (NUG) move to include women in the peace process.

The overall role of NUG for the heightened role of women, however, remains debatable. On its beginning days NUG made some important promises regarding uplifting the position of women and saving them from the prevailing violence and discrimination but many of those promises have only remained promises. On certain occasions even some women rights organizations clearly stated that the government has not been able to do much in this regard and the promises have remained only promises.

Then there are fears that in the process of the restoration of peace and making agreements with the Taliban extremists, there may be certain sacrifices made regarding the rights of women and that would deal a major blow to all the progress or achievements that have been made regarding women in the country.

Ban Ki-moon also said that he was "deeply concerned" about the high civilian toll and the high number of displaced people in the country. On this note he called on the country's international partners to further commit to helping Afghanistan.

Afghan government in this regard can make sure to provide better security to the civilians and must make every effort that they are properly protected. Definitely, it is not possible to ensure the security of all the people, keeping in consideration the situation, however, it can make efforts to do what it can do in this regard. There are many cases wherein civilians lost their lives because of the negligence or inappropriate actions of the authorities. Therefore, there should be endeavors to control them, at least. This would also reduce the number of people who get displaced because of insecurity.

The international community has also emphasized that aid pledged should largely be spent on key projects to help Afghanistan reach the point of self-reliance as well as for the rehabilitation of Afghanistan's infrastructure, for press freedom and for propping up human rights - particularly that of women's rights.

George Cunningham, deputy of EU ambassador to Afghanistan said in a statement, "I expect good progress and as I said money will not be given in one go, it will be given in segments."

Promoting good governance, fighting corruption, strengthening rule of law and security and promoting economic development are said to be important factors in terms of securing aid.

Corruption has been a dominating problem in Afghanistan and a large portion of previous aid money was, in fact, gulped by corruption; little money reached to the poor and deserving people. In order to save the upcoming aid from the evil of corruption, pronounced actions would be required on institutional level. Corruption has penetrated deep within Afghan social and political systems and, the sincere authorities would have to make some big decisions to eradicate it properly from the country and bring the aid money in the best use.

Good governance, on the other hand, is also difficult to achieve for NUG in near future. Still a large portion of Afghan society suffer from poverty and unemployment, how can the government even talk about good governance. Education for all, rule of law, justice, gender equality, transparency and participatory government, all these can only be achieved when the very basic problems are solved. Thus, making developments in good governance would really be a Herculean task for the government.

However, the minister of finance Eklil Ahmad Hakimi has assured the international community that the money will be spent on key projects and will be monitored by the international community.

President Ashraf Ghani in his address also mentioned that the aid would be used in the best way to eliminate terrorism and instability from the country. He also said that creation of the anti-corruption task force body, increase in government revenue, investment, the peace deal with the Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), mega economic projects such as CASA, TUT-AP, Chabahar port, connectivity through railway lines, TAPI and other projects were major achievements of Afghan government in recent times. Moreover, he added that Afghanistan would require further support from the international community to fight terrorism.

There is no doubt in the fact that Afghanistan require support from the international community and the more there is support, the better there is a chance for Afghanistan to make developments; however, even more important is the fact that the authorities who make use of these aids and funds must be honest, dedicated and sincere. Without sincere and honest efforts everything may end up in smoke.

## The Protracted War

By Hujjatullah Zia

The important thing is for the leaders to try to really think about the country and its future, and how to better serve the people. Of course, since it is a political system, each of the political leaders has their own constituency, where they have to be able to deliver upon the expectations of their supporters - but Afghanistan is facing severe challenges; not only security, but also in terms of the economic situation, the human rights situation and corruption," these words were spoken by UN envoy to Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto on the eve of Brussels Conference co-hosted by EU and Kabul government.

The insurgency has mounted as the Taliban fighters intensified their terrorist attacks. Afghan nation bore the brunt of militancy and suffered great harm and heavy casualties within the past two years. Haibatullah's predecessor Mullah Akhtar Mansour - who was killed in the US drone strike- captured Kunduz on late September 2015 as a result of spring offensive. Refusing peace talks, he declared Omari Operation in the current year and Haibatullah follows his footsteps through continuing the deadly attacks. The worst-case scenario of Kunduz takeover was repeated in the same year as the Taliban's radical ideologue Mullah Haibatullah staged fatal attacks against Afghan government.

In the previous commentary about peace agreement with Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, I wrote that it did not carry much weight in bringing peace and stability in the country since HIA were in conflicts with the Taliban. I also pointed out that Hekmatyar's call on Taliban for peace talks would give an adverse result. Hence, the security situation has been deteriorated in the country despite the peace agreement with HIA and it is not a significant outcome for the government.

Afghan government still calls on warring parties to join peace process and stop violence and bloodshed. It is believed that with the death of Akhtar Mansour - who was considered a barrier before peace talks - there are still major setbacks before the negotiation, including Mansour's successor. The peace talk is doomed to failure if Haibatullah, whose radical mindsets far outweigh Mansour's - continues leading the Taliban outfits.

After all, the unmitigated militancy, which increases the death toll, will spread a sense of fear in the air and lead to mistrust between state and nation. According to public belief, the National Unity Government (NUG) is not able to protect the life and liberty of the citizens and there are many challenges in the government's machinery. Besides administrative corruption and bribery, mainly in the judicial system, there is trust issue between the heads of NUG and their negative state-

ments against each other are leaked to the media every once in a while. Human Right is also an issue in Afghanistan and the rights and liberty of Afghan nation are violated on a large scale and the graph of civilian casualties increase with each passing day. The warring factions, especially the Taliban fighters, pose serious threat to citizens' rights. They never consider the humanitarian law or the law of war. For instance, the last year's Kunduz takeover was followed not only by deaths and wounds but a number of women were said to fall the victim of sexual assaults, prisoners were freed and streams of blood were spilt without an iota of mercy.

To Afghans' unmitigated chagrin, the security situation deteriorates and political and economic challenges increase. In other words, the nascent democracy is undermined by armed insurgents and peace is a dream that never comes true for the nation. Neither human rights discourse nor the democratic paradigms were panacea for the problems. The economic stagnation aggravates the challenges in the country. Afghanistan's impressive average annual growth of nine per cent from 2002-2013 has declined rapidly since 2014. According to the World Bank's World Development Indicators, annual GDP growth fell from 14.4 per cent in 2012 to 2 per cent in 2013, and 1.3 and 1.5 per cent in 2014 and 2015 respectively. This drastic economic decline is mainly the result of the post-2014 international military drawdown and the year of intensified political instability that followed the 2014 election. Foreign troops once brought hundreds of millions of dollars into the Afghan economy, and their departure from 800 bases, large and small, deprives the country of what was after 2002 its largest single source of revenue. By one estimate, more than 200,000 Afghans have now lost jobs in logistics, security, and other sectors of a war-driven economy.

This sudden economic reversal has considerable political, security and social implications. Rising unemployment and widespread poverty is already widening the legitimacy gap between the NUG and the Afghan public, and expanding the reservoir of grievances that insurgents as well as hard-line ethnic and regional players could further exploit. To mitigate the challenges, the government will have to tackle the problems within the state machinery and build trust among the politically influential figures.

They have to centralize over eliminating corruptions, drug trafficking, bribery, nepotism, etc. In a nutshell, to undermine the terrorist networks, the government is to prioritize resolving the challenges and root out the contributing factors to terrorism, especially their financial resources namely narcotic cultivation and drug trafficking. Meanwhile, the intelligence service must be extended and the soldiers reinforced to overcome the war on terror.

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## Glance at Relations between Afghanistan and China

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

China has had peaceful and non-aggressive policies in the world particularly in regard to Afghanistan Affairs. Now China is considered the largest foreign investor in Afghanistan. Though she has the shortest border with Afghanistan, but her friendly neighborhood with Afghanistan back to 2000 before and has never had any conflict issues in the history of both countries. The relations between Afghanistan and China mostly involved in trade activities but after the fall of the Taliban regime and presence of International community in 2001, the relations between two countries had greatly improved. In December 2001, China sent to Afghanistan a working team of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which attended the Afghan transitional administration ceremony with a message of congratulations to President Hamid Karzai. In January 2002, President Karzai visited China, and met respectively with Chinese President Jiang Zemin. The two sides exchanged the notes of China providing 30 million yuan of emergent material aid and US\$1 million in cash to Afghanistan. President Jiang Zemin announced that China would provide US\$150 million-worth of assistance to Afghanistan for its reconstruction. The 30 million yuan of emergent material aid had been delivered to Kabul by the end of March 2002.

In May 2002, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiazuan visited Afghanistan. During the visit, the Chinese Foreign Minister met with Hamid Karzai, Chairman of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan and held talks with his counterpart Mr. Abdullah Abdullah. The two sides signed the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation of US\$30 million Chinese aid to Afghanistan. In November, Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah visited China. During his visit, the Chinese and Afghan sides exchanged the notes of China providing US\$1 million of material aid to Afghanistan. In December, China, together with the other 5 neighboring countries of Afghanistan signed Kabul Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations, reaffirming its commitment to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and to continuously support Afghanistan's peace process and reconstruction.

In February 2003, President Karzai passed through China twice. In May, the Vice President of Afghan Islamic Transitional Government Nematullah Sharhrani paid a working visit to China. During the visit he held talks with Chinese Vice President Zeng Qinghong and met with NPC Chairman Wu Bangguo and Premier Wen Jiabao. The two sides signed three cooperative documents including the Agreement of Economic and Technical Cooperation, under which the Chinese Government provides US\$15 million grant to the Afghan Government. However, the relation between two countries confined to relations between two states and traders. Since 2010, the relation between two countries has been extending unprecedentedly. The investment of \$3.5 billion investment to develop Aynak Copper mines, the launch of rail-

way between Afghanistan and China, the visit of Afghan and China delegations entirely confirm that China and Afghanistan are closing more than ever.

In continue to the recent friendly communications, Tuesday on October 04, 2016, Mr. Zhang Min, who worked as former Charge d'Affaires of Chinese Embassy and the Current Professor of the Pashto Department of the Communication University of China leading a 6-member delegation, held a Seminar about The Past, Present and Future of China-Afghanistan Relations, during their visit from Afghanistan In embassy of China; Several Afghan journalists, analysts and members from Afghan China friendship association also attended the seminar. Professor Zhan Min, "said China and Afghanistan have never had any conflict issues until now." He expressed his deep excuse about adverse effect of war on lives of innocent Afghan people and said that all Chinese people have the same feeling of sympathy about Afghan people. Finally, he said that China will do any types of help in contribute to peace process in Afghanistan. And then, Mr. Zhang Zhixun, A political officer from Chinese embassy, said that he had released the Pashtu song, sung by Chinese pashtu Students came as members of this delegation, from Dr. Kamal's facebook gained more than 4000 likes. It clearly indicates that there are deep feelings of friendships and good-will between people of two countries. Therefore, learning the languages of each other can play a good role in cultural, economic and social exchanges. on the whole, the participants from both countries admired the historic relations between two states and as well as traders of both countries but the relationships between people of two countries specially young generations, culture of two countries and the investments still need to be improved. Nevertheless, some Chinese participants representing CCTV raised their concerns about security issues as a worrying barrier for expansion of investments.

Consequently, Increasing China-Afghan cooperation can serve as the ballast for Afghan stability and the propeller for the regional peace. Because China has the strong potential to make important contributions to Afghan stability; on the other hand, the Chinese dream in her relations is peace, development, cooperative and win-win results, and it is similarly connected to the Afghan dream. So, Afghan government must not take a passive approach towards the technical and investment opportunities in building her infrastructures. We should not let the new type of relations stay as a concept or unpractical; we should push it forward and pave the way for more investments. The government should ensure the security of international business men and women who are interested to invest in Afghanistan. Also, they can be encouraged to invest in peaceful provinces of Afghanistan if currently not possible to work in certain provinces. Due to lack of financial ability, there is no way for Afghanistan unless seriously pave the way for private and international investments so as to overcome the current economic crisis.

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