

The Kabul Process



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The Kabul Process for Peace & Security Cooperation

1. Key Aims

An Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace process is of the highest priority for the Afghan Government. After decades of violence and bloodshed, Afghanistan recognizes that a sustainable means of ending the conflict is through a negotiated political settlement. In the process of transition, Afghanistan has already shown that it is capable to take the lead with regard to its own security. The Afghan Government is fully determined to be in the driver's seat of the peace process, and aims to engage the region in order to address the multiple dimensions of the ongoing violence in Afghanistan. The search for peace and security in Afghanistan includes multiple interlinked dimensions – between the Afghan Government, Afghan society and armed groups, and neighbors in the region and involved actors around the globe.

To support an Afghan vision for peace, the strongest commitment of regional partners and key stakeholders is now needed more than ever. Taking the lead in the this process underlines the willingness of Afghanistan as a sovereign state to act in a diplomatic context according to international norms and conventions, with the hope and expectation that all other participants will act according to the same international norms. Afghanistan seeks sustained stability on the basis of genuine state-to-state relations with the region, which encompass diplomatic, economic, political and security cooperation.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is convening the first meeting of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation on 6 June 2017 in Kabul. It has invited states of the region, who will take the center stage at this gathering, along with key members of the international community. There is a pressing reason for holding this meeting: **We need a stable Afghanistan to enable a stable region.** H.E. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani will outline Afghanistan's new vision and strategy for peace in order to garner regional support. Inspired by a new impetus on peace, the Afghan Government invites regional and international representatives to jointly develop fresh thinking on key problems that prevent greater stability and cooperation. This will reinvigorate regional and international consensus on the need for a peaceful

Afghanistan. The 6 June meeting will be the start of a process, not a panacea, providing a chance to establish pragmatic goals and to obtain commitments from countries that need to be turned into actions as the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation fully unfolds.

2. An Overarching Umbrella

While multiple fora have been held to help with peace and security in Afghanistan and the region over the past few years, the Government of Afghanistan believes that there is a great need for an overarching process that can serve as an umbrella, which various other initiatives can feed into and thereby reinforce the overall process. The Purpose of the Kabul conference is to place the Afghan Government as the key driving force for achieving peace, with the earnest support of regional and international partners. The Afghan Government further believes that the continuation of other initiatives could be supportive of this overall endeavor, as different formats help to bring together diverse groupings and provide the space for in-depth discussions with concerned participants. Therefore, the Kabul Process will incorporate and consolidate the positive steps taken and gains achieved.

3. Specific Themes

The premise of the Kabul Process on Peace and Security Cooperation is that regional representatives rally behind Afghanistan's vision for peace and security. As part of this process, regional partners will need to develop measures necessary to end violence and to forge sustainable peace, creating positive dividends for the entire region. The following two themes are essential to consolidate cooperation: peace and security.

3.1. An Afghan Vision for Peace

H.E. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani will highlight the strong commitment of the Afghan Government to peace-making and peace-building in Afghanistan. This commitment is well reflected in the recent peace agreement with Hizb-e-Islami. It is now anchored in a peace vision and strategy that stresses a whole-of-government approach to fostering an inclusive peace process.

The Afghan Peace Strategy outlines that there are several dimensions of Afghanistan's conflict. These are critical for understanding why it has proven so difficult to bring peace and stability to the country. Most importantly in this context, Afghanistan's conflicts do not derive solely from domestic disputes and rebellion. They stem as much from a lack of consensus amongst regional and global actors that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan is more valuable than an Afghanistan that is at war. Until that view changes, Afghanistan will remain unstable and its ungoverned spaces and border areas will continue to breed extremism and provide safe havens for regional and global terrorist networks. The conference on 6 June aims to outline a vision for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan that all regional actors and key stakeholders can actively support.

Peace-making for an ultimate political settlement is one important part of the peace process. The other key part is to open the door for a long-term vision and process of peace-building in Afghanistan. Peace-building aims to resolve the root causes of conflict, build trust, and provide

durable incentives to sustain peace. Violence in Afghanistan has led to discord in the region. Peace-building in Afghanistan creates cords between nations in the region, tying them together to strengthen connectivity and prosperity.

3.2. Security Cooperation

Terrorism is a global phenomenon posing threats to all, undermining peace, security and development in Afghanistan and the wider region. However forging a common understanding of these threats remains a serious challenge, including views on the use of terrorism as state policy. In addition, over the past 15 years terrorist groups have grown in numbers, they have become more violent and transnational, and their aims exceed the boundaries of any one nation. They are a threat to all states and the international order in general. More than twenty terrorist organizations operate in the ungoverned areas, either actively hosted or tolerated in exchange for their support to local armed groups, and these organizations use sanctuaries to plan and execute attacks throughout Afghanistan, the region and beyond. Without sanctuary, logistical support, the freedom to fund-raise and channel money, and revenue from the narcotics trade, the war would have been over a long time ago.

It will take a concerted effort by regional and international partners of Afghanistan to counter these foreign terrorist fighters. Lack of collective action will continue to risk leaving Afghanistan and the immediate neighborhood as a base for foreign fighters, threatening the stability of the region and the world. In this regard, concrete collective counter-terrorism ideas should be sought, leading to a fruitful discussion at this meeting on how to take collective actions through specific Counter Terrorism Confidence Building Measures.

4. Conclusion

The countries of the region must reach a consensus to accept Afghan stability and actively work to achieve it. The region has learned at great loss that continuing instability brings with it costs that affect everyone. Peace in Afghanistan thus strengthens peace dividends for all nations and people in the region, leading to increased connectivity, trade and prosperity. Regional connectivity will in turn help to build trust and foster exchanges between various strata of society in the region. The Government of Afghanistan sees this meeting as ideally placed to generate a positive momentum upon which further progress for peace can be built. The meeting aims to provide a fresh start for an open engagement and exchange that can lead to creation of a stable Afghanistan, by consequence, enabling a stable region.