

Newsletter on Indo-Pakistan Dialogue on the Regional Situation in the Context of Afghanistan 23-24 September, 2011

Chairman RIPORT, Mr. Khalid Aziz attended a meeting of retired Pakistani and Indian officials to develop proposals to begin an international process to address the regional situation in the context of Indo-Pak cooperation in Afghanistan. The meeting took place in Dubai on September 23-24, 2011.



The meeting was facilitated by Peter Jones, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa and Nicole Waintraub was the project assistant and meeting coordinator.

The group agreed to a joint statement that calls for the speedy appointment of a Special Representative of the United Nation's Secretary General. The Special Representative is to consult interested states and develop a framework for a regional consultative mechanism. The mechanism would provide, for the first time, a place where all countries neighboring Afghanistan, and other concerned states, could design a cooperative approach "to help ensure non-interference in Afghan affairs by external parties and also the implementation of a commitment by Afghanistan that its territory will not be used by any group to threaten or attack any other state."

The group expressed the hope that the process could begin as soon as possible. It also noted

that the upcoming Bonn conference on the future of Afghanistan would be an excellent place for a newly appointed Special Representative to begin the consultations "on such matters as the structure of such a mechanism, the obligations of the participants and the creation of a process whereby the implementation of these obligations could be monitored and confidence thereby built."

Finally, the high-level group discussed the situation in Afghanistan as it impacts on India-Pakistan relations and agreed on seven proposals intended to help allay mistrust and promote dialogue on Afghanistan between Islamabad and Delhi.

A Regional Approach to Afghanistan

The participants recalled the document of the 2001 Bonn Conference on Afghanistan was a request by all of the Afghan groups represented at Bonn for "the United Nations and the international community (to) take the necessary measures to guarantee the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan as well as the non-interference by foreign countries in Afghanistan's internal affairs."

Similar sentiments have since been repeated by 'the Loya Jirga'. For example, *The National Consultative Peace Jirga Resolution* of 08 June, 2010 states; "We want and urge for a long-term international commitment, so Afghanistan does not become again a playground for regional conflicts, and that external interferences can be averted and thus space for stronger regional cooperation can be provided."

In this context, the participants in the Dubai meeting agreed that an important element of the upcoming official meetings in Istanbul and Bonn should be the launching of an international process to give effect to these calls.

This could begin with the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations with a mandate to expeditiously consult concerned states as to how a regional

consultative mechanism might be created to help ensure non-interference in Afghan affairs by external parties and also the implementation of a commitment by Afghanistan that its territory will not be used by any group to threaten or attack any other state. The Special Representative should be tasked to report back to the Secretary General as quickly as possible on such matters as the structure of such a mechanism, the obligations of the participants and the creation of a process whereby the implementation of these obligations could be monitored and confidence thereby built.

Participants in the Dubai meeting further agreed that, following receipt of this report, the Security Council should expeditiously consider the matter and, in concert with relevant states take steps to begin the creation of the necessary regional consultative mechanism on Afghanistan.

It was noted that the participating states in the upcoming Bonn II conference could begin discussions on a regional consultative mechanism as a means of further expediting its creation.

It would be helpful if the Special Representative is appointed by this time and could participate in these discussions.

Joint Actions by India and Pakistan

In addition to their discussions over a regional mechanism, the participants in the Dubai meeting discussed specific bilateral steps that India and Pakistan could take to contribute to stability in Afghanistan and in the region. These could include:

- The initiation of official India-Pakistan talks on Afghanistan;
- A joint expression of support for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity, non-interference and non-intervention;
- Exploration of the possibilities for collaboration in reconstruction and development projects;
- Agreement on the elimination of the use of territory as a sanctuary for extremist/terrorist groups;
- Discussion of future cooperation in the training of Afghan security forces;
- Encouragement of the private sector in India and Pakistan to jointly invest in such

fields as agriculture, infrastructure and



mining; and

- Joint efforts to facilitate Afghanistan's integration into SAARC by securing full transit rights for Afghanistan to all SAARC countries.

The participants in Dubai meeting were:

1. Khalid Aziz, Chairman of the Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training and former Chief Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP), Pakistan
2. A.S. Dulat, former Chief of the R and AW, India
3. Chinmaya Gharekhan, former UN Under-Secretary General and former Special Envoy of the Indian Prime Minister to West Asia, India
4. Aziz Khan, former Ambassador, Pakistan
5. Lalit Mansingh, former Foreign Secretary, India
6. Rahimullah Yusufzai, Journalist, Pakistan

Observers in the meeting were:

1. Amb. (ret.) Craig Dunkerley, Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, USA
2. Col. (ret.) Jack Gill, Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, USA