



Concept Note

High-level Event: Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Afghanistan Geneva Conference

Virtual format

Monday 23 November 2020 (12:00-13:30 GVA time)

Background:

Effective engagement by regional countries, including neighbouring countries and the wider region, will be crucial in promoting and sustaining a durable peace in Afghanistan. A stable and secure Afghanistan will have immense benefits not only for international security and stability, but also for trade and transit cooperation in Central and South Asia. Similarly, closer links with the region will foster the necessary socio-economic conditions for the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan, and promote confidence among Afghanistan's development partners with respect to their ongoing investment in the country's future.

The 2020 Afghanistan conference comes at an opportune moment, following the launch of Afghanistan Peace Negotiations and amid a regional atmosphere marked by a renewed emphasis on political cooperation and economic diplomacy. This provides a unique opportunity to reinvigorate regional cooperation with respect to Afghanistan, building on the solid base established by existing fora. The roundtable will give Afghanistan and key regional countries the opportunity to discuss initiatives of geo-political and strategic importance, highlight signature infrastructure and development projects to catalyse regional cooperation, and identify challenges in implementing regional projects.

Objectives:

- Galvanize regional support for peace and development in Afghanistan;
- Highlight key infrastructure and development projects; identify challenges in implementing regional projects, as well as possible solutions;
- Identify potential areas of strengthened cooperation to foster sustainable peace and economic development in Afghanistan.

Venue and format: The format will be fully virtual with all participants joining from various locations, with technical operations managed from Geneva. The meeting will be chaired and opened by H.E. Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and H.E. Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan followed by keynote speech by H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. This will be followed by an update from the Asian Development Bank and statements of regional countries responding to the four key questions [*see below*]. Following the discussion, there will be time for a moderated discussion around the statements, along with closing remarks from H.E. Foreign Minister Atmar and SRSB Lyons.

Participation: Hosted by, the Government of Afghanistan, the Government of Finland and UNAMA. The following regional countries will be invited to deliver statements (in alphabetical order): Azerbaijan; China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan.

Observers: List will include Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Nordic Plus, Spain, UK, USA, EU, IMF, NATO, OIC, UNRCCA, and World Bank.

Questions for discussion:

- (1) How can we leverage the regional political landscape to establish sustainable peace and promote peace dividends for Afghanistan and the region?
- (2) What are the country specific or multilateral initiatives that could contribute to regional connectivity and enhance trade between regional partners and Afghanistan?
- (3) What are the current obstacles in developing efficient regional cooperation/connectivity?
- (4) What additional political and economic measures could be proposed to improve regional cooperation?

Agenda:

- Opening remarks: H.E. Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan – 4 mins
- Remarks by UNAMA SRSG Lyons – 4 mins
- Keynote address: H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani of the President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – 15 mins
- Update by ADB on social and economic prospects for Afghanistan and region – 8 mins
- Statements by participants – 3 min each (45 min)
- Discussion and comments – 10 mins
- Closing remarks by H.E. Foreign Minister Atmar and SRSG Lyons – 5 mins

(Total time of 1 hour 30 min)