Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani traveled to the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek to attend the 19th meeting of the Heads of States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The meeting will carry increasing significance for Afghanistan, which is on the cusp of entering the SCO.

Last year, China hosted the SCO meeting with the participation of heads of states, including President Ghani from Afghanistan. TheSCO signed a protocol with the Afghan government during the SCO Heads of State summit in Beijing, China, to establish the Afghan-Pakistan Council of Ministers. The protocol is a mechanism for developing proposals and recommendations to support the council for establishing a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

Heads of states meet in Bishkek at the time of immense challenges in regional stability. The three waves of terrorism, siege and terrorism that threatened the Islamic State group still remain a serious threat to the region. The Eastern Sunday deadly bombings in Sri Lanka, which is a dialogue partner to the SCO, on April 21 suggests that terrorist groups seek to extend their reach across the region and target people on the basis of their faith, race, and color. Meanwhile, poverty remains a formidable challenge in many countries in the region. West of all, poverty and hunger have been compounded as a result of a regional conflict. For instance, a large number of civilians, including women and children, suffer west of the wake of famine and hunger in Syria and Yemen.

The SCO participants agree that current instability and poverty issues in the summit and reaffirm their commitment to promoting cooperation to address the ongoing challenges. To mitigate the impact of Afghanistan on the region, the SCO stakeholders have to promote mutual cooperation and trade and investment. That is the SCO members have agreed to launch a dialogue partners to reinforce their economic cooperation and joint efforts to combat terrorism.

The SCO summit provides a multilateral platform not only for commercial exchanges but also cultural interaction and people-to-people contacts. In this regard, the SCO has to reinforce cultural exchanges so as to promote mutual understanding and mutual trust. It should be noted that violation of human rights and humanitarian law is one of the serious issues across the region. The rights, liberties, and dignity of individuals are widely trampled upon in one way or another. People are persecuted on the basis of race, color, or gender. Meanwhile, Yemeni men, women, and children were killed in the civil war in Yemen and the ongoing conflict and military attacks carried out by Saudi-led coalition forces.

For all these reasons, the SCO members, heads of states, and dialogue partners have to step up their struggles for protecting the rights and liberties of all individuals across the region and put pressure on their governments through international channels rather than confrontation. Hence, all regional and global stakeholders have to ensure that the Afghan-Pakistan Council of Ministers can be a platform to bring peace to the region.

The SCO stakeholders are supposed to establish mutual trust, friendly relations, and good neighborhood and promote the culture of dialogue and cooperation and to deter regional problems and challenges in other words, they have to promote the “Shanghai Spirit” – i.e., mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and mutual respect. This is a cultural and social contract, and pursuit of common development.

Adhering to the international principles, stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter, SCO stakeholders have to respect the cultural values and social norms of all nations and step up their struggles for building trust.

The issue of Afghanistan is highly serious as militant groups, notably the Taliban, have intensified their terrorist activities. Afghan soldiers, and civilians have sustained heavy casualties in the last 18 years of war. However, as military strategy becomes more ineffective, Afghan military strategy becomes more ineffective, Afghans have to promote mutual cooperation and trade and investment. As a result, the US government though seems more flexible and has now. The emergence of other countries in the region and Pakistan have had over the past years in Afghanistan, do not make war in the region.

Where is the Key to Peace: Kabul or Islamabad?

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Recently the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, that Pakistan is ready to help Afghanistan to achieve peace and development. He is assured that Pakistan would remain committed to durable peace and stability in Afghanistan; it is a prerequisite for development and prosperity of the region. He also promised to reopen its air space for Afghanistan India flights in next few days. According to Afghanistan Civil Aviation officials, Afghanistan will reopen its airspace for flights on June 14. It is hoped that this cooperation leads to an improvement in the Afghan government’s image in the eyes of the Afghan people.

Afghanistan has countries with some flexibility and started some new political communication; the meeting of the president Ghani with Imran Khan in the framework of the Islamic conference summit in Saudi Arabia, the trip of the national security advisor to Pakistan, the Sind evaluation meeting of the two countries and the recent Afghan-Pakistan summit in Islamabad; finally the impending travel of the President to Pakistan are some examples for this improvement which caused some optimism. This skepticism improvement comes after several years of tension between the two countries with implying Taliban to stop destructive activities in Pakistan.

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