



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN JAPAN



INFORMATION BULLETIN

The Strategic Vision Of The President Shavkat Mirziyoyev Of Ensuring Regional Security And Tackling Afghan Problems

On February 29 this year the bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Taliban Movement ended with signing of the long-awaited «peace agreement» which can set start to intra-Afghan nationwide reconciliation. This became the first real advancement towards peace for over decades of war.

The signed Agreement instills a certain hope on the eve of forthcoming meeting of the representatives of the government, political forces of Afghanistan and armed opposition.

It is obvious that positive shifts, which are being observed, are related to the new atmosphere of mutual understanding that has been established in the region of Central Asia.



The policy of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev has played a significant role in this. He has defined as main priority of the country's foreign policy creation in Central Asia, including Afghanistan, a «zone of stability, steady development and good neighborliness».

Thanks to consistent foreign policy course and high ground decisions of Uzbekistan's leader, the mutual mistrust began melting in the region, the contradictions among neighboring countries began to be addressed and the new political atmosphere of cooperation and mutual

understanding has emerged. The results of the Consultative meeting of the heads of states of Central Asia in Tashkent initiated by the President of our country Shavkat Mirziyoyev became a bright confirmation to the aforementioned.

*Tashkent considers Afghanistan as an unalienable part of the region. Therefore, the efforts on establishing peace in this country are very important. The steady development of Central Asia directly depends on stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan. **As the President of Uzbekistan has numerously underscored, «it is impossible to speak about peaceful and prospering Central Asia without resolving the Afghan problem».***

*Decisive contribution by Uzbekistan to stirring up the Afghan peace process became the High-level International conference on Afghanistan which took place **on the initiative of Uzbekistan's Leader** in March 2018 in Tashkent. The Presidents of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, representatives of all states – the permanent members of the UN Security Council, leading countries of the region and high-profile international organizations participated at the event.*

*Speaking at the Tashkent Conference **President of Uzbekistan has demonstrated a clear-cut strategic vision of the ways to tackle conflict in Afghanistan** and defined main priorities of the «Afghan policy of*

Tashkent», which became a «cornerstone» of stirring up international efforts on peaceful settlement in Afghanistan.

A key outcome of the forum became the unanimous adoption of the Tashkent Declaration which has stipulated full consensus on the regional and global levels in terms of major principles of establishing long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Given the results achieved during the talks of the United States and the Taliban Movement, Uzbekistan's participation in the process of establishing peace in Afghanistan becomes yet more an in-demand one.

We have spoken to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov about Uzbekistan's vision of the major aspects of political settlement in Afghanistan and its contribution to ensuring regional security.

- What has made Uzbekistan to actively join the international efforts on resolving the Afghan conflict since not all of the countries, which are interested in this, were ready to act consistently – up to organizing such a high-profile conference as the Tashkent one?

- Don't forget that we have a common border with Afghanistan. We have a centuries-old history and destinies of our people are closely intertwined. **As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has noted, «for over a span of millennia the people of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan developed in one cultural and civilization space».** And how cannot we be interested in soonest recovery of normal life there?

Well, you understand that this conflict – the longest in the world history – has led to the fact that Afghanistan practically lost its statehood. And how without it can all branches of power fully function, the laws be followed and economy be in operation?

Just imagine – we are living in the 21st century and there is still war going on, which has begun in the last century. The war has already been continuing for almost 40 years. Nearly two million people fell victims to it and another six million, according to Ministry for Refugees of Afghanistan, fled the country.

Certainly, today there is a need for common regional strategy which will ensure not only a return for refugees to their homeland, but also their active involvement to construction of peaceful life in Afghanistan.

Annually there are tens of armed clashes on the borderline territory with the states of Central Asia. There was a time when the hostilities developed next to our borders. All of this cannot but raise concerns.

Moreover, in the due course of pushing out the ISIS militants from the Middle East, Afghanistan became a shelter for transnational terrorist organizations. This fact started to gravely threaten not only regional, but also global security.

We are proceeding from the position that security is indivisible and it can be ensured only by concerted efforts.

The leader of Uzbekistan has numerously stated that «the security of Afghanistan is the security of Uzbekistan». In our Afghan policy we are struggling not only for the future of Afghanistan, but rather for our common security, for the world without terrorism, fanaticism and violence.

Along with this, assisting peace in Afghanistan is not only addressing the problems of security.

In the Afghan issue we are not basing solely on the so-called «defensive approach». We are confident that we understand well what are the developments in our region and not attempting to play any zero-sum games in which if any of the players wins then another loses. We are the pragmatics and want to be good neighbors.

Despite the borders, which were formed just 100 years ago, there is a three thousand year-old history of interactions between our peoples.

The current borders, which were put in place along the river of Amudarya, have never been an obstacle for movement of people, engaging in trade and mutual penetration of cultures and religions.

Peaceful Afghanistan is capable to provide Central Asia with the shortest route to naval communications, diversify our transport corridors and open up vast markets for exports of domestic goods.



It is extremely important to help Afghanistan to integrate into regional economic cooperation, and Tashkent is keenly wishing it to happen. Besides, we need to understand the following: the less the level of threats from Afghanistan will be, the less we will spend to maintain national security. The saved resources can be channeled to tackling the socio-economic issues and raising living conditions of our citizens.

- How do you understand the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan? As a whole, what is going on in this country?

- You have asked very important question. Without understanding the nature of the crisis one cannot develop effective strategy of its resolution. The conflict in Afghanistan for over the 40 years saw significant transformation. At present, the situation in the region is completely different from what it has been at the early stage of the armed confrontation. This is unarguable fact.

It was important to comprehend what is taking place there now. Is this a civil war or only a fight on the part of the government against terrorists? Is this an international conflict or a regional one but with powerful involvement of global players? Or does the problem lay with turning Afghanistan into «a grey zone» of unhindered transboundary trafficking of drugs, arms and in persons, into a «comfortable harbor» for international terrorist organizations?

Today we don't have a sole simple answer for these questions. The Afghan conflict has incorporated in itself everything that I have enlisted above and transformed into a complex and hard-to-solve tangle of contradictions where domestic, regional and international problems are closely intertwined.

- All right. And when you have understood what you have been dealing with in Afghanistan, you have decided to conduct the Tashkent Conference by inviting to it the leaders of world diplomacy and high-level politicians?

- Yes. Since, due to the events in the Middle East and North Africa the situation in Afghanistan has dropped off the grid of the world politics. However, the conflict didn't lose its intensity and acuteness. Therefore, the forum became a breakthrough in the quest for ways of the Afghan settlement. This was admitted both by our Afghan colleagues and foreign partners at all levels.



The meeting in Tashkent allowed to bring the problem of Afghanistan back into the focus of international agenda. The principle new moment, which was stipulated by the Tashkent Conference, is the fact that the regional and global approaches in the issues of settlement in Afghanistan began acquiring greater significance.

- What do you mean?

- It was underscored that without efforts on the part of neighbors and leading global powers it will no longer be impossible to settle the conflict. It was at the Tashkent conference that it has been demonstrated the readiness by international community to assist direct dialogue with Taliban Movement without any preliminary conditions. I will add to it – it was here in Uzbekistan that we have been able to truly «push» Taliban to get involved in the negotiation process. As you know, later our partners have also had several rounds of negotiations with the Taliban representatives in order to better understand their position and seek compromise.

Besides, the world community has realized that effective development of the peace process is possible only given active participation of the countries neighboring on Afghanistan. In this context, it was important to ensure regional consensus on fundamental principles of the Afghan reconciliation. It was needed so that the countries, which are divided, as if to say, by various contradictions could agree to come to terms among themselves: Pakistan and India, Iran and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates,

and there is a special position of Turkey... It was possible to girdle all of this around one understanding of the Afghan problem.

After the Tashkent Conference positions of Washington, Moscow and Beijing came much closer to one another.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has underscored, «the main condition of advancement to peace is development and implementation in practice of one Comprehensive peace program for Afghanistan endorsed at the regional and global levels».

The Declaration adopted at the Conference became a certain «roadmap» of the Afghan reconciliation, counteracting international terrorism and drug trafficking, as well as regional economic cooperation. The document has formulated conditions of Afghanistan's steady development, raising well-being of the Afghan people and its involvement to creative processes in the region and the world as a whole.

- In order to ensure various countries to come to consensus at the Conference, which you were speaking about, obviously it was necessary to undertake serious preliminary work. Tell me, how you prepared the Tashkent Forum.

- Above all, on the eve of the Conference **President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has personally and thoroughly discussed issues of the Afghan settlement with the leaders of world powers: President of Russia Vladimir Putin, the U.S. President Donald Trump, President of China Xi Jinping, the EU leadership, heads of the states of Central Asia, India, Pakistan and Iran.**

However, the preparation to Forum began long before these meetings – from close cooperation with our Afghan friends. In essence, it was our big joint work. I will remind that the Tashkent Conference was inaugurated by two presidents – Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Ashraf Ghani.



On the instruction of President, the close contacts have also been put in place with the representatives of major domestic political forces of Afghanistan, including head of the Government A.Abdullah, former Afghan president H.Karzai, leader of the «Islamic Union for Liberation of Afghanistan» A.Sayyaf, leader of the «Islamic Party of Afghanistan» G.Khekmatiyar, chairman of the Supreme Council of Peace of Afghanistan K.Khalili, member of the leading Council of the «National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan» B.Dostum, leader of the «National Islamic Front» S.Ghilani, members of the leading Council of the «Islamic Society of Afghanistan» Yu.Kanuni and M.Ismail-Khan, former Balkh governor A.Noor, heads of the political office of the Taliban Movement in Qatar Mullah A.Barodar, A.Stanikzai and others.

I would like to underscore that all of its actions in this direction Tashkent coordinated with official Kabul. We remain committed to a fundamental principle – the political process on establishing durable peace must be carried out only by Afghans and under the leadership of the people of Afghanistan.

- It is clear that the work on hosting the Conference would be impossible without tight cooperation with your colleagues in the region, who have participated in the Forum. Are the states of the region ready to continuing such close cooperation?

- The President of Uzbekistan in his appearances at the international and regional platforms such as the United Nations, CIS, SCO and OIC, and others has numerous times expressed readiness to jointly with our partners, including the countries of Central Asia, promote search for political resolution of the Afghan crisis.

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It is quite obvious that not a single country is capable to tackle the Afghan problem on its own. **The leader of Uzbekistan has emphasized not once the important role of the neighboring countries in stabilization of Afghanistan.** The efforts of the neighboring countries and partners must not replace, but

add one another.

All of the countries of Central Asia are actively promoting resolution of the Afghan crisis. Under the presidency and on the initiative of Kazakhstan the UN Security Council held ministerial debates on Afghanistan. It was during this event that the initiative was enunciated to hold the Tashkent Conference which was endorsed by all countries of the region.

In its turn, Kyrgyzstan has proposed to establish the research center on Afghanistan in Bishkek to more thoroughly study the processes undergoing in this country.

All of us understand that it is necessary to draw Afghanistan into regional economic processes. This idea was broadly endorsed by participants of the Seventh Conference for Regional Economic Cooperation on Afghanistan in Ashkhabad, the Tashkent Conference, as well as the International High-Level Conference on Problems of Terrorism and Sources of its Financing, which took place in Dushanbe.

The «India – Central Asia» Ministerial Dialogue held in Samarkand with participation of Afghanistan for the first time can serve as another example of active regional interactions on the Afghan direction.

- Do you consider that Afghanistan stopped to be a stage of clash of interests of world powers the way it was during the Cold War?

- Yes indeed from the outset the Afghan conflict was a product of geopolitical confrontation of the two world systems. **President of Uzbekistan has said right away that the «flame of war was imposed to the Afghan people from outside. It is not its choice».**

And up until now the large centers of power are clashing between one another in Afghanistan while pursuing their own interests.

The constant dragging of new partakers into conflict has led to its unprecedented aggravation.

To a great regret, for over a span of decades the illusions remained in terms of the possibility to militarily tackle the Afghan problem. It is very pity that it was possible to realize the dead-end nature of such an approach only after unparalleled human victims and massive economic and political losses.

Today it can only be welcomed the close cooperation of the large world actors, above all, Russia, China and the United States, the EU countries and the states of the Muslim world. We are noting with pleasure that Moscow and Beijing have lately achieved tangible results at their trilateral meetings joined also by other interested countries. All this forms necessary external conditions for effective resolution of the Afghan issue.

- I will ask right away: who do you believe can act as a guarantor of durable peace in Afghanistan?

- These are, firstly, the large powers: the United States, Russia, China, the EU countries, and certainly, as much as same level Afghanistan's immediate regional neighbors. These are external forces, but sustainability of all peace arrangements in Afghanistan will depend on involvement of domestic Afghan political forces in them. Without nationwide accord and reconciliation it will be impossible to achieve notable progress.

It is extremely important to preserve and further develop the state law-enforcement institutions, full-scale operation of the civil society structures and observance of the rights of the Afghan women, and so on. In sum, I mean all of those positive things which were achieved for over the last 18 years in building independent Afghan state and creating foundations of civil society.

- If everything which you are speaking about will become a reality, then for the first time in 40 years we will see long-awaited peace in Afghanistan. What is the future of this country in your opinion?

- You have already said it – first, it will be peaceful. This must become a common idea for consolidating the entire Afghan society, all ethnic groups and political movements. Second, it must be formed a solid



all-nation government capable to effectively address the tasks in the sphere of security and economy.

Afghanistan must transform into a platform for effective regional cooperation.

I have already spoken that today Afghanistan, unfortunately, still remains to be a venue for geopolitical standoff and competition of the world and regional powers. In Uzbekistan we believe that this approach must be changed.

Afghanistan gives all of us a chance to learn to find a common language, conjugate national interests, seek compromises and achieve mutual understanding.

Then it will be able to make Afghanistan an equal partner for all neighboring countries in ensuring sustainable development, security and stability of our common region.

It won't be possible to achieve peace in Afghanistan without recovering economy and addressing social problems of the population. It is important to continue investing in the economic future of Afghanistan. One must not allow for reduction of financing humanitarian programs and projects.

On its part, Uzbekistan has already embarked upon implementing the large-scale infrastructure and socially significant projects in Afghanistan such as construction of the electricity power line «Surkhan — Pulee-Khumri» and others. This power line will switch Kabul into one energy system of Central Asia. Moreover, the electricity power line «Surkhan — Pulee-Khumri» may become an integral part of the CASA-1000 project and promote supplies of electricity power to Pakistan and further onwards to the countries of South Asia.

Uzbekistan is interested in implementing the transport-logistical projects which will allow drawing Afghanistan into regional integration.

Our country also stands ready along with the government of Afghanistan and other international partners to participate in implementation of the railroad transport projects «Mazari-Sharif – Herat» and «Mazari-Sharif – Peshawar» which will connect Central and South Asia.

The railroad project, which connects Mazari-Sharif with seaports of Pakistan, may become a part of the Eurasian concept of interconnectedness which is now being endorsed by the European Union. Moreover, launching of this route will ensure the shortest access of the states of Central Asia to Pakistani seaports of Gwadar and Karachi, and will promote stirring up transit of goods further to India and Bangladesh.

In this regard, I also deem it necessary to note the words of the **President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani** at the solemn event on the occasion of launching first cargo train from Afghanistan to China through the territory of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. «**I want to express sincere gratitude to my big friend President Shavkat Mirziyoyev for the support to the people and government of Afghanistan along the path of recovery and development of the country**». I believe this is the highest appreciation on behalf of the Afghan people of Uzbekistan's efforts in terms of rendering practical assistance to the recovery of Afghanistan's economic infrastructure.

It is important to remember that full-scale peaceful life in the country is impossible without ensuring access to education. It is an open secret that during the war the entire generation, who has seen few but violence, grew up in Afghanistan.

One should give young Afghans the opportunity of another destiny, shape prestige of education in the society, which will be able to confront the ideas of hatred and extremism. Uzbekistan is also actively working in this direction. **On the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev the Educational center for Afghan nationals was established in the city of Termez.** The next enrolment in row is now underway. Nearly 200 people will be studying at the Center on preferential terms in 2020. In the future we are planning to increase the number of students up to 300 and expand curriculum.



Besides, **the leader of Uzbekistan has proposed to institute a special International Fund to Support Education in Afghanistan.** The main goal of the Fund is to educate the youth for the specialties needed in Afghanistan, allocate scholarships and educational grants for the talented students and young scholars.

As a sign of friendly gesture Tashkent is actively allocates full-scale humanitarian aid to Kabul. We comprehend our big responsibility before the brotherly Afghan people and will further act in this direction.

- Speaking about long-term development of Afghanistan after peace agreement – during the so-called «post-peace period», what will be the priorities of Uzbekistan's Afghan policy?

— Uzbekistan is absolutely sincere in conducting its Afghan policy. We don't have political goals or hidden motives in relation with this country. We are guided by very simple and pragmatic principle: if there a peace in neighbor's house, then there is a peace in yours. Moreover, we are convinced that our common home is Central Asia, an inseparable part of which is Afghanistan, as well. Only by concerted efforts we will be able to develop successfully.

This is our main and ultimate goal. We didn't have other goals. We have always kept to neutral position. We didn't interfere in domestic affairs of Afghanistan.

As a result, Uzbekistan is enjoying a deserved authority and trust among all Afghan political forces, including the Taliban movement. All of them recognize and support Uzbekistan's sincere wish to promote peace in Afghanistan.

- At the moment, the issue to draw Taliban to the future governance of the country is one of the most acute issues. Uzbekistan was one of the first, yet back in 1999, that established and began maintaining contacts with Taliban Movement. Not everyone did share such a position...|



- We have proceeded from that the Taliban, while being a part of the Afghan society and citizens of Afghanistan, must take part in defining the future of their country.

In the context of the newest history we perceive the current dialogue with Taliban Movement as a resumption and strengthening

of multilateral peace process, which Uzbekistan attempted to maintain yet in 1990s in the framework of the 6+2 format. Back then our representatives met with leaders of Taliban in Kandahar.

In this regard, I want to draw attention to the following.

We believe that major mistake of the 2001 Bonn conference on Afghanistan was that Taliban wasn't involved in the negotiations on peaceful recovery of the country. As a result, the war has never stopped for later 18 years.

At present, as much as then, there is still a common task, i.e. to put in place inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue to gradually and patiently seek consensus everywhere where it is possible.

In this context, the dialogue with Taliban is not only an expedient one, but simply necessary. However, starting any peace process supposes denial by Taliban movement of any forms of terrorist activity and violence, mandatory observance of ceasefire regime, which in its essence is envisaged by the agreement signed with the United States.

- What other resources does Uzbekistan have in the Afghan issue?

Uzbekistan has a unique experience of statehood, which includes deep traditions of diplomacy. As it is well-known, the diplomacy, the art of negotiations and peacemaking have a centuries-old historical continuity in our part of Eurasia, and especially, on the territory of modern Uzbekistan. This historically rich experience of the Uzbek diplomacy helps in tackling such international conflicts as the Afghan one.|

Unfortunately, the modern world order poses many threats and challenges. We are observing the heightened level of global instability which dictates domination of security issues in the international

agenda. However, in such crises as the Afghan one it is very important to have post-conflict settlement, resolution of the problems of international migration, etc. It is in this very occasion that the experience of Uzbekistan's diplomacy must be in broad demand by the international community.

In the applied context all of this may turn out to be also useful in training by our specialists in international affairs of professional experts in the sphere of modern conflict studies.

- *The signing of the agreement between the United States and Taliban Movement not only raises a broad interest, but also instills hope for the soonest peace. And what practical steps must be undertaken now to further advance peace process?*

- I agree with you that signing of the agreement between the United States and Taliban movement after 18 years of ongoing hostilities between them is indeed a landmark and important political event for the entire region. It is hard to overestimate its significance for peace in Afghanistan.

However, difficult task lays ahead. One should truly assess the situation. There are remaining many difficult and delicate problems. In essence, the agreement between the U.S. and Taliban is not an end, but the start of the path towards peace.

Now it is important to launch the peace negotiation process itself, the direct intra-Afghan dialogue. Everything will now depend on firm will, unity and decisiveness of the people of Afghanistan themselves.



In this regard, it is very important to form as soon as possible the certain delegations of the government and the opposition, to start the constructive dialogue on the entire spectrum of issues of peaceful recovery of Afghanistan. In sum, the destiny of Afghanistan lays in the hands of Afghans themselves.

In conclusion, I would like to cite the words of the President of Uzbekistan at the Tashkent Conference that **the future of Afghanistan must not become an example of incapability of the**

international community to counteract threats and challenges common to all of us.

Today it is important as never before to all of us to unite and offer hand of peace, cooperation and support to much-suffering people of Afghanistan.

These words didn't leave careless anyone of the partakers of such a large-scale international forum. It is important today despite any hardships to help the people of Afghanistan to solidly step on the path of peace and prosperity.

In this Afghanistan can always count on its friendly neighbor – Uzbekistan.

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