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CONCEPT PAPER

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN

POORLY CALCULATED PEACE IS MORE EXPENSIVE THAN WAR

DATE: February 22, 2019

TIME: 8:30 am to 3:30 pm

PLACE: Swiss UMEF University Campus, Chateau d'Aïre

185-187 Route d'Aïre,

1219 Aïre - Geneva, Switzerland

Contact: Phone: +41 (0) 22 732 07 12

E-mail: info@umef-university.ch

Objective & Outcome

The Afghanistan war has been the longest in US history. On-going negotiations have brought a glimmer of hope that finally peace may be at hand.

A group of Afghan intellectuals and international experts established in Europe, with the assistance of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy of SWISS UMEF UNIVERSITY in Geneva, will meet on February 22, 2019, to discuss peace prospects, the conditions under which peace could be attained and the international impact of a possible peace.



Some of the questions this meeting will address are:

- How can we ensure that the progress made over the last 18 years be maintained?
- Why is the UN not involved in the peace process?
- Who will guarantee that the country will not return to the situation of a civil war as in 1992?
- What would be the priorities of a government in which the Taliban would participate?
- How would the budget of the Afghan government be secured in the future?
- What are the election mechanisms that will be put in place to ensure that results are accepted by all parties without recourse to an internal conflict?
- Would human rights be safeguarded?
- How would relations with its neighbours, in particular India, Iran and Pakistan, evolve?

These questions will be analyzed by the intellectuals participating in this meeting and will materialise in a conclusion which will be sent to the United Nations and the United States in the hope that this final document will be recommended to all involved parties to avoid a new civil war in Afghanistan that will impact the region and the entire world.

Participation TBC:

The United Nations, the European Union, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the United Nations Human Rights Council as well as the Embassies or representatives in Bern or Geneva of the following countries: United States, Afghanistan, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, African Union, Vietnam have been invited to participate in this meeting.

Representatives of the Afghan government in Kabul and several Afghan personalities.

Former Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, UPF Secretary General for Europe.

Several members of the Afghan diaspora from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Netherlands, Denmark.



Several international experts from Geneva Center of Security Policy, Geneva International Peace Research Institute, Oxford Process, IFIMES (Institute for Middle East and Balkans Studies) DeSSA (Department for Strategic Studies on Asia) as well as independent experts.

Overview:

A negotiated peace in Afghanistan presents a number of challenges.

The duration of the war over several decades has created a number of situations, that require an in-depth examination in light of the peace negotiations underway between the United States and the Taliban.

The war has been a very costly undertaking both in financial and human terms.

On the human side, there has been a large number of civilian casualties and a flow of both internal refugees and refugees that have fled to neighbouring countries, Iran and Pakistan in particular. Will the conditions of peace allow their return and what employment possibilities will they find? In particular will the professionals of the Diaspora return?

On the financial side, the income of the government of Afghanistan is too meagre to allow it to finance the rebuilding of the country. Will the United States and other major donors such as the World Bank contribute in a significant way to assist in this momentous effort?

Afghanistan has extensive mineral riches which have been estimated to be between \$2 and 3 trillion. Insecurity in the country has been a major obstacle to their exploitation. Will a peace negotiation, with a government that includes representatives of the Taliban induce corporations from the extractive industries to invest in productive activities as well as the required infrastructure and thus contribute to the economic development of the country?

Will the wealth from the mining industry be able to replace the income generated by the cultivation of opium?

How will the countries in the area perceive the economic growth of Afghanistan which has so far been an important trading partner?



How will the peace process enable a peaceful coexistence with the neighboring countries?

Afghanistan's geographic position has attracted major powers in the past. How likely is it that the country will still be viewed as a masterpiece in the Great Game and will continue to be subject to constant instability?

Corruption may well prove to be one of the most important barriers to development. What policies can be put in place to reduce, or eliminate, corruption?

What process will be put in place to disarm both the Taliban and the other armed groups to prevent a civil war?

With the presidential elections in Afghanistan scheduled for the spring, what will be the impact of these negotiations? Will we be moving to a period of major instability and a return to a civil war as in 1992?

Will the peace negotiations cover some or all of these issues and bring an acceptable response to the above questions?



Programme Agenda

8:30 - 9:00	Registration and coffee
9:00 - 9:10	Welcome
Security and Peace 9:10 - 10:10	<p>Processes to disarm the various armed groups – Taliban and several militias run by war lords – require considerable attention and will be a mainstay of an enduring peace. The relations with the neighboring countries are also an important consideration for both security and trade as the country is not self-sufficient and this is complicated by issues of international policies such as that of the United States with Iran and that of Pakistan with China. The creation of the Silk road projects are also an element that can develop into a major game changer. More immediately, the negotiations will overlap with the forthcoming presidential elections with an impact that is difficult to forecast. Everything must be done to avoid a repetition of the events that led to the 1992 civil war that will destroy the various contributions from the Afghan and international community over the last 18 years and which include democracy, economic development, human rights, free speech and the development of new institutions.</p>
Diaspora 10:15 - 11:15	<p>The Diaspora can be a major contributor to the rebuilding and the economic development of the country. However, it will only do so if certain basic conditions are met.</p> <p>Prosperity will come from entrepreneurs that bring know-how, experience and capital. Their concerns are, as for all entrepreneurs, the freedom of doing business, and, in particular, the reduction of corruption practices that act as an effective barrier to the creation and development, of new corporations. More specific concerns are those of security based on the disarmament procedures and the relations with neighbouring countries to allow free movement of goods across borders as the country, being landlocked, is highly dependent on Iran and Pakistan for its supply and export routes. For the younger members of the Diaspora, the possibility of securing employment will be another important condition that has to be met for them to consider returning.</p>
Economy 11:20 - 12:20	<p>The conclusion of the peace process should usher a new set of challenges, the first of which is the government budget. It will be important for the United States and other donors to maintain their financial assistance with a concentration on the building of the infrastructure required for the development of the country. Attracting foreign corporations from the extractive industry should be a priority as the country has mineral reserves that have been estimated to be in the trillions of dollars. This should be followed by an adequate fiscal policy that should, in time, be an important source of revenue and job creation provided the proper infrastructure is put in place.</p>
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	Open discussion and concluding statement

