

Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan Commences

On November 2, an international conference on Afghanistan was held in Istanbul, Turkey. Hosted by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, the Istanbul Conference was attended by leaders from the broader region and Europe, as well as senior representatives from NATO, the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. On the eve of the conference, Turkish President Abdullah Gul hosted a trilateral meeting with Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai and Pakistani counterpart Asif Zardari.

At the conference, participants expressed their commitment to a set of confidence building measures to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan. A key concern was the security transition in Afghanistan as foreign troops prepare to withdraw from the country by the end of 2014. In the area of security, participants also reaffirmed their desire to enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism and illicit trafficking. Initiatives to promote sustainable economic growth in Afghanistan and neighboring countries were also discussed. In this regard, participants called for the establishment of an integrated trade and transportation network throughout the region. In addition to the areas of security and economy, commitments were also made in the educational and cultural fields.

Speaking at a press conference, Davutoglu stated that Turkey would continue to extend support of every kind for the restoration of peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan. A failure in this country would cause regional instability, he said.

As a follow up to the Istanbul Conference, a decision was taken to meet at the ministerial level in Kabul early next June.

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