

**Unofficial Translation of Dr. Spanta's Keynote Speech at the Second Afghanistan-Central Asia  
Dialogue Kabul, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

Excellency Ambassador JENCA, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm glad to have the chance to speak at the second meeting of Afghanistan and Central Asia Dialogue. All the guests are welcome to our country and I wish you have a successful conference. At the beginning, I would like to thank Doctor Moradian and his colleagues in AISS for giving importance to such issues that are related to the regional integration and strengthening regional dialogues.

I hope the results of today's discussions which are based on the spirit of fraternity and solidarity will find a proper reflection in the formulation of policies of our governments to create an area of cooperation and solidarity and a stable region.

Afghanistan has historical, cultural, geographic and other commonalities with Central Asian countries. We are the owners and heirs of a great and common civilization. Religion, language, architecture, miniatures, calligraphy and traditional music represent this common civilization. Merv, Bukhara, Samarkand, Herat, Balkh, Almaty and Khujand are all part of one civilization. This civilization is not based on any particular ethnic group. This is the common civilization of our people and brothers which live in the independent countries. Afghans speak Pashto, Persian Dari, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kyrqizi, Kazakhi, Baluchi and a few other languages which are the official languages of the people of our region.

The majority of our populations are Muslims and our Islam is completely different from that of Taliban and Daish/IS who excommunicate other Muslims who do not follow their ideologies. We live in peace, cooperation and brotherhood with the people who follow different beliefs in our countries. We have Afghan Hindus who are the original inhabitants of our land and they defended our homeland alongside the Afghan Muslims during the independence struggle. In our region, Islam is the symbol of trust, conscience and a product of our long term civilization. The question of excommunicating other Muslims which is trending these days was alien to what our ancestors had left us in the form of our culture and belief.

Central Asian states must defend their religion and civilization against ignorance and the violence perpetrated by the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Daish, IMU, East Turkestan Islamic Movement and other extremists.

Our region has a great human and natural resources in the form of young people, raw materials of strategic importance and growing economic power. Great energy and underground resources of strategic importance for modern industries are present in Central Asia. Not only the countries like China and India, which are growing and developing rapidly, need these raw materials but these are also needed by the other industrial countries in the region and the world. We need to integrate more closely and make effective use of these resources.

The current economic, social and security challenges in this region require a comprehensive cooperation. The temporary actions are not effective enough to overcome these challenges. Therefore, the regional policies have to be made step by step in the concerned areas.

European Union is a great example for us, we just need to follow them and start with small steps. In 1952, the countries comprising of France, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy and Belgium created the European Coal and Steel Union and in 1958, the Economic Community of Europe was created. The Europe Union was established in 1992 based on the Maastricht agreement. Now the EU has 28 members. Difficult decisions require leadership of the brave and ideal men and women. The European Union is the product of the devastating and bloody experience of the European countries and at the same time it is a product of their common civilization and the credit also goes to the policymakers of that time who had a clear vision of the future.

We cannot overcome the problems of poverty, underdevelopment, terrorism and separatism without the regional policy of integration and cooperation. We cannot become the effective actors by being the spectators in the world affairs. We cannot decide our future without a common strategy of cooperation and without finding a common solution. It is the only way to save our countries from the colonialism and the continuing policies of Cold War and to be the owner of making and implementing the policies for the betterment of our countries. This

approach will promote our role from a passive to an active contributor towards bringing international security and stability.

The fourth ministerial conference on Heart of Asia process (Istanbul process) was held in Beijing, China on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014 in which Afghanistan was the focal point and the Central Asian countries had a very active involvement. It is one of the important initiatives for regional cooperation. I believe that it time for Afghanistan to take practical step in this respect. Existing organizations, such as ECO, CAREC and SAARK are very important for the regional cooperation, but their quality as regional initiatives should be promoted.

The same as the existing opportunities, we are encountered with threats as well. Backwardness, poverty, terrorism, organized criminal groups, separatism and a sense of colonial intentions of some regional and international powers are some of the serious threats are looming in the region surrounding Afghanistan. I believe that we, the people of Asia and particularly this region, need a very specific collective security strategy for institutionalizing security in our region and discovering the main impediments so that by a joint cooperation we overcome such impediments.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite Afghanistan and the international community's various efforts and sacrifices against terrorism and extremism, it is unfortunate that there are still some serious threats which are increasing steadily. There is no doubt that Afghanistan with assistance of the international community has had tremendous achievements in terms of social and economic development. However, it is the sad reality that the international strategy to fight against terrorism has been badly defeated. Such strategies have been implemented in a wrong place. It should not be misunderstood that I exclude Afghanistan from fighting terrorism when and where it is necessary. I think the struggle should be focused on the areas where the terrorists reproduce their ideologies, train their killers and get the financial resources.

The current anti-terrorism strategy is suffering from an appeasement disease. The implementers of this strategy wrongly assume that by giving money and by begging terrorist groups and their supporters can satisfy them and overnight make them peace angels, particularly with respect to those who use terrorism as a mean of their foreign policy. Such policies are sensible and logical for stable and mature democracies; but it is incompatible with the logic of militarism and hegemonic approach. History is abundant with examples of naivety towards hegemonic and expansionist powers.

Countries are not a laboratory of testing unrealistic and epical peace theories, policies and strategies. In my view, we need a realistic anti-terrorism approach to be compatible and be in harmony with the global realities which in turn would lead to real stability. Hereby, I recall what I said in Herat Security Dialogue-III in Herat city of Afghanistan on 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 as well as in Xiangshan Security Forum in Beijing on 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2014. Invasion of Iraq, Libya and supporting the extremist groups in Syria has not benefitted the democracy and stability in our region or in the Middle East. In contrast, these acts have resulted in devastation and destruction of human lives and property. Hence, collectively, we need to work on:

- How to prevent our nation-states from becoming territories without a functioning state to be ruled and contested by terrorists and organize crimes?
- How to promote and expand social justice, economic development and education through political and social reforms, based on people's sovereignty and the nations' distinct social and cultural identity and heritage?
- How can we prevent the nation-states in the greater Middle East and our region from sliding towards tribal and ethnic orientation and fragmentation?
- How can we protect licit national economies from becoming war and criminal economies in failed or failing states?

Sadly, I have to say that still our regional system is influenced by a number of factors which are in contrast to the regional cooperation, particularly in terms of regional security. Such factors are the inheritance of the past colonial conflicts and unilateral action and also the policies of some of the governmental institutions of some regional countries with a hegemonic approach in the region.

The usage of terrorism as political means has weakened the regional integration process.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I believe that there are very good opportunities for the regional cooperation. Construction of energy transfer network from Central to south Asia like CASA-1000, construction of the railroad from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and from Afghanistan to Turkmenistan, extension of the existing railroad which comes from Uzbekistan and connection of the railroad to Pakistan and Iran, etc. There are some of the opportunities which will lead to the increase in ties and cooperation between various countries in our region and in connecting our land locked territories to Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

I hope that we will have a close and friendly relation in future and I wish you a fruitful discussion.