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“Heart of Asia” conference starts in Kabul

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An international conference, “Heart of Asia” began in the capital Kabul on Thursday morning, where leaders would push the region’s security and economic agenda -- aimed at stabilising Afghanistan.

Nearly 30 delegates from 12 regional countries and a dozen international agencies are participating in the one-day conference in Kabul, a year after the inaugural meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey.

President Hamid Karzai will deliver his welcoming address at the high-profile gathering.

The Istanbul Conference, held in 2011, to bolster security and cooperation in the ‘Heart of Asia’ is a foreign ministers’ level meeting, seen as another confidence building efforts to promote stability in the highly volatile region.

“This region is facing plenty of challenges, participants will discuss how to face these challenges and resolve them. They will largely focus on how to build trust among neighbouring countries.

“In addition issues on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and how to improve trade and business opportunities among member countries will be part of the agenda,” Janan Mosazai, Afghan Foreign Minister’s spokesperson told Pajhwok Afghan News.

Ministerial-level delegation from Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan are attending the conference in Kabul.

Also present are representatives from the United States, several European countries and organisations such as *NATO*, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (*SAARC*) and the United Nations.

The term "Heart of Asia" was coined to denote Afghanistan's location at the intersection of Asia's great regions -- South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East.