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## Kabul, Beijing sign key accords

Sep 23, 2012

Afghanistan and China inked two agreements on cooperation in areas of security and finance and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on an “action plan” for implementation of a joint declaration on bilateral strategic cooperation, the Presidential Palace said on Sunday.

The pacts were signed late on Sunday after a high-ranking Chinese delegation led by Zhou Yongkang, China's domestic security chief, met President Hamid Karzai during a surprise four-hour visit to Kabul, the president's office said in a statement.

It was for the first time in nearly 50 years that a senior Chinese official has visited Afghanistan. The last senior Chinese official to visit Afghanistan was President Liu Shaoqi, in 1966.

Beijing has stepped up diplomacy with Kabul in recent months as the deadline for the withdrawal of US and *NATO* forces draws nearer.

In June, Karzai pledged to work with China to fight terrorism and extremism in the region during a visit to Beijing, where he attended the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation meeting.

The Karzai office said both sides conferred on implementation of an action plan for the Afghanistan-China joint declaration on strategic cooperation.

Karzai thanked the visiting delegation for China's assistance and cooperation with the people and government of Afghanistan over the past decade. “We are looking forward to a broader and strong cooperation with China,” the statement quoted Karzai as saying.

Karzai said Afghanistan wanted good relations with all regional countries, particularly with China for being a good and honest ally. “Security of the region is linked to cooperation and good relations among regional countries and we have to work together to overcome common challenges,” the president said.

Zhou said they visited Afghanistan to implement the decision made between Karzai and his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao during Karzai’s trip to China in June. “China wants the lives of Afghans improved and relations with Afghanistan wider compared to the past,” he announced.

On China’s willingness to invest in Afghanistan, Zhou hoped many Chinese investors would come to Afghanistan for investment in different sectors.

After the meeting, the Chinese delegation signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on an “action plan” for the implementation of the strategic declaration and two other agreements on security and economic cooperation with Afghan officials.

Presidential spokesman Aimal Faizi said the agreements would help boost relations between the two countries in areas of economy and security.

Faizi said talks between the two sides were fruitful and encouraging as they discussed issues concerning regional political situation, bilateral trade and efforts at improving security and justice system in Afghanistan, in addition to regional and international matters of mutual interest.