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## China has Reiterated its Support for Afghanistan

May 10, 2016

China has once again reiterated its support for Afghanistan and in a joint seminar on “One Road One Belt” where senior Afghan officials and the Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan, Yao Jing, participated, it was revealed that the two countries may sign agreements on security and economic cooperation in near future under the initiative of One Road One Belt.

One Road One Belt basically refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. It is gaining support and acceptance in the Eurasian and Southeast Asian nations and is believed to be a vital route for growing businesses in the region. As Afghanistan is a channel connecting Central Asia and South Asia, it has a vital role in the project, therefore, it can benefit to a large extent from it.

Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Hekmat Khalil Karzai, said in the seminar, "If the idea of One Belt One Road can be successfully implemented, it would open up the old economic routes in Asia. Afghanistan as an ancient economic artery of the Silk Road, puts interconnection and relationships of trade and investment through the region as its top foreign policy priority." Meanwhile, the Chinese ambassador called for the implementation of big economic and infrastructure projects between Afghanistan and China, and said a railroad would soon be built between the two countries. "During the forthcoming visit, I think that both leaders will have an in-depth discussion on how to further our cooperation in other fields; in the economy, in the security, in the politics as well as in the international issues. One of the major outcomes is that

government to government MoU cooperation under the initiative of 'One Belt and One Road'," the Chinese envoy said.

In post withdrawal Afghanistan, one of the countries that can play the most important and supportive role is People's Republic of China. China, being the strongest of the countries in Asia, can lead Afghanistan to reconstruction, development and peace. And, China at the moment seems ready to take up this role.

In fact, Sino-Afghan relations are at a historical point as China could be in the leading role in the post withdrawal Afghanistan. It can definitely play a constructive role in the peace process in Afghanistan and China has already given the indication that it is ready to support Afghanistan in this regard. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani also believes that China could be really supportive for Afghanistan in the upcoming challenges. He, on many occasions, has expressed hope that Beijing could play proactive role in Afghan peace process, and also emphasized that lasting peace in Afghanistan would benefit Afghanistan, China and the whole region.

On the other hand, China can also have an immense role to play in the economic stability of Afghanistan and promoting the business and financial self-sufficiency of the country. China is not the largest donor country to Afghanistan, but China's aid is sincere and without any political conditions. In the 1950s and 1960s, although China was not better off at that time, it still built some aid projects such as Parwan Irrigation System and Kandahar Hospital for Afghanistan, which still function well in promoting the livelihood and welfare of local people. In recent years, China has been actively supporting the Afghan peaceful reconstruction. China had provided more than 1.6 billion yuan of grants, trained more than one thousand professionals in all fields through bilateral and multilateral channels, provided over 10 batches of goods and materials, built important projects such as Jumbhoriate Hospital, Teaching Building of Chinese Language Department and Guest House of Kabul University, National Center of Science and Technology Education, and Multi-functional Center in the Presidential Palace for Afghanistan. All of these have played effective role in promoting the development and people's livelihood of Afghanistan, and gained praises from all walks of life of Afghanistan. During President Ashraf Ghani's state visit to China, China committed to provide 2 billion yuan of grants to Afghanistan from up to the end of 2017, and train 3000 professionals in various fields up to 2020. China has clearly shown the willingness that it will not leave Afghanistan's hand at this crucial juncture, wherein it is in dire need of both political stability and economic support. At the same time, it is important to note that the announcement of around USD 3.5 billion by Metallurgic Corporation of China for the development of Aynak Copper mines is another important contribution that can have a lasting impact on the overall economy of Afghanistan.

Apart from economic and political support, China has always continued support for Afghanistan in different other sectors as well. Education and capacity building have been among the most important ones. China, during President Ghani's visit, also promised to provide 500 scholarships to students in the next five years.

In addition, the peace process with Taliban is being supported by China and China has given clear indication that its role would be assistive regarding the process. As put by former ambassador of Afghanistan to China, Sultan Ahmad Bahin, "China's role is important for

Afghanistan's peace, reconstruction and other sectors. It is important for Chinese people as their country is one of the biggest economic countries in the world. A more secure region will be crucial for further development of that country.”