

ISTANBUL FORUM FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION
BETWEEN
TURKEY, AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Joint Declaration for the Eighth Meeting

February 13, 2014 – Ankara

1. Istanbul Forum for Economic Cooperation between Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan is a tripartite dialogue mechanism established on October 26, 2007 between the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to promote the contribution of the business world to the stability building process in the region.
2. As it was acknowledged in the joint declaration of the Seventh Istanbul Forum meeting, the potential for economic integration among Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan has not been fully tapped yet, and one of the major reasons for this is weak logistics connections. The Forum members reiterate their belief that strengthening logistics connectivity between the three countries and further to Central Asia and South Asia will bring a strong impetus to the integration between three countries and their economic performance, hence reinforce sustainable peace in the heart of Asia. With this in mind, we support CAREC's Six Corridors Initiative and efforts to revitalize the Silk Road.
3. Istanbul – Islamabad Container Train Service provides a fast, reliable and low-cost logistics alternative that has a potential to boost the regional integration. In December 2013, during the visit of Prime Minister of Republic of Turkey H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Pakistan, a memorandum of understanding between Pakistan Railways and BALO, a logistics company established by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), was signed. With this memorandum of understanding, the parties committed to putting their best efforts to ensure reliable scheduled services of the Train.
4. Currently, Istanbul – Islamabad Train suffers from low demand from freight forwarders. The reason for low demand is not a low trade potential between Turkey and Pakistan, but rather absence of a proper schedule of the train services. After ensuring a scheduled service, large cargo suppliers could be attracted. Currently, a number of large cargo suppliers participate to the trade between Turkey and Afghanistan in addition to Pakistan. Respective authorities of the three countries should be in direct contact with the Forum Members for an early start of scheduled services.

5. If the Istanbul-Islamabad train service is extended to Afghanistan through truck connections from Quetta through Chaman border gate, or from Islamabad through Torkham border gate, a critical mass of cargo to ensure scheduled services will be attained. Transporting cargo to Afghanistan with Istanbul – Islamabad Train will only be possible if the Transit Trade Agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan is amended to include this train service as a transit route.
6. Given the opportunity provided by the Trilateral Summit, Members of the Istanbul Forum encourage the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan to consider amending the Transit Trade Agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan to include Istanbul – Islamabad Train as a transit route.
7. The Forum Members proudly welcome and congratulate the President of Afghanistan for the reactivation and operationalization of TIR system. The Forum Members strongly support Pakistan’s participation to the TIR system. The Forum Members also expect the support of TOBB for capacity building and better implementation of international transport regulations.
8. The Forum Members urge the governments to take the necessary measures to establish a fast track visa service for business people in order to increase business-to-business contacts. The chambers in the three countries are ready to take responsibility in this regard.
9. The Forum Members urge the governments to sign and ratify the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and TPS-OIC to increase intra-ECO and intra-OIC trade to remove trade barriers.
10. The Forum Members support mutual investments among their respective countries and to foster this, urge their governments to fully implement the ECO Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment (APPI).
11. To foster entrepreneurship and innovation in three countries and foster relations between young entrepreneurs, the Forum Members encourage establishment of business incubation centers similar to GARAJ incubation center in TOBB University of Economics and Technology with the assistance of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA).
12. The Forum Members have decided to organize a trilateral business and investment conference on mining sector in Kabul, Afghanistan. The meeting will be held in the first half of 2014 with the participation of business councils of three countries.
13. The Istanbul Forum decided to have its ninth meeting in the auspices of the next trilateral summit.