



2020 AFGHANISTAN CONFERENCE

23–24 NOVEMBER, GENEVA

PEACE, PROSPERITY AND SELF-RELIANCE

2020 Afghanistan Conference Opening Remarks by Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Your Excellency President Ghani,
Fellow co-chairs,
Ministers and Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
The proud people of Afghanistan,

It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you all to this ministerial conference providing us a historic opportunity. With the peace talks underway, and the end of the Transformation Decade at sight, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. I hope that the Afghanistan Peace Negotiations lead to substantive results soon. An immediate ceasefire would support this process.

Finland is very pleased to co-host this 2020 Afghanistan Ministerial Conference together with the Afghan Government and UN. I would like to express my gratitude to our co-hosts for the excellent cooperation during the preparations.

By having a lead at the Conference, Finland shoulders its global responsibility. Our aim is to strengthen multilateral cooperation in these difficult times amid a global pandemic. Furthermore, Afghanistan is Finland's largest development partner. We seek to make a lasting contribution to building peace in Afghanistan.

We are here to celebrate the progress Afghanistan has made during the past 19 years. These economic, political, social and development gains need to be preserved and built on. We must do even more to empower women, root out corruption, protect minorities, promote the rule of law, and ensure a strong role for a vibrant civil society. I particularly call your attention to the youth. Their dreams of security, participation, education and employment must be fulfilled.

I remember my visit to Kabul and my first meeting with the future President Ghani in 2002. The city was war torn. In that dire situation, I was impressed by the spirit of the proud Afghan nation.

There are no shortcuts for peace or for development. However, the will of the Afghan people is clear. Their voices calling for peace should be heard.



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I received this message during my recent discussions with the Afghan civil society. I hope that you too will sense this today. We will hear a civil society statement and you will also find videos containing Afghan voices on the Conference website. This overwhelming desire for peace should give the negotiating teams in Doha perseverance to overcome obstacles during the months ahead. Lasting peace requires compromises by all.

Nearly 70 countries and more than 30 international organizations have come together today to pledge their support to the Afghan people for the next four years. Our commitment remains as strong as 19 years ago. Together we will set priorities for international support towards a peaceful, prosperous and self-reliant Afghanistan, based on commonly shared values and principles.

With these words, I warmly welcome you all to the 2020 Afghanistan Conference. Afghanistan needs our support now more than ever. Let's make this event count. I look forward to hearing your generous pledges.

Thank you.