**A Historic OIC Moot**

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It was surely and certainly a historic moot of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was held in Islamabad last Sunday (December 19) at the initiative of Saudi Arabia and quite successfully and enthusiastically hosted by Pakistan. It dilated at some length on different humanitarian, financial, and health-related problems concerning the people of Afghanistan and also took some appropriate decisions after day-long deliberations.

The OIC member states through their Foreign Ministers also expressed solidarity with the people of Afghanistan; reiterating their commitment to helping in bringing much-wanted peace, security, stability, and development to their country.

The 17th Extraordinary session of the 57 member states of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers quite expectedly and appreciably vowed to play a leading role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance on an emergency basis to the Afghan people who have suffered from 40 years of civil war and accordingly unanimously agreed to establish a Humanitarian Trust Fund, launch an Afghanistan Food Security Programme as well as engage with the World Health Organization (WHO) for securing vaccines and medical supplies given the consistent prevalence of the pandemic of COVID-19.

The unanimously adopted Joint Resolution, which is also called Islamabad Declaration, has, indeed, brought a glimmer of hope for the 22.8 million, more than half the population of Afghanistan, who are facing acute food shortage while a large number of 3.2 million children and about 700000 pregnant women and lactating women, who are facing the grave risk of acute malnutrition, to say the least.

The moot has established a welcome fact that Pakistan is not being isolated in the comity of nations.

The extraordinary meeting was convened after the United Nation’s concerned agencies had warned that as large a number as 60 percent of Afghanistan’s 38 million people were facing a crisis level of hunger and the situation was getting worse with every passing day in the face of winter season setting in further aggravating the situation and further deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Imran Khan in his keynote address strongly warned that unless action was taken immediately, Afghanistan was heading towards chaos, which needless to say suited none. He also exhorted the world to understand the gravity of the situation and reach out to the Afghan people who were on the verge of starvation.

Availing the opportunity of the presence of Islamic countries representatives, PM Imran Khan emphatically reminded them that not only the people of Afghanistan but also the suppressed and oppressed people of India’s Illegally Occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine were also looking towards them as they were being denied the right of self-determination for decades together and the international community continued to be ignorant and in deep slumber.

The moot also expressed deep concern over the breakdown of the health system. Outbreaks of diseases and severe malnutrition in Afghanistan, particularly in the face of the pandemic and decided to establish a Humanitarian Trust Fund under the aegis of the Islamic Development, which would serve as a vehicle for channelizing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. As per decisions of the moot, the OIC General Secretariat together with the Islamic Development Bank and Humanitarian Trust Fund will initiate discussions with the UN system organizations to devise a road map for mobilizing actions to unlock the financial and banking channels for resuming liquidity and opening the doors for financial and humanitarian assistance besides devising a mechanism for the disbursement of urgent and sustained humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. The Humanitarian Trust Fund will accordingly be operationalized by the Islamic Development Bank by the first quarter of 2022. The moot also expressed deep alarm over the worsening economic situation in Afghanistan which was being further compounded by the continued freeze of overseas Afghan assets as well as other international assistance exacerbating the urgent cash flow problems including payment of remuneration to public officials and hindering the provision of essential public and social services to the people of Afghanistan. The moot also underlined the dire need for supporting Afghanistan in addressing poverty, creating employment opportunities, and provision of essential services to its citizens in particular food, clean drinking water, quality education, and health services.

While deciding to launch an Afghanistan Food Security Programme, the OIC representatives requested the Islamic Organization for Food Security to undertake necessary work in this regard using the capacity of the Organization’s Food Security Reserves when necessary. The OID member states, international donors, the UN Funds and Programmes, and other international actors were also urged to generously contribute to the Afghanistan Food Security Programme.

Muslim Ummah’s foreign ministers also made an urgent appeal, according to the Islamabad Declaration, to the OIC Member States, the international community, including the UN system, international organizations, and international financial institutions to continue providing all possible and necessary recovery, reconstruction, development, financial, educational, technical and material assistance for Afghanistan as policy tools for promoting realization and employment of fundamental rights and freedom by all Afghan citizens.

The gathering also recognized that development, peace, security, stability and human rights all were interlinked and mutually reinforcing and reaffirmed strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and national unity of Afghanistan.

As for the pledges to the Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan and for providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, an immediate donation of one billion Riyals was announced by the Saudi Foreign Minister. Pakistan has already committed to assisting $30 million the people of Afghanistan. There were no more pledges that were immediately made but hopefully, doors have now been opened and help and assistance would start pouring in not only from the OIC Member States but also from the international community and organizations. Needless to mention here, in the passing that all participating delegates appreciated host country Pakistan for making appropriate, adequate, and nice arrangements and warm hospitality for the OIC important historic moot which also endorsed its oft-repeated stance for peace, security, and stability in Afghanistan besides all Afghans inclusive government there. Pakistan and Afghanistan’s peace, stability, and security are indeed inter-linked with each other and also important for the region at large. The moot has also established a welcome and appreciable fact that Pakistan is not being isolated in the comity of nations and successful hosting of the moot was a testimony to this.

This was not all. The OIC Council of Foreign Ministers also deliberated on issues of Afghan refugees, terrorism, women and human rights and freedom, and a lot more which would be dilated upon by this scribe some other time.

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