

**ISTANBUL FORUM FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION
BETWEEN
TURKEY, AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN**

Joint Declaration for the Sixth Meeting

November 1, 2011

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. Forum members welcome the concrete steps taken since the fifth meeting of the Forum held on December 24, 2010.
3. Forum members appreciated the efforts made by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey to ensure efficient and safe operation of the Istanbul – Tehran – Islamabad Container Train and the establishment of TOBB International Logistics Management Company to this end. Forum participants are informed about the efforts to strengthen the coordination for the operation of the Train and the economic feasibility works concerning the investment on the moving parts of the train and the full support of the Forum participants are taken. Forum participants called private sector support organizations for contributing to the process. Istanbul Forum welcomed the opportunity to extend this connection to Afghanistan through the North-South railway connection via Torkham and passes through Jalalabad and Kabil. The feasibility studies and the design will be conducted in 18 months and the railway will be constructed by 2016.
4. Forum members appreciated that “women entrepreneurship” was decided to be the theme of the sixth meeting. Members expressed their sincere gratitude to TOBB and the Global Entrepreneurship Program executed by TOBB for ensuring the involvement of women entrepreneurs from Afghanistan and Pakistan in the Forum. Improving the participation of women to economic life will facilitate sustainable development and lead up future generations in the region. A chief way to achieve this is to pave the way for women entrepreneurs. As the number of successful businesses established by women increases, women’s employment and social status of women will be improved.
5. The Forum encouraged the Governments’ of the three countries to develop mechanisms for the empowerment of women entrepreneurship.
5. The following decisions were made after the discussions on women entrepreneurship in the Forum meeting:
 - Improving women’s leadership: TOBB “Women Entrepreneurs’ Boards” present a success story bringing together almost 10 thousand women entrepreneurs, making effort to promote mentorship relations among women, and promoting women’s participation in civil society circles

as leaders. The private sector organizations that are the members to Istanbul Forum will make effort to establish similar associations in their home countries with the technical support of TOBB Women Entrepreneurs' Boards. The Forum agreed to explore ways to document some of the successful stories of women entrepreneurs from the three countries in order to promote experience sharing and inspire further successful examples.

- Capacity and skill development: Necessary works will be done to provide a group of Afghani and Pakistani women entrepreneurs with entrepreneurship training programs offered by Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) Entrepreneurship Institute and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization of Turkey (KOSGEB) during the year 2012.
- Access to markets: One of the chief factors needed to facilitate access to markets is enhancing mutual business relations. Networks of women entrepreneurs offer an important opportunity with this respect. Cooperation between Afghani and Pakistani women entrepreneurs and TOBB Women Entrepreneurs' Boards will be promoted in particular to ensure access to the Turkish market and to developed country markets through the Turkish market.
- Access to finance: Financial inclusion was identified as an important strategy to promote growth and strengthen women led enterprises. Access to finance includes a focus beyond credit to encompass financial education, access to deposit facilities, insurance and other financial products designed to meet women's needs. Innovative and efficient delivery methodologies and client centric products are required to bridge this gap in a sustainable manner.

6. Forum participants welcomed the project of "Afghanistan Vocational Training and Qualification Center" that is planned to be built in Kabul in cooperation with the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK)/Turkish-Afghan Business Council and INTES (The Turkish Employers' Association of Construction Industries). The project that targets to improve vocational skills of Afghan and Turkish workers, who are already in construction sector or plan to work in this sector, will be financially supported by TIKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency). It is in the agenda of this project to recruit Afghan women in this vocational center, encourage them to benefit from trainings and enable them to have professions to find jobs. Within this context, the Forum appreciated the assignment of Afghan Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled as the coordinating body and requested the allocation of a specific land for this Center. The FPCCI would welcome the establishment of such a Center in Pakistan also, where the Pakistan – Turkey Business Council and the Government of Pakistan will contribute its share.

7. Forum members acknowledge that the Entrepreneurship Summit to be held on 3-6 December, 2011 by the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey is a great opportunity for establishing new cooperation networks to enhance entrepreneurship between the three Forum member countries and throughout the region. In this context, Forum members support the idea to set a "Pakistan Pavilion" during the Summit in which special events will be held to bring Pakistani participants together with participants from other countries, predominantly Turkey and Afghanistan.

8. Istanbul Forum decided to hold its seventh meeting in the first half of 2012.