



News Release

First Technical Working Group Meeting on Lapis Lazuli Corridor Held in Ashgabat

15 November 2014

The first technical working group meeting of Lapis Lazuli Corridor between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey was held in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan today November 15th, 2014 in Ashgabat.

In his opening remarks, Wepa Hajyyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, highlighted the importance of this corridor and the opportunities coming through greater regional economic integration and cooperation.

The representative of Afghanistan, Wahidullah Waissi, Director-General of Economic Cooperation, mentioned the historical and economical benefits of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor; which aims to enhance connectivity between the countries of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, thereby expanding economic and cultural links between Europe and Asia. He added that in doing so, the new corridor seeks to improve and streamline transport infrastructure and customs procedures, increase trade, create job and expand the economic relations of citizens in countries benefiting from this new transport and transit trade corridor.

Ali Gasymov, member of Azerbaijani delegation, discussed the legal, economic and safety factors of this initiative that will contribute Baku, Tbilisi-Kars railroad project.

The Georgian representative, Gvenetadze Gogita, highlighted reducing trade barriers and development of joint customs operations as part of their country agenda for Lapis Lazuli Corridor.

The Turkish Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Sevki Mutevellioglu, talked about revival of the ancient Silk Road by operationalization of the modern Lapis Lazuli Corridor. He has highlighted this Corridor as a shortest, less expensive, and secure passage connecting Caucasus and Central Asia.

Based on a recent study by Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industry, transit through Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey via road and rail is a viable transit route for trade with EU, Balkans and Eastern Europe.

In March 2014 the Afghan Foreign Minister, H.E. Zarar Ahmad Osmani, visited Turkmenistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan and shared Afghan vision in developing and operationalizing of the Lapis Lazuli Transport and Transit Trade Corridor initiative with the aforementioned countries' leaderships. Fortunately, the leaderships of all countries welcomed the idea and acknowledged the necessity of connectivity through this Corridor as a joint effort for greater regional economic cooperation.

Experts and officials from foreign services of all five countries contributed to the discussions held in this meeting and supported the initiative. The delegation reviewed the draft Lapis Lazuli Agreement and shared their initial views. Both Georgia and Turkey offered to host next technical meetings in their capitals.

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