



By: Saber Fermand

Canada Afghanistan Business Council held its first Business Match Making Conference in Toronto on October 16th and 17th, 2008. First initiative of its kind to bridge bilateral investment and partnership interests between Canada and Afghanistan and their respective business communities.

The conference started on October 16th, with a welcome reception in honor of the guests from Afghanistan, Dubai, USA and Canada, by the members of the Board of Directors of Canada Afghanistan Business Council, at the Elegant Banquet Hall in Richmond Hill.

The Evening officially began with verses from Holy Qur-an, recited by Mr. Jamshid Hussaini. Ms Laila Alam as the MC for the evening welcomed everyone and introduced Mr. Aziz Amiri President of Canada Afghanistan Business Council (CABC) to officially welcome the Guest of Honor, Mr. Ehsanollah Bayat and other guests from Afghanistan, Dubai, USA and Canada, followed by self- introduction by every member of the Board of Directors, including their short Bio and their respective business activities in Canada, Afghanistan and Overseas.

The self- introduction started by Mr. Amiri and followed by Zakaria Khan, Saber Fermand, Ahmad Yarmand, Hamid Khulmi, Haji Daoud Yousuf, Jamshid Hussaini, Ahmad Akefi, Azim Azimi, Laila Alam, Rasheed Walizada and Yama Bayat. (some members of the board were not present due to their travels abroad.)

During the reception Ariana TV's journalist and Host, Ms. Nazira Karimi conducted interviews with several participants on the topics of the conference and its aims, goals and benefits in both Canada and Afghanistan.

The reception facilitated an opportunity for good networking, new friendships, and refreshing old ones, prior to concluding the evening with a feast of delicious Afghan Dinner at around 10.00 pm.

The second phase of the conference was held on October 17th at the Hilton Suits Hotel in Toronto, which started at 9:30 am. This part included pre-arranged One on One meetings of various business counterparts as well as a Round Table and individual interviews with members of Board of Directors and other participants about the BMCC, role and participation of individual members of CABC and Afghan Canadian Business Community in the larger picture of the rebuilding of Afghanistan.



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The next phase of the program started at 2:00 pm, with the recitation of few verses from Holy Qur-an by Mr. Zараabi, followed by national anthems of Canada and Afghanistan.

Ms. Laila Alam as the Mater of Ceremony, called on Mr. Aziz Amiri for his welcoming remarks, during which he welcomed the guests and participants as well as highlighted the vision, goal and importance of CABC and the major role it can play in bridging the gap between business and investment interests in many sectors between both countries, Canada and Afghanistan.

H. E. Mr. Habibullah Qaderi, Consul General of Afghanistan in Toronto explained and brought to the forefront the highlights of free market economy and private business accomplishments over the past few years along with the positive affects it has had in the lives of people of Afghanistan.

Mr. Ranjan Banerjee representing Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Explained the role of DFAIT and Canadian involvements in Afghanistan in terms of co-operation in the future to facilitate and enhance CABC's role. Of course within its departmental guidelines and regulations.

Ms. Corie Mc Dougal, representing Ontario Ministry of Trade talked about the Ministry's role and how they could be of help within their jurisdictions as well as possibilities to assist business community in Ontario. That followed with a Slide Show that was informative in respect to trade.

(Doing Business in Afghanistan) was the topic of a panel discussion that its members consisted of H. E. Habibullah Qaderi, Consul General, Mr. Naseem Akbar, Assitant to Director of Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), Mr. Obaidullah Sader Khil, Pres., Chairman of Afghan Business Council of Dubai, Mr. Zakaria Khan VP, CABC and Mr. Saber Fermand VP, CABC.

Mr Zakaria Khan moderated the panel discussion after introducing Mr. Naseem Akbar, H. E. Consul General, and Mr. Sader Khil and gave a brief highlights on the topic.

Mr. Naseem Akbar described the possibilities and facilities AISA can offer including Challenges and business climate in Afghanistan along with a Feature Video prepared by AISA to support and highlight Business Climate in Afghanistan.



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Saber Fermand talked about the growth of economy in Afghanistan, emphasizing that while there are challenges, still Afghanistan has had 13.5 % growth in its economy in 2007 and how Canadian businesses explore the unlimited opportunities in many sectors of the economy in Afghanistan, using CABC as the source of contact and information on how to partner and invest in Afghanistan as well as assisting those from Afghanistan to identify lucrative business and investment opportunities in Canada. He added AISA has had a major role in registering new businesses and it was identified by the World Bank among the best in promoting and facilitating businesses.

Mr. Sader Khil, a very successful businessman himself talked about the successful ventures and activities of the Afghan Business Council in Dubai. He congratulated CABC's success in a short time and expressed the full co-operation of ABC with that of CABC in Canada.

Mr. Allen Bell of Globe Risk, gave a detailed brief on his company and the role they can play with their participation in the business community. He also encouraged businesses to identify the opportunities Afghanistan offers and take part in its growth.

During the question period both H.E. Habibullah Qaderi, Consul General and Mr. Naseem Akbar shed further lights on the possibilities of doing business in Afghanistan and related policies of the Government of Afghanistan as well as answers to the questions that were asked.

Panel discussion was concluded and summed up by Mr. Zakaria Khan.

During a break all participants visited Business Exhibition part of the conference, where certainly some common business interests met and we at CABC wish them best in their future joint endeavors.

The evening part of the conference began at 7:00 pm with the welcoming remarks by Mr. Saber Fermand, followed by the introduction of H. E. Omar Samad the Ambassador of Afghanistan to Canada, the featured Guest Speakers.

Ambassador Samad described in detail and eloquently, all the challenges in doing business in Afghanistan while emphasizing the great opportunities Afghanistan offers to the business community. He shed light on the facilities that the Government could provide to do business in Afghanistan.

Ambassador Samad congratulated CABC board members for their successful Business Match Making Conference and expressed full co-operation of the Embassy with their future activities. While wishing them further success, he pointed to the important role CABC can play in promoting business and for businesses to use CABC's services.



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Mr. Steve Hallihan Director General, Afghanistan Task Force at Privy Council Office expressed continued support of the Government of Canada and its mission to be an active partner in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and encourage businesses to benefit from the business opportunities available. Mr. Hallihan while praising CABC for this initiative, expressed full support and asked CABC to continue its efforts.

Lt. Commander Albert Wong, Army Public Affairs National Defense, congratulated CABC for its success and described his personal experiences in relation to Afghanistan and his desire to see Afghanistan on its way to peace and prosperity.

After the Dinner, program began with a message from Dr. Taj Yarmand, CABC Senior advisor, read by Laila Alam.

The last was Rasheed Walizada, CABC Secretary that gave a descriptive and detailed importance of the youth that makes up 67% of the population as well as their important roles they will play in the future well being of Afghanistan. He also talked about projects on hand for the employment of youth inside Afghanistan.

Followed by the Award Ceremony by Mr Azim Azimi and the following were the recipients in their respective categories:

Most successful business with corporate social responsibility was presented by Ambassador Samad to Engineer Ehsanollah Bayat, Chairman of Afghan Wireless, Ariana TV and Bayat Foundation.

Mr. Bayat in his acceptance speech was appreciative of CABC and congratulated them for holding a successful business conference. He gave a detailed and informative brief on Bayat Foundation and encouraged all other businesses not to forget their social responsibility, while they are in pursuit of business and success. He specifically reminded Afghan Businesses to remember the need of the people in Afghanistan and contribute as much as they can to the humanitarian cause.

The most Successful Afghan Canadian Business Award was presented by Mr. Daoud Yousuf, Member of the Board of CABC to Kabul Farm Owner, Haji Sardar Shanawaz.

the Most successful Canadian Business in Afghanistan was presented by Haji Hamid Khjulmi, Member of the Board of CABC, to Mr. Allen Bell, President of Globe Risk International.

The Most Successful Youth Award promoting community services, was presented by Mr. Ahmad Akefi, Member of the Board of CABC, to Mr. Javid Taheri, the first successful Lawyer of the Afghan Community.

Mr. Rasheed Walizada was recipient of an award, presented to him by Mr. Amiri for his Exceptional efforts, hard work and dedication in organizing the BMCC.



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The Conference was concluded by an overview by Mr. Ahmad Yarmand that further Encouraged the business community and pointing out the readiness of CABC in facilitating business activities both in Canada and Afghanistan. Mr. Zakaria also Thanked the Embassy of Afghanistan, Afghanistan General Consulate, Canadian Government, all the sponsors and participants for their support and encouragement.

The conference concluded at 10:30 pm. It is worth mentioning that around 120 People participated in the Conference. About 25 Business people from Afghanistan were not able to attend as they were not granted visas to Canada. There were a lot of media And public attentions. The participants, while congratulating the CABC members, noted that events like this further emphasizes the path to the success of the Afghan Community In Canada and their participation in the rebuilding of their homeland Afghanistan.

