

I. International

Ibn Sina R&D Center

Kabul Ibn Sina Conference Opens Way for ‘Economic Miracle’ in Afghanistan

by Marcia Merry Baker

Nov. 12—An extraordinary conference on the economic development of Afghanistan took place in Kabul Nov. 6–8, titled “Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Afghan Economic Miracle.” It was sponsored by the Ibn Sina Research and Development Center and had the participation of officials from the ministries of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and of others from a wide spectrum of Afghan and international experts.

The event brought together more than 600 people, 350 of whom participated Nov. 7 in day-long workshops in seven basic areas: agriculture/water, health, energy, industry and labor/credit and national banking, transportation, education, and culture.

The Kabul conference comes in the midst of progress on certain major, transformational infrastructure and related development projects already initiated by the IEA government over the past two years, despite the acute lack of resources and the perpetration of sanctions against Afghanistan by the Western anti-development nations, and their seizure of \$9 billion in Afghan national bank assets.

Among the outstanding examples of development initiatives: First, the Qush Tepa Canal in northern Afghanistan for irrigating 550,000 hectares, now one-third constructed. This will enable the nation to be self-sufficient in grain when it is completed, perhaps

by 2027. Second, the Wakhan Corridor highway, construction of which is underway in the far northeast, to the China border, replacing an unpaved, treacherous route with a modern roadway. Third, national opium poppy cultivation has been decreased by 95% over the 2022–2023 crop season.

Thus, the remarkable conference discussion added to the focus and momentum of the orientation already



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Opening plenary of the conference, “Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Afghan Economic Miracle,” attended by more than 600 men and women over Nov. 6–8, at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul.

in progress for development under IEA initiative. This process is rightly seen as that which can make “an economic miracle.” Though there has been no formal announcement, it can be said that Afghanistan now ranks in the forefront, even as a model in many respects, of the impetus for development expressed by the Global Majority internationally.

Mr. Fatah Raufi, the moderator of the three-day conference, is a founding member and one of the co-leaders of the Ibn Sina Research and Development Center, sponsor of the Kabul conference. He and fellow Afghan emigres Daud Azimi and Mirwais Popal, soon after August 2021, initiated active discussion and support for their homeland to further its economic development in every way possible. They have worked together tirelessly on this shared goal.

Among their principal collaborators was the Schiller Institute, whose founder and leader, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, had already issued a [call](#) in October 2021 for an international “Operation Ibn Sina” effort to support emergency health care, food, and other interventions to relieve the immediate hardship, and to build the economy of Afghanistan at that time.

Ibn Sina, the 11th-Century namesake of “Operation Ibn Sina,” is the universally esteemed and beloved physician and thinker, whose family was from the northern Afghanistan region. This great Islamic figure inspires hope at a time of deep suffering after 40 years of terrible, wrongful occupation and warfare in Afghanistan.

In November 2022, collaborators in Operation Ibn Sina issued a 90-page report on economic development in Afghanistan, prepared in conjunction with the Schiller Institute, for circulation as a pre-conference



EIRNS/Jason Ross

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzay, IEA Acting Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs: “We are committed to self-reliance, as well as open to collaboration with all neighboring nations and peoples.”

discussion document among the friends of Afghanistan, inside the nation, and in the world over. In the ensuing months, the Ibn Sina R&D Center was formed. Its contribution to this week’s conference is fully explained in the conference invitation, which speaks of “the economic reconstruction of the entire country.” (See full text below.)

National Self-Sufficiency

Afghanistan’s Acting Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, speaking at the opening plenary session Nov. 6, struck the theme, repeated throughout the conference, of national self-sufficiency. After 40 years of war and destruction imposed upon their nation, Afghans are now committed to building up Afghanistan. Minister Stanekzai said, “We are working ‘shoulder to shoulder’ to see this happening. We are committed to self-reliance, as well as open to collaboration with all neighboring nations and peoples.”

Minister Stanekzai called upon Afghans living abroad “to return home and rebuild their country” with their resources and education. He spoke movingly of how “the



UN/Homayon Khoram

A view of Afghanistan’s Panjshir Valley, one of the most agriculturally productive regions in the country.

doors are open” to all, open for “all brothers and sisters.”

Officials from many other ministries likewise issued this call and spoke of national self-sufficiency at the plenaries on Day One and Day Three, adding specifics from their differing areas of responsibility, from energy, to health care, to urban planning, and the other fields. For example, Shukrullah Waziri, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, gave specifics of building up the Afghan livestock herds, meat supply, and logistics at the Nov. 8 plenary, in a report-back from the Agriculture Workshop.

Wide Spectrum of Participants

There was a wide spectrum of plenary speakers and workshop participants in addition to many experts from the various ministries. Specialists came from Kabul University, the Academy of Sciences, the Afghanistan Railway Authority, Chamber of Industry, Chamber of Commerce, municipal councils from the provinces, diplomats from foreign embassies in Kabul, schools and colleges, hospitals, archeology programs, projects to teach women dairy and textile skills, and many other spheres, public and private. Specialists gave presentations on Islamic banking, on vocational education, and other topics. Representatives spoke from companies providing services for economic projects, for example the mapping of mountain slopes and routes for construction of highways.

A special message came from France, from Jean-Marc Deplaix, who for seven years has been the Inland Waterway Expert of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). He congratulated Afghanistan on the Qush Tepa Ca-



Schiller Institute

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and leader of the Schiller Institute, sent a pre-recorded presentation, “A New Chapter in the History of Afghanistan.”

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, leader of the Schiller Institute, sent a pre-recorded presentation addressing “A New Chapter in the History of Afghanistan,” part of which was played on the opening day. The entirety of it will be made available. She situated the need for a basic economic development program for Afghanistan

in the context of the history and geographic location of the country, how it had been a target of the policy of the British Empire and the Great Game, and how it is now a crucial hub in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. She emphasized that the atrocities being perpetrated in Gaza underline the necessity to realize an economic development program for all of Southwest Asia, typified by the “[Oasis Plan](#),” authored by her late husband, economist and statesman Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.,

which he first outlined in 1975.

The Mission of Development

Prominent Afghan business leader Fareed Alokozay gave a powerful presentation on the closing day, speaking of “mission.” He referred to the 2022 Operation Ibn Sina/Schiller Institute report, and the many points made by the ministries in their presenta-



EIRNS/Robert Baker

Fareed Ahmed Alokozay, a prominent Afghan business leader, addresses the closing plenary with a strong call to the “mission” of building the nation.

tions, saying that this is just “the beginning.” This is a start. He called on everyone to “move on the plan ... work on the plan.” He singled out for mention the Qush Tepa Canal.

Alokozay was adamant: After 40 years, we now have “the opportunity to be self-sufficient.” He spoke with authority from his extensive business activity. He said that the nation needs the ability to import what it chooses to, and to export likewise. He called at large for everyone to give time to the Emirate to complete the nation’s priority projects. We must complete these projects, he said.

He spoke movingly of the nation having the assets of its youth, of its business companies, and other means, to succeed. In particular, the tax revenue should be applied properly and well, to get maximum beneficial results for the nation.

In sum, Alokozay said, “The conference ends today, but tomorrow is an action day.”

Opium Poppy Cultivation Cut by 95%

Pino Arlacchi, former Executive Director of UNODC, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (1997–2002), spoke on the closing day of the conference as well, praising the IEA’s 2022–2023 elimination of opium poppy cultivation by 95% as “a huge result, not only for Afghanistan, but for the rest of the world.” The government, which the former UN official said should be recognized internationally, can be proud of its successes against ISIS, and in shutting down opium poppy cultivation, which have made the world a better place.

Arlacchi described his personal experience when he was head of the UNODC, and went to Afghanistan to work with the new 1999 government—“the first generation of Taliban”—to eradicate poppy growing at that time, which succeeded dramatically as of 2001. Then, after the U.S./NATO invasion in autumn that



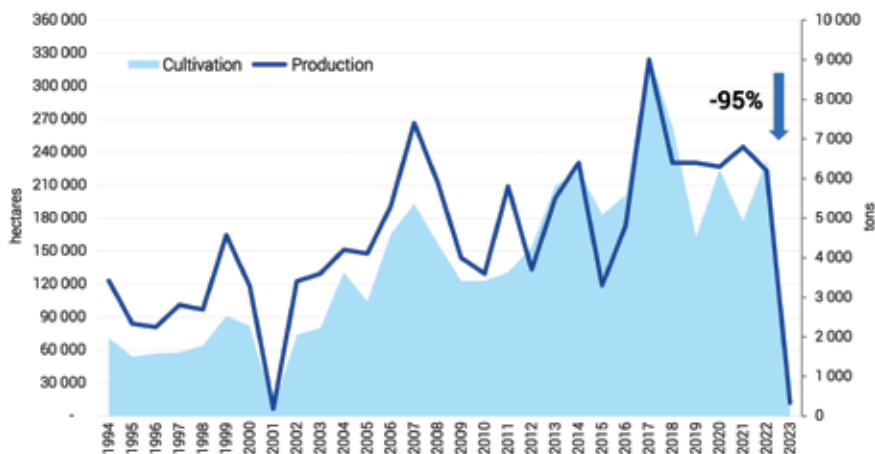
Fatah Raufi (left), a co-leader of the Ibn Sina Research and Development Center and the moderator of the conference, translates for the address to the closing plenary of Pino Arlacchi, former Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, who praised the virtual elimination of opium poppy cultivation, as shown on the graph.

year, the poppy plants soon were back, as the occupation leadership fostered their return. Within two years, Afghanistan opium production was bigger than it was before 2001.

In 2010, Arlacchi again went to Afghanistan—“as a friend,” he reported to the Kabul conference audience—to aid in opium poppy eradication, but the NATO occupation conditions made it impossible. At that time, Arlacchi was a member of the European Parliament from Italy.

At today’s Kabul conference, Arlacchi called for international support to enable the Kabul government, and the neighboring countries, “to consolidate its ex-

Opium Cultivation and Production in Afghanistan, 1994-2023



Source: “Afghanistan Opium Survey,” UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Aug. 2023.

ceptional result.” He roughly indicated elements of the plan to back the farmers formerly growing poppy to enable them to grow food crops instead, saying that steps should be taken “to phase out forever” the opium poppy cultivation. He foresees that “a group of donor countries to defend Afghanistan” can be organized for this effort, to provide resources, beginning with some of the Arab countries, and also including China and Russia.

Arlacchi, Professor of Sociology at the University of Sassari, in Italy, his home country, spoke of how much money would be needed for a five-year period, as the funding amount that can make the eradication

success permanent. He sternly pointed out that Europe alone has one million dope addicts right now. There are those in the international community that must step forward and assist in making the eradication succeed permanently.

Workshops, SMART Method

A remarkable part of the conference was the conduct on the second day, of seven parallel workshops, in which 350 attendees broke up into groups by topics of their interest and expertise for intensive work on specifics of development. Except for the mid-day break for prayer and lunch, their group discussions continued for the whole day, ending with a compilation of the major goals and major problems in each sector.

Since the Schiller Institute attendees had already had the opportunity, over the past year, to confer with Afghan experts, including from many of the ministries, they presented overview remarks at each workshop, as did other visiting participants and Afghan experts. Then, following very lively discussion, summaries were prepared. There was a total of 11 Schiller Institute participants, volunteers from Germany, France, and the United States—seven in person and the others by pre-recorded video. The seven workshop topics were Agriculture/Water, Health, Energy, Transportation, Education, Culture, and the combined topics of Industry and Labor/Credit and National Banking.

The attendance and format of each workshop varied, but the intense focus was impressive throughout. At two of the sessions, Education, and the combined Industry and Labor/Credit and National Banking, attendance was very large—well over 80 persons each, reflecting the extreme concern over job creation, and financial and other constraints on the economy. Some 80% of Afghanistan’s population is involved in agriculture. Current *real* unemployment—including mis- and under-employment, including in the “informal” sector—is in the range of 57%.

Across all of the sessions, the “SMART” method was observed to organize the results of the experts’ discussions, at the guidance and request of conference Moderator Fatah Raufi. Speaking personally, he explained in his remarks at the opening of the confer-

ence, that he has worked for 27 years as an automotive engineer, and found SMART to be efficacious. The acronym stands for goal concepts, for which questions are asked, to focus the information to be supplied from each area of economic concern, to the end result—in this case a comprehensive economics plan.

In brief, the SMART planning method stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

For a concrete understanding of this method, think through SMART in terms of the national goal of Afghanistan to become food self-sufficient. One relevant goal is to increase the domestic production of wheat,



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Women seated for the opening plenary. Some 90 women participated over the three days of the conference.

the staple food. At present annual wheat production is in the range of 5 million metric tons, necessitating wheat imports (commercial or donated) of at least 2 mmt annually. The interim goal of 7 mmt minimum of domestic wheat production, can be expected to be achieved in the next couple of years, with the short-term rehabilitation of many irrigation systems currently in disrepair, and provision of better seed and other inputs. Then with the completion of the Qush Tapa Canal system, perhaps by 2027 or soon thereafter, wheat self-sufficiency is reachable, and further goals of dietary improvement can be set.

Mr. Raufi reports that the extensive results from the conference, in all areas of the economics work, will be compiled into a comprehensive plan in the near future.

Model for a Miracle

At present, 39.8 million people live in Afghanistan, as reported by the spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health, in his report-back on medical and health care goals at the closing plenary. The government in Afghanistan is doing the impossible: taking both short-term and long-term measures for its population at the same time, for which the nation has no means, but only commitment. In the short term, the IEA government is taking *emergency action* in terms of food, health, transportation, disaster relief, and other necessities, and at the same time initiating *transformational* economic projects. All this is clearly underway, despite the vast destruction from 40 years of war and occupation, and despite the severe lack of re-

presentatives were in Iran and China on trade and infrastructure diplomacy. First Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Abdul Ghani Baradar led a delegation of at least 30 Taliban officials to Tehran for talks this past week, including in the framework of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Committee.

In Shanghai, the Afghan business delegation at the China International Import Expo (CIIE), which began Nov. 5, made trade deals for supplying more of the famous traditional Afghan products, especially dried fruits, pine nuts, pomegranates, and carpets.

In the sphere of prospects for multi-nation development corridors, Afghan representatives have been having meetings from Tashkent to Moscow to Beijing, on the prospects for various key projects, such



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The Agriculture and Water Workshop, one of the seven concurrent, daylong workshops.

sources from the continued economic warfare against the nation from the West.

In that sense, what the deliberations and reports from the just concluded Kabul conference manifest, is that we are witnessing a new economic model for a miracle-in-the-making. Yes, there are lessons from economic models at other places and times that have something to offer Afghanistan. Many were raised at the workshops. For example, how in the 1960s, the wheat revolution was made in the Punjab in India. Or how in recent times, Bolivia has become a nuclear-medicine nation.

But Afghanistan is breaking new ground. Moreover, it is notable that contemporaneous with this week's Kabul conference, Afghan government and business rep-

resentatives were in Iran and China on trade and infrastructure diplomacy. The IEA delegation that participated in October in the Third Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, led by acting Commerce Minister Haji Nooruddin Azizi, will be followed up by a Kabul government technical team returning to China for talks on active participation in the Belt and Road Initiative.

All these developments are part of the national self-sufficiency-driven vision for the future in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In all its outstanding contributions, the Nov. 6–8 conference in Kabul can be said to have met the intentions, and love for country, of its sponsors. It is a reality: “Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Afghan Economic Miracle.”

Invitation to ‘Creating the Afghan Economic Miracle’

The following is the full text of the “Conference Perspective” provided by the event sponsor, the Ibn Sina Research and Development Center, in its invitation to the recent, Nov. 6–8, 2023 conference, “Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Economic Miracle in Afghanistan,” in Kabul, Afghanistan at the Intercontinental Hotel.

There is amazing wealth for upcoming economic development in Afghanistan. The Afghans do not want any foreign geopolitical competition in their country anymore; instead, they request competition in economic development.

The challenges of the Afghan situation, which are essentially the result of 40 years of successive wars due to foreign invasions and occupations, left the country without real development. Besides this, the policy of sanctions imposed on Afghanistan after withdrawal of NATO forces, and the essential denial of cooperation with the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, have worsened the humanitarian crisis to an unacceptable level. Therefore, an entirely new approach is required.

The Ibn Sina Research and Development Center is organizing and hosting a conference in Kabul, approved by the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and with its active participation, to present a comprehensive plan for the economic reconstruction of the entire country, with the goal to turn Afghanistan into a middle level income country in the foreseeable future.

Obviously, the alleviation and subsequent elimination of the humanitarian crisis must be a priority. But that is sustainable only if there is a nationwide program of basic infrastructure, including transport, energy, water management, communications, education, and health care. Only if these basics are built in the entire country can productive agriculture and industry be developed.

For this goal, the Conference will present the economic plan called, “Operation Ibn Sina,” which has been worked out by the volunteer economists of the international Schiller Institute, and provided to Afghan experts living abroad and in Afghanistan, to analyze and to prioritize its goals. This program draws upon the experience of other successful economic

build-up programs, such as the Chinese economic miracle, which transformed China from a poor rural country into a manufacturing super-power; and earlier success stories, such as the industrialization of the young American Republic, the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the record of Russia, and other examples, such as Indonesia and Egypt.

The transformation of Afghanistan into a stable, prosperous country is also in the interests of all of the country’s neighbors, since the geographic location of Afghanistan makes it an organic hub for much of the transport and trade between Central Asia, South Asia, and Southwest Asia. The integration of Afghanistan into the corridors and infrastructure projects of the Belt and Road Initiative is in the interest of Afghanistan, as well as of all Eurasia.

Cooperation is paramount with the SCO and the EAEU, but especially now with the BRICS-Plus, which had its historic meeting in August in Johannesburg, South Africa, in which tectonic changes have taken place in creating a new economic system. If we turn Afghanistan into a prosperous country, as part of these gigantic changes in the Global South, it will represent hope.

This program will be realized in the tradition of one of the greatest sons of Afghanistan, Ibn Sina, whose father was born in Balkh, in the north of the country, and who is one of the greatest physicians and universal thinkers of all time. Ibn Sina was one of the great medical scientists of universal history, who enriched the knowledge of mankind about the body, the soul, and the universe, and in this way contributed to improving the conditions of life, and increasing the longevity of all the generations who came after him.

What an excellent metaphor for a rich and beautiful future for Afghanistan! Ibn Sina’s elevated spirit also stands for the high ideal, that the program associated with his name is above particular ethnic, local, or other specific interest groups, and is entirely and uniquely devoted to the benefit and happiness of the Afghan people.

This is a call to action for all patriotic Afghans living in the diaspora in many parts of the world, to return to Afghanistan to bring in their skills to contribute to the saving of the great nation of Afghanistan.