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Iran Finalizes Strategic Cooperation Document with Afghanistan

Iran and Afghanistan strategic cooperation document has been finalized, said Iran Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh, Trend reports via IRNA.

"The document has been finalized, considerable amount of time was spent on it," he said.

He said there were two issues, the details of which were fleshed out during Deputy FM Abbas Araghchi's visit to Afghanistan, and because of that some details of the document were adjusted.

"The issue of water right could be reviewed between the two countries to find common ground or being followed via joint commission and water ... **P3**



Gen. Miller Briefed on Security in Western Provinces

The commander of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan has conferred on the security situation with Afghan and foreign security forces and civilian leaders in western Herat province.

Gen. Scott Miller visited the Train, Advise and Assist Command West (TAAC-W), led by Italian troops, a statement from the NATO-led mission said.

Gen. Miller was briefed by TAAC-W Commander Brig. Gen. Beniamino Vergori on the security situation in the western provinces, the statement added. Herat Governor Sayed Abdul Wahid Qattali; National Directorate of Security (NDS) Chief General Issa Mohammad Hamidi; 2nd Special Forces Brigade Commander Col. Fardeen Sepah and Maj. Gen. Abdul Raouf Arghandiwal; Commander of the 207th Afghan National Army Corps, were also present on the occasion.

Miller reaffirmed NATO's support for Afghan security forces, saying: "We are still here; we are committed to supporting the ANDSF."

He commended the Italian contingent for its contributions to the 38-member RS mission. He hailed Italian efforts as essential in helping Afghan forces progress toward sustainability.

US Troops Will Not Leave Afghanistan in May: Graham



Republican US Senator Lindsey Graham in an interview with CBS has said that the American troops will not leave Afghanistan in May, supporting the Biden administration's stance on Afghanistan and its bid to review the US-Taliban agreement. "I'm very pleased with what the

Biden administration is proposing for Afghanistan. We're going to keep troops there on a conditions-based approach," Graham said. In response to a question that will the US troops leave Afghanistan post may, Graham said, "I think we're not going to leave in May. We're going to leave when the

conditions are right. The the Taliban have been cheating. They haven't been complying. And so I like what Secretary Blinken and the Biden administration is doing." "They're reevaluating our presence in Afghanistan to keep the footprint low, but not to walk away and lose all the gains we've achieved,"

Graham said. "If we leave too soon without a conditions-based withdrawal, Daesh and al-Qaeda will come roaring back. Women will suffer greatly. So they're in a good spot, I think, on Afghanistan."

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at last week said "we have seen attacks... against individuals, journalists, and others, and of course the high level of violence is something which is of great concern."

"So, we will make the assessment together, we will make the decision together, and this will be one of the most important topics that will be discussed when we have a NATO Defense Ministerial meeting later this month and decisions will be made," Stoltenberg said.

He also said that NATO and its allies were faced with "a difficult decision" on Afghanistan and that "we have to make that together. Because my message is that there will be costs and challenges, whatever we decide."

Bipartisan Panel Urges US to Slow Afghanistan Troop Withdrawal A study group appointed ... **P3**

2 Injured in Kabul Blast Targeting Govt Official

A magnetic IED explosion targeted a vehicle carrying Abdul Hadi Rafiee, the deputy minister of agriculture for administration and finance in Omid-e Sabz township of PD6 in Kabul city on Monday.

The Kabul Police spokesman, Ferdaws Faramarz said the explosion caused no casualties, but a security source said that two people were wounded in the blast.

Police said the explosion took place at around 11:20am.

This comes as targeted killings and IED explosions have in the Afghan provinces, particularly the capital, Kabul.



Taliban Vows to Guarantee Safety of Trans-Afghanistan Gas Pipeline

A Taliban delegation has paid a surprise visit to Turkmenistan to pledge support for a planned natural gas pipeline across Afghanistan, providing welcome reassurance for a project whose viability has long been rendered doubtful by security concerns.

According to Eurasianet, signs point to the trip having been brokered by the U.S. government, which has long championed what is known as TAPI, named after the four countries the pipeline would cross: Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

Turkmenistan Foreign Ministry says a meeting between senior representatives of the Turkmen Foreign Ministry and a delegation of the Taliban Movement Political Office led by the head of this Office Molla Abdul Ghani Baradar took place on in Ashgabat on February 6 In the course of the constructive negotiations, the parties reportedly



underlined the significance of the establishment and maintenance of peace and stability in Afghanistan. In this regard, it was noted that Turkmenistan has given significant support for Afghan people, contributed to the development of Afghan economy, primarily strategically important fields such as energy, transport, connectivity

and communications. The significant projects in the aforementioned fields are "Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India" pipeline, high voltage electric power transmission line, fiber-optic connection along "Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan" route, as well as railways connecting Turkmenistan ... **P2**

Taliban Vows...

and Afghanistan.

The delegation of Political Office of Taliban movement reportedly expressed full support to the implementation of the above-mentioned infrastructure projects aimed at ensuring well-being and prosperity for Afghan people.

The representatives of Afghan delegation made a statement to the press and answered questions from journalists after the negotiations.

Eurasianet says Suhail Shaheen, a member of the Taliban's Qatar-based negotiation team, told reporters in Ashgabat on February 6 that his movement was offering "full support for the implementation and security of TAPI and other developmental projects in our country."

Shaheen explicitly addressed the most commonly aired worry about the prospects for TAPI by assuring his hosts that not only would the project not be targeted for attacks, but that the Taliban was committed to ensuring its safety.

"We are trying to contribute to prosperity of our people and development of our country by providing protection to all projects," Shaheen said in English, reading from a written statement.

Putin Notes...

At present, the national "scientific and technological policy and measures to strengthen national science should definitely correspond to the challenges of a fundamentally different level of complexity," the head of state added.

The president urged Russian organizations performing scientific research to pool their efforts in order to achieve the final result, instead of being torn asunder.

By ELLEN LAIPSON

Can Biden Get the U.S. out of Afghanistan?

U.S. President Joe Biden's maiden speech on foreign policy on February 4 did not mention Afghanistan, but it is well understood that the long war there will demand the attention of him and his new team. The situation is simply not stable, and the agreement negotiated by the Trump administration a year ago that would permit the withdrawal of all U.S. forces by May could well unravel.

That agreement was only between the U.S. and the Taliban, or, as the text of the agreement frequently and awkwardly states, "the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban."

The agreement requires the Taliban to prevent any security threats to the U.S. in exchange for the complete withdrawal of American forces, now down to 2,500 troops. The second half of the agreement requires the Taliban and the government in Kabul to engage in peace talks, which are intended to lead to a ceasefire and a political roadmap for Afghanistan's future.

The intra-Afghan talks began in Doha in September last year, with the government of President Ashraf Ghani a reluctant participant. So far the parties, including civil society, have negotiated over procedures for substantive talks, but the process has reached an impasse.

As is often the case in delicate transitions from civil war, the violence gets worse as each party seeks to strengthen its position before serious bargaining over power-sharing begins.

The Taliban insist that they are not solely responsible for the surge of violence against the government's assets and institutions, and the recent assassinations of prominent civil society figures. They blame ISIS or other groups. But if true, that only reveals the failure of the Taliban to follow through on their commitment to the U.S. to clamp down on the Taliban's Islamist allies, especially al-Qaeda.

Nearly 20 years after the U.S. struck Afghanistan to defeat al-Qaeda and oust the Taliban from power, it feels like this war has come full circle. If this process of military drawdown and intra-Afghan peace talks fails, Afghanistan could return to civil war, with the Taliban well positioned to return to power.

It is easy to blame the Taliban for the current state



of affairs, but regional experts find equal blame with the corruption of political elites in Kabul, and the stubborn refusal of President Ghani to acknowledge that a political transition will mean a change at the top. He posits that he alone embodies the sovereignty of Afghanistan, yet the Taliban's fight against Kabul has been premised on questioning the legitimacy of Ghani's government, which, in the Taliban's view, was imposed by foreign powers.

The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), which has long been active in Afghanistan, assisting in governance reform and conflict prevention, this past week released a bipartisan report with some recommendations for the Biden administration.

The report calls for a pause on the May deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. forces, and advocates a return to a "conditions-based" approach, rather than fixed deadlines, to determine how the U.S. brings this longest war in U.S. history to a close.

The report reflects an establishment view in Washington that believes both that the U.S. has a moral and security interest in continuing to help the country, and that the final withdrawal should be on terms that do not look like defeat. The report conveys a heartfelt belief that the decades of US involvement have improved conditions for many Afghans, and have helped build a foundation for a more peaceful and modern country.

It's understandable that US diplomatic and military leaders cannot face the prospect of withdrawing as a defeated great power, but that is the true pattern of Afghan history, and it is the narrative already promoted by the Taliban. The conclusion of the agreement was for them a true victory, and their commitment to make peace with the politicians of Kabul may not be as deep as the American negotiators intended.

In fact, several of the advisers to the USIP project have signaled that there's no real rationale for delaying the withdrawal, and that conditions could worsen if the parties believe the US is no longer complying with its own agreement.

One small indicator of the likely path for the Biden administration was the decision to retain Zalmay Khalilzad as special envoy. It was he who negotiated the February 2020 agreement, and has built a wary trust with the Taliban. President Ghani, on the other hand, sees the American negotiations and Khalilzad in particular in adversarial terms.

In a recent conversation organized by an American non-governmental organization, Ghani took pleasure in referring to Khalilzad as an employee of the state who will be instructed by the Biden team, rather than the important player in US-Afghan relations that he has been since the 1980s.

When Biden was vice-president, he was ready to reduce the US entanglement ...

P3

By Paul Rogers

Taliban Present Biden with the Challenge that Could Define His Presidency

Joe Biden's team have been finding Trump's legacies littered right across government, and nowhere more so than in the Pentagon. The new president moved fast with numerous presidential directives, but he also faces the problem of vast numbers of appointments made in the last few months of Trump's control, even after the outgoing president had lost the election.

In the Pentagon, for example, several hundred appointments were made to a wide range of advisory boards covering defence policy, health, science and business. They were made even as late as November and December by Trump's ultra-loyal acting secretary of defense, Christopher Miller. The appointees included retired brigadier and former Fox News commentator Anthony Tata, and even Trump's former campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski.

Just like the presidential directives, though, Biden has acted quickly to change this. His new secretary of defense, Lloyd Austin, has announced a broad review of

the advisory boards and ordered hundreds of board members to resign their posts by 16 February at the latest, including several dozen late appointments. While the numbers give an indication of the problems Biden faces, the rapidity of the actions indicate his determination to change the Trump culture across government.

Trump emboldened the Taliban. The problem, though, is that it is all very well what you do in Washington, but the Pentagon's greatest challenges lie in conflict zones. My column from a fortnight ago covered this topic, looking at both Afghanistan and North Korea, as well as pointing to political uncertainty in Tunisia as a marker for wider problems across the Middle East and North Africa.

In the case of Afghanistan, the issue was that Trump had ordered all the 9,000-plus soldiers to leave by the end of April, whatever the state of the US/Taliban negotiations. Currently there are 2,500 left, and the Taliban insist there will be no further progress towards settlement

until after the departure of all US troops – as well as the 7,000 troops from other NATO member states.

The Taliban have adopted the tactic of making government forces their targets rather than foreign troops. This became even more evident with the publishing this week of the latest report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). Although the SIGAR post is governmental, it was established by Congress in 2008 and its current director, John Sopko, is a well-regarded and experienced federal civil servant.

SIGAR operates with a high degree of independence and has provided some of the better quality, open-source assessments of the security position in Afghanistan, albeit from a US perspective. In his latest quarterly report, Sopko states: "There has been no ceasefire agreement and high levels of insurgent and extremist violence continued in Afghanistan this quarter despite repeated pleas from senior US and international officials."

The report highlights the degree of

control that the Taliban seem to have over their numerous paramilitaries; the clearest example being the complete absence of insider attacks on foreign troops in recent months. This is in stark contrast to 2019, which has been called "the deadliest year on record". A total of 172 were killed and 85 were wounded in 82 insider attacks carried out by both Afghan soldiers and 'Taliban infiltrators'. Meanwhile, the Taliban attacks on Afghan government officials, journalists, judges and others continue apace, including the usage of magnetic "sticky bombs" attached to vehicles. This has enflamed widespread fear and uncertainty, especially in Kabul. If Trump had been re-elected, he would most likely have ignored this in his determination to get out, but even if Biden wants to do the same, he will face the problem of NATO partners, many of whom take a very different view. Heiko Maas, foreign minister of Germany – the second largest NATO contributor after the US – insists that troop withdrawals must be linked to the successful conclusion of negotiations with the Taliban.

Afghan president is part of the problem

Maas' view is shared widely among senior NATO personnel in Europe and so this constrains Biden's room to manoeuvre. Part of the problem is the relationship between the US and the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, who is regarded in some quarters as a technocrat with little in the way of diplomatic skills, who sees a peace deal with the Taliban as the likely end to his own career. Meanwhile, there are those who consider any kind of deal with the Taliban to be simply a prelude to the Taliban taking control of the entire country within a few years.

Ghani is highly resistant to any deal that involves power-sharing with the Taliban, no doubt with good reason. However, he faces divisions within his own political circles that are made more pressing by the Taliban's current diplomatic moves to engage more fully with Russia, Iran, and even Turkey.

With the United States' current domestic problems, Afghanistan is hardly the most pressing item on the agenda. But unless the Biden administration can find an approach rooted in preventing a Taliban takeover, this issue will come to haunt not just his presidency, but NATO as well for years to come.

Afghanistan Ships 50 Tonnes of Dried Fruits to Canada via Land

Afghanistan sends off 50 tonnes of dried fruits worth more than \$500,000 from Kabul to Canada through land for the first time.

With an estimated delivery of 40 days, the shipment will first reach Turkey from Uzbekistan and then depart for Canada.

Hashmatullah Ghafoori, deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and livestock, on the occasion in Kabul's Badam Bagh, said private company

"Raz Food" was taking the country's first shipment.

Head of the company Abdul Sattar Ghafari said exports through land were cost-effective, but the government must address the security problems. Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has aimed to increase the country's exports from their current volume of less than \$500 million to more than \$2 billion in the next two years.



EU, Arab League...

authorities to adopt needed electoral laws and its constitutional basis, implement the cease-fire agreement and enact economic reforms, starting with the unification of all financial institutions.

"The EU will be ready to support this process and urges all Libyan and international actors to do so in respect of Libya's territorial integrity and national sovereignty," it added. Arab League welcomes elections in Libya

The Arab League, as well as several Arab countries separately, also welcomed the election of Libya's Presidential Council, as well as its prime minister.

A written statement by the league emphasized the bloc's support for all national efforts in Libya to reach a final and comprehensive solution. Algeria's foreign minister also released a statement, noting that the neighboring country is ready to cooperate with the new Libyan administration and emphasizing Algiers' opposition to outside interventions into Libya's internal affairs.

In a statement of its own, Oman's Foreign Ministry expressed the Gulf country's pleasure at the interim administration's election, adding that they hoped this step would provide security, stability and development.

For its part, Yemen's Foreign Ministry noted that this was a historical step towards security and stability in Libya.

Earlier Friday, Libyan delegates elected Mohammad Younes Menfi to head the three-member Presidency Council and Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah as new Prime Minister. The new executive authority will govern Libya in the lead-up to national elections Dec. 24.

Libya has been torn by civil war since the ouster of Gaddafi in 2011.

Based in the capital Tripoli and currently led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, the Government of National Accord was founded in 2015 under a UN-led agreement. But efforts for a long-term political settlement have failed due to a military offensive by militias loyal to Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar.

Al-Sarraj's internationally recognized government has been battling Haftar's militias since April 2019 in a conflict that has claimed thousands of lives.

Iran Finalizes...

right management. We hope the Afghan side would announce its stance about it," he said.

The Helmand River has been at the center of a dispute between Afghanistan and Iran over water rights and the construction of the Kamal Khan dam.

The Iranian government argues that dam construction on the Helmand will cause environmental damage, mainly in its water-stressed south-eastern region of Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

US Troops Will...

by US Congress calls on the Biden administration to slow the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, remove the May 1 exit deadline and instead reduce the number of troops only as security conditions improve in the country.

The report finds that removing international forces by the May 1 deadline set in the US-Taliban peace agreement could lead to a civil war in Afghanistan.

The report finds that removing international forces by the May 1 deadline set in the US-Taliban peace agreement could lead to a civil war in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Study Group began its Congressionally mandated work in April 2020, just weeks after the US and the Taliban signed an agreement on February 2020 on the conditions for a US troop withdrawal that would end US' long military engagement in Afghanistan.

"We have an interest in an Afghanistan that respects basic human rights. We do not, however, believe that securing these interests requires a permanent US military presence in Afghanistan," the group said in the report.

The report said that: "An immediate diplomatic effort to extend the current May 2021 withdrawal date in order to give the peace process sufficient time to produce an acceptable result."

Afghanistan Study Group makes following recommendations for the Afghan peace process: clarify the end state, reinforce the conditionality of a final US troop withdrawal, clarify the US commitment to the current Afghan state,

work diplomatically to promote the success of the negotiation process and design an overarching regional diplomatic strategy. The report has mentioned that a recognition that, in addition to conducting counterterrorism operations and supporting the Afghan forces, a key objective of the ongoing US military presence is to help create conditions for an acceptable peace agreement.

The February 2020 Doha agreement and the subsequent troop reductions clearly demonstrated that the US is prepared to withdraw from Afghanistan. "It should not, however, simply hand a victory to the Taliban," it said. "Key consideration of the Study Group was that while we support the values of the Afghan government and recognize that its collapse could create significant problems for the region and beyond, US decisions about America's presence in Afghanistan cannot be held hostage to the divisions, ineffectiveness, corruption, and shortsightedness that the Afghan government has too often displayed," the report says.

The report suggested that a reemphasis on diplomacy and negotiation, including a regional diplomatic strategy implemented over the longer term. "There is broad regional support for a US withdrawal that is responsible rather than precipitate and chaotic. Many countries in the region,

especially Pakistan, have influence over the Taliban and other participants in the peace process. They should actively use this influence to make the peace process successful because they will ultimately benefit from its success," the report says.

The report adds that Afghanistan's long conflict has entered a new and potentially final phase: a real opportunity to reach a peaceful resolution exists, but the forces of fragmentation remain strong. "The United States can play a key role in determining if this opportunity is taken. A responsible and coherent set of US actions could greatly increase the chances of a peaceful resolution to forty years of conflict; a rash and rushed approach could increase the chances of a breakdown of order in Afghanistan and a worsening of this long and tragic war with negative consequences for the region and heightened threats to the security and interests of the United States and its allies," according to the report. It also urges the US to maintain its commitments which made in its February 2020 agreement with the Taliban, which includes a commitment to withdraw our forces under specific, acceptable conditions.

The Study Group, however, believes that it will be very difficult, and perhaps impossible, for those conditions to be achieved by May 2021, when the agreement states that troops should be withdrawn.

Can Biden Get...

in Afghanistan, and cautioned against the surge of US forces that Barack Obama eventually approved in 2009. So one might imagine that his own preference would be to stick to the military drawdown and scale back US involvement, while retaining important political and development activities in the country.

But there are also signs that the new administration may agree to the delay of the May deadline for the final withdrawal. It may be persuaded by the argument that staying longer provides

needed leverage on the Taliban to fulfill their obligations in the agreement.

It may also reflect some broader trends in Biden's foreign policy. The president's theme of "America Is Back" would not be served by an abrupt and ignominious withdrawal, and one that may leave NATO allies in Afghanistan in an untenable position.

It would be understandable for the new team to want to take time to consult with allies, in contrast to former president Donald Trump's unilateral decisions in 2020 about pulling

troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany.

In the end, Biden may reluctantly lean toward extending the US presence in Afghanistan, in the hopes, perhaps feckless, that conditions on the ground will improve.

At the State Department, he pledged to "begin restoring American engagement internationally and earn back our leadership position, to catalyze global action on shared challenges." A slower exit from Afghanistan might serve that larger goal.

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Putin Notes Russia as Only Nation with Three Domestic COVID Vaccines

Three coronavirus vaccines developed by Russia are a major scientific achievement, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday at a meeting of the Council for Science and Education. According to Putin, thanks to its scientists, Russia "has leading positions in the world" in developing coronavirus vaccines. "Moreover, we are the only country that already has three vaccines of its own, which are domestically developed," he said. "Without a doubt, this is a major scientific achievement," the Russian president stressed. The fact that Russia was able to launch the production of the vaccine and start mass vaccination of the population was even more important, Putin went on to say. "Thus, thanks to the joint efforts by scientists, domestic companies and the state, citizens of our country and other countries can take advantage of this greatest scientific achievement," he stressed. Putin noted that Russia also needed an equally

fast process of introducing and scaling up technologies, creating competitive products on their basis in other areas that were critical for society and every person.

Rollout of cutting-edge technologies
The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the rollout of cutting-edge technologies and the national scientific and technological policy should meet challenges of the time, Vladimir Putin said at the meeting of the Council.

Education, science and technological sovereignty "have currently become not merely important but to a considerable extent decisive, key factors of national security and the quality of life," the president said.

"The momentum for global changes is growing in front of our eyes. The pandemic has not simply become a test for mankind, but it has also boosted the mainstreaming of advanced developments in all spheres of life," Putin insisted. ... **P2**



A look at the world

Israel: Netanyahu Appears in Court for Corruption Trial

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday appeared in the Jerusalem District Court for the resumption of his trial on corruption charges.

Netanyahu remained in the courthouse for about 20 minutes before leaving, according to an Anadolu Agency reported.

The trial session opened with Judge Rivka Feldman Friedman confirming the defendant's attendance. Netanyahu responded by confirming his presence, as the court procedures require.

"I confirm the written answer submitted in my name," Netanyahu told the court before leaving the courtroom.



Israeli police imposed strict security measures around the courthouse. Despite the heavy security presence, dozens of Israelis made their way to protest close to the courthouse against Netanyahu and demanded his resignation.

Netanyahu's trial resumed looking into the charges against him which include corruption, bribery, and breach of trust. Netanyahu has repeatedly denied the accusations.

On Jan. 14, Israel's Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit filed an indictment against Netanyahu. His first trial session was held in May 2020, then followed by another session in July 2020, before the trial was delayed due to the coronavirus lockdown.

Netanyahu is preparing himself to run in the upcoming general elections in Israel on March 23, the fourth round of polls in two years.

Netanyahu, who is heading the right-wing Likud party, is the longest-serving Israeli prime minister with more than 14 years in office.

China Pushes for Healthy, Stable Ties with U.S.: FM Spokesman



CCTVPlus-China is pushing for a healthy, stable relationship with the United States, while continuing to safeguard its own sovereignty and interests, said the Foreign Ministry spokesman at a press briefing in Beijing on Monday.

Spokesman Wang Wenbin made the remarks in response to a query on comments made by U.S. President Joe Biden in an interview aired on Sunday that said China and the U.S. may be competitors but should avoid conflict.

Asked to comment on Biden's remarks, the spokesman said that China is committed to developing a relationship with the U.S. which avoids conflict and confrontation, and strives for mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

"President Xi Jinping has had many contacts with President Biden, and China and the United States have maintained communication at all levels, helping to develop mutual understanding and bilateral relations. China is committed to developing a relationship featuring no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation with the U.S. At the same time, China will continue to firmly safeguard its national sovereignty, security and development interests. The two sides should work together to focus on cooperation, manage differences, and promote the healthy and stable development of China-U.S. relations, so as to benefit the peoples of both countries and the rest of the world," said Wang.

EU, Arab League Hail Selection of Libyan Interim Gov't

The EU and Arab League on Sunday welcomed the election of Libya's new temporary leadership to govern the country until elections in December.

In a declaration on behalf of the EU, Josep Borrell asserted that the bloc welcomed the agreement on the transitional unified executive authority that saw the election of an interim presidential council and prime minister.

EU foreign policy chief Borrell also underlined that this was an important milestone in the Berlin Process for a political resolution to the conflict in the North African country and on the way towards national elections due Dec. 24, 2021.

"We are ready to work with the new President of the Presidency Council, Mohammad Younes Menfi, and the new Prime Minister, Abdul



Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, and stress the need for the swift formation of a new, inclusive government that will work for national reconciliation and unification of the country. "We encourage the House of Representatives to vote on the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) outcomes according to the timeline agreed in the Road Map adopted by the LPDF in Tunis in November 2020," the statement said.

It said that since the Berlin Conference, Libya had made significant progress towards securing lasting peace and stability, including through the reopening of its energy sector, the cease-fire agreement of Oct. 23 between the rival sides in the country, the roadmap for the upcoming elections and selection of a transitional unified executive authority.

The bloc also urged all relevant Libyan stakeholders and members of the international community to support the temporary authority in the interest of stabilizing the country and national reconciliation after years of turmoil since the deposition of former ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

"In this regard, the EU recalls its instrument of sanctions against possible spoilers," it said. Emphasizing that the main priority should now be to prepare to hold the elections on time, the statement urged Libyan ... **P3**



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