

# **Welcome Remarks**

by

**Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia**

Director General, ICWA

at

**Sixteenth Sapru House Lecture**

by

**H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani**

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

at

**Sapru House, New Delhi**

**28 April, 2015**

Your Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,

Hon'ble Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India

Distinguished Members of the Afghan delegation,

Excellencies , Members of the Governing Council, Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great privilege for us at ICWA to extend a warm welcome to your Excellency.

2. We meet in the backdrop of a terrible tragedy caused by the massive earthquake in Nepal. On behalf of all present here, we would like to express our support and solidarity with the people of Nepal. May I read an extract from the Media Statement made by Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi earlier today?

*“President Ghani and I speak for our two countries, South Asia and the world to the people of Nepal: Your courage and humanity has earned the respect of the world. And, you are not alone at this moment of tragedy and trial. We will do everything possible with rescue and relief. And, we will certainly be there when you rebuild your lives and reconstruct your homes and heritage.”*

3. The ICWA is deeply honoured by your Excellency's acceptance of our invitation to deliver the Sixteenth Sapru House Lecture. This lecture series, started in August 2012, is dedicated to the founders and builders of ICWA which has aptly been described by the Parliament of India as “an institution of national importance.” Your presence amidst us today imparts special value to the lecture series and indeed to the institution itself.

4. I also take this opportunity to welcome Hon'ble Vice President of India. Under his inspiring guidance as the President of the Governing Council of ICWA, this institution has scaled new heights in the fields of foreign policy research, publication, outreach, Track-II dialogues and contribution to policy-making.

5. Excellency, our two countries have been linked together through strong bonds of history, culture, civilization and mutuality of interests. We are important neighbours, important to each other as well as for the region. Our relations have indeed been multi-dimensional. Our relationship is not confined to governments only. It is anchored in vibrant bonds that exist between our peoples since a very long time. We watch and study developments in and around Afghanistan from this friendly perspective. We are deeply conscious of the imperative need of our bilateral relationship to contribute positively to peace, stability and development in our region. We view Afghanistan as a valuable bridge between South Asia, and Central Asia and beyond.



*(L-R) Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General, ICWA, Hon'ble Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India & President, ICWA and H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.*

6. In this backdrop, we look forward to your Excellency's address on the subject -- "The re(birth) of the Asian Continental Economy: Regional Cooperation and Afghanistan's

Cooperative Advantage”. Your reflections will greatly help us - our Research Faculty, friends of ICWA and other scholars - to understand and appreciate Afghanistan’s plans and priorities as well as challenges and opportunities in the future.

7. Excellency, you have before you a sizeable audience, representing a cross-section of scholars, academics, think-tanks, diplomats, officials, business leaders, media representatives, and faculty and student officers of the National Defence College (NDC). Their presence here confirms their deep interest in your great country and its tremendous importance for our region.



*H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan delivering Sixteenth Sapru House Lecture.*

8. Dear friends, while many of you are familiar with the achievements of our Chief Guest, may I quickly capture a few essential facts about his illustrious background. He is a leading scholar of political science and anthropology. He studied in Afghanistan, then at the

American University of Beirut, and later at New York's Columbia University. He joined the World Bank as a lead anthropologist, advising it on the human dimension of economic programmes. He served as Afghanistan's Finance Minister for the duration of the Transitional Administration. In this capacity, he played a key role in the design and implementation of some of the most extensive and challenging reforms. Subsequently, he served as the Chancellor of Kabul University and later he was the Chairman of the Transition Coordination Commission. He was sworn in as the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on 29 September 2014.

9. Thank you very much for your attention.
10. The President is respectfully requested to deliver his Address now.
11. Honoured Guests, please join me in putting your hands together to warmly welcome His Excellency the President.

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