

March 27, 2006

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Remarks by Farooq Kathwari, Chairman, Kashmir Study Group and Chairman, Refugees International.

I am pleased to join you today and share my thoughts at a historic time when the great nations of India and Pakistan have an opportunity to work towards a settlement of the Kashmir dispute in consultation and involvement of the peoples of the Jammu and Kashmir region.

In December 2005, I had the opportunity of leading a team of six directors of Refugees International to the earthquake affected areas in the Muzaffarabad region and the NWFP. I know many here have been directly and indirectly affected by this tragedy, and I would like to propose a minute of silence and prayers in memory of all those who lost their lives and suffered injuries and destruction on both sides of the Line of Control and the Northwest Frontier Province.

As many of you know, the Kathmandu December 2004 meeting organized by Pugwash was also historic. I reflect on that meeting with a sense of pride for the participants who met for the first time in fifty-seven years and agreed on a consensus statement which focused on improving the welfare and dignity of people, ending violence, working towards a solution that would be honorable and also feasible.

At this time, I would like to mention the Study recently released by a Washington based think tank, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), www.csis.org, in collaboration with the Kashmir Study Group,

www.kashmirstudygroup.org, titled “The Economic Dimensions of Peacebuilding in Kashmir”. Many of you have received the report and others may have seen coverage in the Pakistan press and the Kashmir Times. I must state here my great sadness in reading the dire economic situation of Jammu and Kashmir, especially the insurgency areas of the Kashmir and Jammu region. All economic and social indicators are very distressing. The literacy rate is now the lowest, second only to the State of Bihar. In fact, infant mortality has gone up, life span has decreased, major increase in unemployment, especially females and of those with education, a record of very poor governance and, most importantly, increasing feeling of alienation, hopelessness, and psychological trauma, especially for children and women. However, the report also goes into detail about the opportunities the region has provided the leadership is able to focus on development instead of continued conflict.

For the last many years I have focused my attention on discussing ideas and opportunities with the leadership of the region so that they move forward to bring about peace and dignity for the Kashmir region and for the whole of South Asia.

Our work has focused on three principles. First, the solution to the Kashmir dispute should be peaceful. Wars, insurgency, counter insurgency, have all been counter productive for the region especially for the Kashmiri speaking areas. Today there is a greater realization that a peaceful outcome is important.

Second principle is that any solution must be perceived as honorable by all sides. One side declaring total victory is not going to work. Today the leadership of the region led by the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India together with the leadership in Jammu and Kashmir recognize this principle.

The third principle is that any ideas or solutions must be implementable. Too much time, energy and resources have been used for negative and destructive purposes. Today the debate is on areas relating to peoples of Jammu and

Kashmir governing themselves and focuses the attention of leadership on positive areas of development and human dignity.

Most countries and institutions that have progressed have generally had the benefit of good governance and good local self-governance. In the United States, growth and development has not been primarily the result of control from Washington, but the opportunity created whereby thousands of villages, towns, cities and business enterprises govern themselves with the participation of the local people and their leadership. I am Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of an enterprise in the United States which has over 300 autonomous self-governing units with great involvement and entrepreneurship at the local level. My job is to make sure the right environment is created for this self-governance and growth. The concept of self-governance works.

Today the debate is focused on the important issues relating to implementation of self-rule in the Jammu and Kashmir region. I believe this is the right area of focus, discussions and study. As you know, the Kashmir Study Group reports titled, "Kashmir – A Way Forward" of 2000 and 2005 depicted the historical, geographic, and demographic make-up of the Jammu and Kashmir region. After great deal of discussions in the region suggested creating self-governing and demilitarized entities on both sides of the Line of Control. Both these reports provided insight in the make-up of the regions, possible options and also, both reports have legal memorandums giving insight into precedents and issues. Both these reports are on website www.kashmirstudygroup.org.

In December 2005 I had an opportunity to meet the well known expert of law in India, Mr. A. G. Noorani, and requested him to write a paper outlining his thoughts on issues and opportunities to implement the concept of self-governance. I am pleased that his report have appeared in recent Frontline magazine of India. Mr. Noorani has given many thought-provoking ideas.

As we move forward, let me share some additional thoughts:

- a) The role of leadership of all sides of Jammu and Kashmir is critical at this stage. They cannot hope that somehow all of this will work out. Hope is not a method. It is the leadership's responsibility to help shape the debate. Today and tomorrow there is an opportunity to discuss issues in greater detail.

- b) The time has come for the leadership of the Jammu and Kashmir regions to rise above their smaller personal agendas, egos, and parties. They must coordinate their activities. This is important for all regions and especially for the devastated areas of the Jammu and Kashmir regions.

- c) The leadership of India and Pakistan must continue to show courage and wisdom, and to help the leadership of the Jammu and Kashmir region so that together they can help bring much needed peace and dignity to the region.

I am looking forward to listening to many ideas from the participants in these meetings.