

Moscow Format

- ✘ Recently India participated in the fourth meeting of the Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan 2022 held in Moscow.
- ✘ **Participating Nations:** Special envoys and senior officials from Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated

About Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan:

- ✘ It is a **regional platform on Afghanistan** involving the special envoys of Russia, Afghanistan, India, Iran, China, and Pakistan.
- ✘ It was launched in 2017.
- ✘ April 2017 saw the first round of consultations with Russia, Afghanistan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in attendance.
- ✘ In 2022, all of these countries—minus Afghanistan—were invited.
- ✘ **Objective:** To facilitate political reconciliation between the then-internationally backed Kabul government and the Taliban, establish peace, and ensure regional security.

Focussed Format to Discuss:

- ✘ The first issue was centred around the potential threats due to the spread of instability, violence, and extremism in Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia.
- ✘ The second was related to the growing inflow of Afghan heroin to the Russian market. Geopolitical interests related to Moscow's opposition to any US or Western security presence in Central Asia undergirds Russia's motives to lead such processes.

Key Outcomes Of The Meet

- ✘ It called for **respect for all Afghan ethnic groups and minorities** in a bid to create national reconciliation in the war torn country.
- ✘ They called for "**complete unfreezing**" of Afghanistan's assets by Washington.

They Urged Taliban Government to:

- ✘ **Prevent poppy cultivation:** Participating countries called upon the Taliban setup to "fulfil its commitments to eradicate terrorism and drug trafficking" that continue to emanate from the Afghan territory.
- ✘ **Stop atrocities:** The return of the Taliban has been followed by a series of attacks on Shia Hazaras and growing atrocities against women and political opponents.
- ✘ **Inclusive Government formation:** The participants underscored the importance of forming a "truly inclusive government in Afghanistan, reflecting the interests of all major ethno-political groups of the country."

India's stance on the Afghan Peace Process

- ✘ **India supports all initiatives for peace and reconciliation** in Afghanistan that uphold its diversity and unity while bringing about the nation's security, stability, and economic growth.
- ✘ India's position has always been that such initiatives should be **Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled** with involvement from the Afghan government.
- ✘ A **regional approach, such as the Moscow format**, is the next best alternative since India would have preferred a direct process between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Way Forward for India

- ✘ The Indian government must be **clear about its stance on negotiations** with the Taliban.
- ✘ India needs to **concentrate on helping Afghanistan** in order to make sure that the nation's elections are as peaceful and inclusive as possible.
- ✘ **Without sending soldiers to Afghanistan**, India may help Afghanistan by providing equipment and spare parts as well as training the National Security Forces in accordance with their needs.
- ✘ For the advantage of both countries, the **energy basket of Asia needs to be utilised**, similar to the TAPI pipeline
- ✘ **India's enormous influence and goodwill among Afghans** stem from its development assistance, therefore the outlay for 2017–18, which is much smaller than its pledge in 2015–2016, should be changed.
- ✘ Rapid **construction of the Chabahar port** will improve Afghanistan's connections to India and the rest of the globe.