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# UNAMA

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Transcript

<http://unama.unmissions.org>

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**Massoumeh Torfeh, Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Director, and**

**Nazifullah Salarzai, UNAMA National Spokesperson**

**SRSG Ján Kubiš:** First of all good morning to all of you. Thank you very much for coming. I apologize for coming a bit late, sometimes traffic is unpredictable. But I am very happy that we can be here together to continue with rather regular press conferences and meetings with the distinguished representatives of the media.

I would also like to thank the Government Media Information Centre (GMIC) for providing us these perfect premises for the press conferences. Thank you very much for your cooperation and support.

The main reason why I indeed appreciated that we can have this meeting is that I would like to inform you about the results of a trip to New York and Washington and notably the results and the atmosphere of the meeting of the UN Security Council that discussed the report of the UN Secretary-General on Afghanistan. It happened some two weeks ago. I returned to Kabul only some four or five days ago, so this was the earliest opportunity to come to you and provide you with this information.

While in New York, not only was there was a session of the Security Council, but I had numerous meetings with different countries, members of the Security Council, other members of the United Nations, groups of countries that are called Friends of Afghanistan and of course I had discussions with the top representatives of the Secretariat, starting with the Secretary-General but also other UN Agencies and funds and programmes. And that was indeed quite a rich programme.

So, what was the main message from these meetings? The main message from both the deliberations of the Security Council and all of my meetings was one: strong support to Afghanistan, strong commitments to Afghanistan and hope for Afghanistan, trust in Afghanistan. This is what I would like to confirm here. I can tell you that all the contacts, all members of the Security Council privately and during the meeting of the Security Council confirmed one thing, the partnership between the international community and Afghanistan is strengthened and reinvigorated. This partnership is not only for this coming period of transition but will last after 2014. The best examples and confirmations of this partnership came from Chicago Summit of NATO, Tokyo Conference, the Kabul Conference of the neighbouring countries, Heart of Asia

countries and through different bilateral commitments to Afghanistan that are not only confirming very often the level of official development assistance but many countries including during the session of the Security Council confirmed their willingness to increase development assistance in the years to come for Afghanistan.

In their statements and in our private discussions, members of the SC definitely recognized a number of problems and challenges that Afghanistan faces. A lot of critical problems that are very clear here and we know about them and you know about them, including issues of good governance and corruption, issues like drug trafficking, violations of human rights, including, sometimes very unpredictable security situation, including other different developments that are taking place and that sometimes create a lot of problem, and yet the main message was the message of hope, and expectations that Afghanistan will fair through this together and supported by the international community and will be able as a sovereign country after 2014 to build its own future in cooperation with the countries of the region and being supported by the members of the international community and by the United Nations as such.

And this assessment was confirmed during the meeting of the UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon with H.E. President Karzai. For example, the Secretary-General congratulated President Karzai and the people of Afghanistan on the clear and strong message of the international community of its continued commitment to Afghanistan now and after 2014.

I believe this is something that should be remembered and noted very clearly because there are many speculations unfortunately that this commitment is not there. I would like to confirm that the commitment is there and it is very strong.

Similarly my contacts with top representatives of United Nations, including the UN Secretariat and also the UN agencies, funds and programmes confirmed their lasting commitments and we as the United Nations are already thinking about how to better engage, how to better serve Afghanistan in the post-2014 period and we have started our internal discussions and deliberations. Again another signal that we are with Afghanistan and will remain with Afghanistan as the United Nations.

Discussions of course focused on very particular topics, there are plenty of them, definitely the security transition and the general security situation in the country, questions of human rights, including women's rights, the rights of children and all that is happening around this sometimes very sensitive topic and difficult situation, issues related to the economic and social development including implementation of the Tokyo Conference agreements. Naturally, issues linked to the political transition, it means the elections, these were some of the topics that were the focus of the discussions both in the Security Council and the Secretariat.

These are the issues that are the core of my mandate, UNAMA mandate and that are determining the focus of our work now and in the future. That is why we will be continuously and increasingly engaged in dealing with these topics. As I mentioned starting with the elections but also human rights and many, many other areas that are very important not only for us but primarily important for the people of Afghanistan.

I think I will stop at this and now open the floor to your questions. I believe it would be fairer. I am able to continue in details about different areas of discussions of the Security Council, but this basically is the main message I wanted to deliver. Trust in Afghanistan, support for Afghanistan, long term partnership with Afghanistan.

Thank you very much.

**Nazifullah Salarzai:** Now it is time for your questions, please introduce yourself and ask one question at a time.

#### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

**TOLO TV [translated from Dari]:** From Tolo TV, thank you very much. You kindly mentioned some details of your briefing to the Security Council. We saw that the foreign minister of Afghanistan complained to the Security Council of cross border rocket shelling from Pakistan into Afghanistan. I'd like to know what were the decisions of the General Assembly with regards to that because direct interference into the affairs of Afghanistan will deter the relationship between the two countries. Secondly, there are concerns about the elections and the lack of budget for the elections. I would like to know your comments with regards to supporting the elections and also the results of your discussions about this topic.

**SRSJ Ján Kubiš:** Thank you very much. First on the issues indeed of relations with Afghanistan-Pakistan and notably the specific case prompted by shelling and all the root causes behind what is happening. Indeed the issue was raised by His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs [Zalmay] Rassoul and there was in a way exchange also engaging His Excellency Ambassador of Pakistan. He is a member of the Security Council in the coming period. But also the United Nations has the duty to at least to monitor and report about developments so also in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations there is a paragraph speaking about the situation and also in my briefing I mentioned the situation in Kunar and the fact that I visited the province in early September and had a meeting with the elders and representatives of the people that are affected by this cross border shelling. So that was another piece of information that reached the Security Council. The positive outcome of this discussion and also of the preceding steps of the Government of Afghanistan is that now there is an increased attention to this issue, an increased dialogue between the two parties that have to deal with this issue. It means that Afghanistan and Pakistan both at the political level and also at the level of the respective military and they are discussing not only the situation but how to prevent this, how to avoid this. This I consider the best approach and the best way forward: that the two parties are talking together and trying to find steps and measures to prevent this kind of situation. We will continue of course to monitor the situation. We are in touch with the authorities of primarily Afghanistan because UNAMA is here in Afghanistan to support Afghanistan. Of course we are in touch through our office in Islamabad with authorities in Pakistan. But the matter should be and indeed is in the hands of the two Governments and this is what is happening. But it's not only about monitoring and I would like to inform you that the humanitarian part of the UN family has engaged fairly heavily and as we noticed there are hundreds of families, large families, that are displaced. We mobilized and we are providing humanitarian assistance to these displaced people.

As far as the second question is concerned, it's about the election. Yes, there are questions, they might be concerns, but they are questions but I can say that I am encouraged. I am encouraged by a very active focus on the issue of the election both from the civil society and the political forces here in the country, from the respective institutions and authorities of the country, including the parliament, including different ministries. And I think that we can say also that we see certain results of this focus. Approximately one year and a half, two years before the election we see a very active series of steps that are being taken to deliver the election. And the same is valid, this focus on the election as far as the international community is concerned.

Yes there are concerns and speculations about the election. But what I hear from the top authority of the country, from Mr. President, consistently, at least in the period that I have been working here in this country is that the election will take place according to the Constitution. And the last example again, the press conference of the President, in my opinion was indeed rather clear. I would quote Mr. President. "The election will definitely happen, 100 per cent it will happen on due time." And before he said it would happen in accordance, in full accordance with the Constitution. It's concerning the timing of the election and the fact that it will happen. An even more strong statement: "My term, if prolonged, even by a day, will be seen as illegitimate." You know, these are extremely strong political statements, telling you the intentions of the top representative of the country.

But it's not only the words. I would like to draw your attention to the decision of the Government to base the future approach for organizing the election on e-Tazkira (electronic voter identity card), and of course on other measures that should ensure that the people who are eligible to vote will be able to vote. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Wolesi Jirga adopted the structure of concerning the powers of the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission and now we expect the act of the Wolesi Jirga and hope that they will act rather soon. I would also like to bring to your attention that we as the international community are engaged on very specific discussions both on e-Tazkira and on other election related issues with the Independent Electoral Commission, with the Ministry of Justice, with the Ministry of Interior, with the Ministry of Communications, with many other organs of the state, and also with the Ministry of Defense and with ISAF concerning security conditions. The work is being done.

And similarly with the civil society that is coming with ideas and proposals. And there are political parties that are coming with their proposals and ideas. Like for example this Cooperation Council of Political Parties and Coalitions of Afghanistan Democracy Charter, a document that was adopted by a number of political parties only recently and is speaking a lot about the future of the country including expectations of what kind of election should happen here in the country, primarily the presidential election but also other elections and on what principles these elections should take place. I am encouraged by these kinds of activities.

And you asked about the attitude of the international community. The international community will support the election in Afghanistan. It's our common interest. We support a strong independent Afghanistan, democratic Afghanistan, therefore we have no other choice and we have no other intention, and I can speak here not only on behalf of the United Nations but the whole international community. We have no other intention than to support good democratic election in this country, including financial support.

**Associated Press:** What is the international community's greatest concern about the upcoming election in terms of being prepared? Is it voter registration? Balloting? Being bankrolled by other countries? Security in Afghanistan? Secondly, how much is the financial support to the elections? (The question has been paraphrased)

**SRSJ Ján Kubiš:** You mentioned a number of areas of concern or at least attention. Definitely, all these areas are important for the election and can't be simply prioritized as such – what is more important, what is less. All of these are important for delivering a good credible election, sustainable election, inclusive election, fair election, transparent election. I would not wish to single out one specific topic. But it's true that they can be sequenced, not prioritized. For example, now we follow with keen interest and provide advice if requested, as requested. As far as preparation of the legislature, that is important for the election – be it structural law or the

election law. It concerns the work of the Independent Election Commission and indeed steps that could and should improve and increase its broad independence and effectiveness. That also concerns the adjudication mechanism – the Electoral Complaints Commission or the body that will be created like this. We are ready to support this work.

There are also other issues that are at this point of time extremely important. We can help the country in providing support for sustainable and inclusive election full of integrity only if we know how the institutions and the authorities of the country would like to proceed. Therefore, it's important to have decisions, like the decision of the Government on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, clearly saying that now the way forward is through the project of e-Tazkira and other efforts based on this project. We will now assess how we can support a good, credible electoral process that would lead to an acceptable result of the election by looking at the ideas of the Government.

Similarly, we are in touch with the Independent Election Commission because it's for them to manage the election. I will have this afternoon a meeting once again with Director (Fazal Ahmad) Manawi to discuss the steps and our support. This is crucial for us to be able to identify how we, be it the United Nations or the international community, can support in a meaningful way credible and inclusive election. Based on this, first of all the Government will be able to establish what are the budgetary, financial requirements. Then, the international community will be able to determine better what kind of support it can provide to support the elections. I think that I detect good willingness on the side of the international community to support financially. It is not without limits. It must be sensible. It must aim at delivering good elections. I believe that here also the international community will be a good partner of Afghanistan

**HASHT-E-SUBH, 8AM [translated from Dari]:** I would like to particularly know the reaction of UNAMA about the recent report released by ICG. Do you think that Afghanistan will fall apart if not managed properly following the drawdown of international troops from Afghanistan?

**SRSJ Ján Kubiš:** No I don't think so. Simply speaking, yes, it is the legitimate job of the analysts to analyze situation from all angles and to look to different scenarios including worst case scenarios. It is their job, they should analyze this, but I started this press conference with something different, with strong commitments of the international community to Afghanistan. That commitment is not based on the expectation of seeing collapsing after 2014. On the contrary there is an expectation that Afghanistan will work, will develop, but with problems, with challenges, with difficulties maybe more than now, but still will develop and the international community is ready to do everything possible to support Afghanistan and frankly to help Afghanistan not to collapse to this kind of doom and gloom scenarios that are coming from different places. I am not convinced that this is the way of the future of Afghanistan.

**KABUL NEWS [translated from Dari]:** You mentioned about the military transition that would be ended by 2014. In the next phase almost 75 per cent of the military responsibilities will be transitioned to the Afghan security forces. I would like to know your assessment of the security situation, whether it has improved and what do you think about the security situation? Secondly, you mentioned that you will support the Government of Afghanistan. I would like to know what kind of support you will be extending to the Government of Afghanistan with regards to peace and reconciliation and what commitment or support will be given by UNAMA in this process?

**SRSJ Ján Kubiš:** First of all, as far as military and security transition is concerned, although we monitor the situation this is not our preliminary responsibility as you know, so I have to rely mostly on the assessments that we are receiving from our international military colleagues, from

the Afghan national authorities, from analysts and then we try to make our own assessment, but it is still something that we do not do ourselves directly.

At this point of time what we hear and what we see is that both the military campaign and security transition are on target and delivers basically the result as envisaged, as planned.

Before the security transition started there were as usual again predictions of collapsing security, collapsing the situation where transition is taking place, the reality is telling no, the security has not deteriorated, the security if nothing else remains as what it was. Security is much more complex and much broader than just military security and therefore we cannot have improvement of security, without improvement of the delivery of the services by the Government, rule of law, justice, economic development, governance all that must be and is a part of the security without that you cannot have real stable security and this is ahead.

Another element that is necessary to indeed increase security and stability is reconciliation. At this point of time there is insurgency going on. I am not speaking about criminality as the matter of first group of questions rule of law, but insurgency, therefore it is essential that the political process is taking hold and is being accelerated. One of the components is to deliver once again good credible elections in the country. The second component is to gradually but steadily give a push to inter-Afghan reconciliation and this is again something that is going ahead. That is not in place now at this point of time, but we need to pay I mean Afghanistan, all Afghan political forces, society of Afghanistan needs to pay much more attention to this and it should be facilitated also by all those that can facilitate this processes, including neighbours of this country.

The United Nations has a natural place and role in these processes including in building, helping to build national accord, national understanding, eventually national reconciliation with the aim to assist these processes we will start soon an inter-Afghan track two dialogue, trying to engage and provide platform for Afghan people, representatives of different groups, civil society, political parties and also those that are fighting the Government, a platform on which they can discuss their future and perhaps deepen and broaden potential possible future national accord.