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United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Transcript

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TRANSCRIPT

Media Encounter with the United Nations Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom

(near verbatim; edited for clarity)

Kabul – Saturday, 14 June 2014

Participants:

- **UN Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan Nicholas Haysom**
- **UNAMA Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit Deputy Director Ari Gaitanis**

Ari Gaitanis: Folks, one more time – Nicholas Haysom, the deputy chief of UNAMA, he'll give an opening statement and take one or two questions afterwards.

Nicholas Haysom: Well, it's my privilege to be here on behalf of the United Nations, UNAMA in particular, to see first-hand how the election system works, to look at a functioning voting station, to get a better understanding of the checks and balances which are in place to guard and protect the votes of the Afghan people.

I also want to say that it's a particularly important occasion today. This is the very first run-off in Afghan history, it deepens and strengthens the democratic tradition of Afghanistan, it marks the final stage in this process which will see the first democratic transition from one elected president to another, and it's also an opportunity to witness the courage of Afghan people who decided to take their own destiny in their hands through the democratic process and to shape the future of Afghanistan themselves.

Given the potential threat of violence against those who do exercise their rights, we have seen today once again that by turning up to vote, Afghans have a determination to exercise their own rights free from interference. Thank you.

Ari Gaitanis: One or two questions, please.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Ariana News TV [translated from Dari]: We have two questions. How do you compare the first round to the second round? In the first round, there were some complaints of irregularities. Also, in the second round, how do you find the turn-out and participation of the people? If you could tell us your observations.

Nicholas Haysom: We're not in a position at this stage to compare the turn-out today to the turn-out in the previous round. We do know that there has been a good turn-out but we have to wait and see what the exact figures are. In general, we can say that the organization of the elections, from what we can see so far, has been good. We know that particular steps have been taken by the election management bodies to ensure there's an improved electoral process, [and] that there will, we hope, a better distribution of ballots, and that the votes of the Afghan people will be better protected, and there will be better detection and removal of fraudulent votes – however, this is not going to be a perfect election. It is not a perfect election in any country, but in the difficult circumstances of Afghanistan we expect that there will be some complaints and we have faith and hope that the election management bodies will be able to deal with those complaints in a way which satisfies the Afghan people.

Reuters TV [translated from Dari]: During the campaign period, some of the candidates had some warning statements to the people. What is your observation and reaction to this? And what if the elections are counted against their will and their positions? What would be your advice and recommendation be?

Nicholas Haysom: We have consistently asked both the candidates and all the other stakeholders, including the supporters of the candidates, to exercise patience in the election, to trust in the machinery which has been created to deal with complaints, and we have urged the candidates to act as statesmen, future presidents, rather than people simply in a competition with each other.

In general, we would say that the campaigns of the candidates have been good. We believe that they have attempted – both candidates – to reach out to the people to offer them their views and perspectives. Now that we have come to this stage, we would continue to urge them to leave the resolution of disputes and complaints between them to the election management bodies and to exercise patience in regard to awaiting the final results.

I would just add, just to remind also, that this election is Afghan-administered, -owned, and -managed. One of its distinctive features is very robust monitoring by Afghans of their own elections through the candidate agents. And in comparison to other elections anywhere we can say it has provided a significant opportunity for Afghans themselves to ensure that elections are free and fair.

SEPARATE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (WITH TOLO TV LIVE BROADCAST)

Tolo TV: Thank you, sir, for giving us time. Could you please tell us how you found the voting process here as compared to the first round of the elections?

Nicholas Haysom: I never visited this particular voting station in the first round, but from what I have seen it seems to be working well. There have been no problems here, there are enough ballots here. We know that a considerable number of steps have been taken to improve the whole process since the first round. It's too early to tell but we would hope that they will deliver a better election.

Tolo TV: What are your expectations from the candidates because, during the campaigns, they had some problems – they were accusing each other. What would you expect from them?

Nicholas Haysom: Well, in political campaigns, normally, the debates would be quite passionate. So, that is not unusual. Afghanistan is no different from any other country in this regard. As we go into the post-election period, there is a great responsibility on both candidates to behave as statesmen and not behave like sportsmen – it's not a World Cup, it's a contest for the leadership of the country. We would ask that they recognize that the machinery which has been created to deal with complaints, to catch, detect and remove fraudulent votes is established; and that we must wait to hear from the official bodies as to what the results are and not pre-judge them in the first instance here. Thank you very much.

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