

UNAMA**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Briefing<http://unama.unmissions.org>

**Briefing by the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for
Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš, to the Security Council**

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Madame President, Esteemed Members of the Security Council,

You are meeting with the results of Afghanistan's presidential elections due to be announced within days but with no political agreement on a government of national unity yet in place. Discussions stretching long into the night in recent weeks, have brought the teams of Dr. Abdullah and Dr. Ghani close but some vital issues have still to be bridged. This protracted deadlock deepens a crisis which had already taken a heavy political, security, and economic toll on Afghanistan with real risks for the future. This is the reason that I am, once again, briefing you from Kabul, where my presence has been requested in supporting efforts at a final breakthrough.

Madame President,

There is quite simply no better way forward other than a government of national unity led by an elected President, as certified by the Independent Election Commission, working in partnership with the new Chief Executive Officer. All other options are either accompanied by heavy risks or undermine the country's Constitutional framework. Both

candidates have previously committed to the concept of such an administration and to abide by the election result, subject to an audit process. Agreeing the modalities of such an administration has proved more difficult. While it remains an Afghan process, I would like to recognise the continuous and constructive facilitation of the United States. Final remaining sticking points include how to best communicate results when supporters on both sides genuinely believe that it was their candidate who won and will accept no other result, regardless of the audit. I continue to emphasise that in a government of national unity there will be no losers only partners.

In telephone calls to both candidates on the 10th of September, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, urged compromise and an agreement prior to the announcement of the election results. This message was reinforced during Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman's visit to Kabul the following day and has been at the centre of my efforts. It is this order of events that can best secure the most broadly accepted outcome.

If there is not agreement by the time of the certification of results, new dynamics will be set in play with the potential to trigger further uncertainty, even the risk of conflict. The time remaining is now short – and by this I mean one or two days.

Madame President,

In Afghanistan there are stark memories of the consequences of a failure in governance arrangements given the tragic descent into civil war in the 1990s.

A legitimate, broadly accepted political transition is necessary in signaling a break to the cycles of conflict that have accompanied regime-change in Afghanistan in recent decades. It is necessary in providing a robust mandate in tackling the country's many challenges including an emboldened insurgency, a looming cash crunch, and an expanding illicit – notably narcotics - economy. Finally it is necessary in ensuring that

the international community has a credible partner for sustained commitments of assistance in what remains one of the most aid dependent countries in the world.

Madame President,

It was at the request of the two candidates and Afghan authorities, that the United Nations accepted a major role in support of the electoral process even as it remained the responsibility of Afghan electoral management bodies. In its supervision of the unprecedented nationwide audit, the United Nations acted on behalf of, and in full consultation with, the international community. Regular – in many cases daily - consultations were held with the two campaigns on the design and supervision of the process at all stages.

The United Nations did not seek this role. It accepted this role as a responsibility, as the very core of a mandate to support the prevention of conflict. The immediate mobilization of personnel and necessary support elements saw the United Nations' system truly delivering as one. It was always understood that there was a reputational risk for the Organisation. It was however a risk necessary to take. I want to underscore my appreciation for the massive support from across the United Nations family, particularly the United Nations Development Programme and Department for Political Affairs, as well as the rapid mobilization of international observers, majorly by the European Union and United States.

With the election commission's final adjudication session last Sunday the supervisory role of the United Nations came to a conclusion. Our assessment was that the audit provided a comprehensive and credible check on the process unprecedented in its scale, depth and scrutiny. Significant levels of fraud were detected and excised. What was also confirmed was that millions of women and men turned out to vote on 14 June in support of a peaceful, democratic transfer of power. For months now they have eagerly awaited the long overdue agreement between the two leaders on the

establishment of a government of national unity. It is their wishes that must be respected.

Madame President,

The serious, and growing, challenges faced by Afghanistan require swift agreement on, and establishment of, such a government.

A tactical shift in the insurgency, has seen attempts to not only disrupt but to exert control over territory across the country. The drawdown of international military personnel appears to have emboldened some hardline elements who still – wrongly – believe that there can be a military victory. The months of political stalemate in the centre have, further, led to local power-brokers and spoilers asserting themselves amidst fluid, ever-shifting alliances of criminal networks, transnational terror groups - including Al Qaeda, and anti-Government insurgents.

As ground engagements emerge as the leading cause of civilian casualties, civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict. In the first eight months of this year civilian casualties rose by 15 per cent on the same period in 2013 - with 2,312 killed and 4,533 injured. Overall 16 per cent more women and 24 per cent more children were killed and injured due to armed conflict than the same period in 2013.

Afghan police and army personnel are responding courageously and I honour all those brave Afghans killed and wounded in the service of their country. Afghanistan's security institutions will require sustained support. A new administration will need to rapidly conclude mutually-agreed legal frameworks in ensuring the necessary planning and preparations for continuity in international assistance. The confirmation of intent to provide ongoing support for Afghan security institutions at the NATO Summit in Wales was most welcome.

With the conclusion of the International Security Assistance Force mission at the end of this year, I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize all nations who have contributed as well as paying my respects to those individuals who have been wounded and the families of those killed.

Madame President,

The prolonged political deadlock has also contributed to economic stagnation in Afghanistan with a dramatic drop in Government revenues. A new administration will need to undertake urgent action in averting a cash crisis and ensuring the continued smooth functioning of government, and in this will require emergency donor support. Yet it is longer-term economic and governance reforms that will be vital in improving revenues and addressing the increasing fiscal gap.

In reframing and refreshing the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework ahead of the London Conference on Afghanistan planned for November, the robust engagement of the new administration will be central to ensuring clear Afghan priorities and direction. I would urge a greater focus on a pro-poor, rights-based agenda – including the rights of women and children – as well as policies that address a burgeoning, and largely unemployed, youth population. Mainstreaming efforts to undercut the ever expanding narcotics economy will also be vital, including through intensified regional efforts.

Madame President,

As well as challenges there are also opportunities as Afghans take charge of their own destiny.

Throughout my tenure I have placed particular emphasis on promoting regional cooperation centred on Afghanistan. Enhancing economic, infrastructure, and security ties within the neighbourhood will be critical for Afghanistan's future stability and sustainability in a stable and prosperous region. I welcome the strong lead that China

has shown in its preparations for the Tianjin Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process.

One of Afghanistan's most important, and challenging, relationships is with Pakistan. Under a new administration a "reset" may be possible in moving forward on the shared challenges of economic development, counter-terrorism, border management, and cross-border incidents with casualties.

A new administration may also be a chance to breathe fresh life into Afghan-led reconciliation efforts for which the United Nations stands ready to assist.

Madame President,

I arrived in Kabul to lead UNAMA in January 2012. At that time there were very real questions as to whether there would even be elections. The first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history will stand as an enduring legacy of President Hamid Karzai's tenure.

Indeed, I wish to take a moment to highlight all that President Karzai has achieved having assumed the leadership of a shattered nation back in 2001. He will leave office with a Constitution, institutional and legal framework in place; local security forces in the lead in protecting the population; and, while Afghanistan remains one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world, real progress in improving the lives of its people. He has secured a rightful place in the history books.

This session will also be my last as head of the Mission.

It has been a challenging time to be in Afghanistan but my privilege to serve. The confidence placed in the United Nations by all parties – domestic and international - including amidst the current events and in thinking about future peace efforts, has been

inspiring. Going forwards, the United Nations will continue to have an increasingly important role both in Afghanistan and the broader region.

I would like to thank you all for the support and guidance provided to me by members of the Security Council, and other Member States and international partners, through the past two and half years. I also want to recognize United Nations, notably UNAMA, colleagues for their hard work, robust counsel, and genuine commitment. In particular I remember my close adviser Vadim Nazarov and others who have paid with their lives.

The aim of all our work - what keeps us committed in an often challenging, difficult, and dangerous environment - is to support the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan for a more prosperous and secure future in a stable and united Afghanistan. It is these wishes that must be to the fore at this critical juncture.

Thank you for your attention.

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