

**UNAMA****United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

**Briefing to the Security Council**<http://unama.unmissions.org>

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

*(as prepared for delivery)*

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Mr. President, Esteemed Members of the Security Council,

The Secretary General's report of the 18<sup>th</sup> of June provides a comprehensive account of the events and trends of the recent quarter. It was finalised prior to the second round of polling on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June. I shall therefore provide an update on election-related events since then, events which have prevented my physical presence in New York with you today.

You are meeting amidst challenges that are testing Afghanistan's electoral institutional and legal frameworks, together with the maturity of its political leaders. How the two presidential candidates – Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai - and the country's leadership manage these events and impasse will be vital to Afghanistan's unity and stability.

A timely political transition with a stable unifying outcome is the wish of the Afghan people and the necessary foundation to progress on Afghanistan's political, security and development challenges. This includes the need for strong Afghan lead in the upcoming series of high-level international meetings which aim to shape and strengthen mutual commitments between Afghanistan and the international community through many years to come.

Mr. President,

What keeps us hopeful in these challenging times, is the very strong, encouraging statement of the Afghan people on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April and 14<sup>th</sup> of June polling days. With pride and determination they turned out in support of a democratic political transition and an end to cycles of ruinous violence.

The Presidential and Provincial Council elections of 2014 are Afghan-held, Afghan-managed, Afghan-led and Afghan-secured. The electoral institutions are still maturing, but preparations and conduct of this electoral cycle have been recognised by domestic and international observers as an improvement on the past. That is certainly not to suggest that there were not instances of fraud and irregularity.

The first round of polling in which none of the eight presidential candidates secured more than 50 per cent of the vote meant that under Afghanistan's Constitution a run-off ballot was required. This was conducted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, with local and international observers reporting a generally solid participation.

I wish to recognize the leadership of the Ministry of Interior and salute Afghanistan's police and army personnel for securing the electoral process, in some cases at the cost of their lives. Amidst an accelerating security transition and the latest Taliban summer campaign, which includes heavy on-going fighting in Helmand province, this successful national operation has contributed to increased morale, trust and confidence in the security services. With the run off taking place amidst the summer fighting season, 530 security incidents were recorded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June - 254 of these assessed as being directly election related. However, the avowed aim of the insurgency to significantly disrupt the conduct of polling once again failed.

As reported, in several cases deals are understood to have been made between local commanders and communities that the process and participants not be targeted. Others however maintained a violent stance, including an attack on the convoy of presidential candidate Dr. Abdullah, for which responsibility has never been claimed. Dr. Ghani also braved threats and came under attack. If the spoilers had achieved their targets then the consequences for the country would have been devastating.

Altogether on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, the United Nations recorded 54 civilians deaths – including 20 children - with another 163 civilians injured. In the following days, in a case which has rightly sparked international condemnation, 11 voters in western Afghanistan had their inked fingers hacked off by alleged insurgents. The Taliban leadership has disavowed such action as unIslamic. I can only marvel at the exemplary bravery of one of the victims who told media outlets that this will not stop him from exercising his franchise more times in future.

At this time of the election impasse it is the determination and sacrifice of candidates, campaign workers, electoral personnel, security officials and voters that must be at the forefront of Afghanistan's leaders' minds. Millions of people came out to support each of the two candidates. They expressed their desire for change and a more peaceful future for themselves and their children. It is their votes and their wishes that must be respected and protected. That the outcome of such an extraordinary effort is currently an impasse makes it all the more disappointing and dangerous.

Mr. President,

It is the responsibility of the Afghan independent electoral management bodies and Afghan stakeholders - including first of all the candidates - to ensure timely and orderly completion of the election process from which a legitimate leader emerges.

Soon after the second round of polling, citing institutional bias and substantial fraud, Dr. Abdullah chose to disengage from the electoral process. Accusations have centred around high-levels of turnout in some areas of the country – which Dr. Ghani's camp in turn puts down to his team's mobilization efforts. The recent resignation of the Independent Election Commission's Chief Electoral Officer was hoped to provide a point for re-entry and in particular lead to discussions between the campaign teams and institutions on strengthening technical checks and balances where voting patterns are claimed to be unusual in increasing confidence in the credibility of the electoral process and the acceptability of its outcome.

The presidential candidates need to immediately engage with one another and the mandated electoral institutions in actively defining solutions to help the process move forward with improved

quality and credibility. There is no political transition outside elections to decide the country's legitimate leadership, accepted by the majority, and to protect its Constitution and the other gains since the fall of the Taliban.

It is under your mandate that the United Nations, and myself as Special Representative, can and do provide good offices at the request of Afghan authorities. We have received such requests recently. I remain, however, very clear about the parameters of United Nations' engagement. These are Afghan elections. We can facilitate Afghan parties reaching solutions. We can provide technical expertise to advise on the possibilities and modalities of strengthened checks and balances where there are questions over the process. What we cannot do is to prepare solutions and decide on behalf of Afghans – that is the exclusive responsibility of Afghans. The United Nations' efforts assist Afghan institutions and stakeholders, we cannot substitute for them or replace them.

Given rising tensions following the second round, including increasing ethnic overtones, the utmost maturity and statesmanship is required, notably by the two presidential candidates. The risk otherwise is a confrontation of the two candidates and their supporters, where the losing side will reject the results and contest their legitimacy. That might lead to a protracted confrontation with a danger of a slide into violence. Afghanistan can ill-afford the unpredictable impacts on security, stability, the economy, and the wider region. The candidates urgently need to be cooperating with one another to prevent such scenarios - that unfortunately cannot be excluded for now.

In such times of tension, missteps, miscommunications, misunderstandings and the actions of a radical few can have broader consequences, I appeal for calm amongst both candidates' supporters amidst sharpening, hateful rhetoric of an increasingly inflammatory tone, risking ethnic division. Most disturbingly, this includes rhetoric evoking memories of the fratricidal, factional conflicts in the 1990s. All necessary steps need to be taken by the two leaders to avoid any slippery slope to civil disorder and instability.

The country's political class, and notably the two candidates, Dr. Abdullah and Dr. Ghani, hold a paramount responsibility to manage this situation. The wishes of the people for a timely conclusion of the leadership transition in accordance with the country's laws need to be respected. They must decisively and actively engage in finding solutions to end the current impasse and contribute to Afghanistan's forward momentum at what is a critical time.

As with elections anywhere in the world, there can ultimately be only one winner. The need now is for statesmanship not brinksmanship.

Mr. President,

To turn briefly to other important current issues, the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been a challenging one in this period. Tomorrow, Afghanistan's National Security Adviser is leading a high-level delegation of political, military, and security personnel to Islamabad, following a similar visit to Kabul. There are to be discussions in all spheres, but notably a focus on combatting the joint menace of terrorism. I welcome steps to engage on results-oriented, practical co-ordination and cooperation both military-to-military and civilian-to-civilian. I support the need for new bilateral mechanisms to better ensure continued momentum towards shared interests of increased stability and greater economic development.

Since the finalisation of the Secretary General's report, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has launched military operations in North Waziristan. This has resulted in mass population movements from the affected areas. Many thousands of those displaced have been moving across into Afghanistan's Khost and Paktika provinces. Afghan authorities, with the full support of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, have been working to provide assistance to those

displaced, with the majority being hosted in local communities. Given Afghanistan's economic challenges and own internal displacement, it is to be hoped that the operation on the Pakistan side of the border can be shaped in a way that will not further escalate an exodus of civilians.

Mr. President,

In challenging times, predictability in international support is all the more critical. The upcoming sequence of high-level meetings was specifically seen as an opportunity to highlight and renew commitments with a new administration: regional cooperation at the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process Ministerial hosted by the People's Republic of China, ongoing international security assistance at the NATO Summit in Wales, and development priorities at the London Conference on Afghanistan. This all depends on Afghanistan's political leaders and institutions breaking the electoral impasse and the completion of political transition in an orderly and timely manner.

Mr. President,

Altogether this reporting quarter has been both promising and challenging for Afghanistan. On the bright side, is the people's participation and engagement in the election process. It was however dominated by economic downturn linked to a lack of confidence due to the current uncertainties; activities of the insurgency and spoilers including those linked to international terrorism and narcotics networks; the current electoral impasse; and death and displacement due to natural hazards and conflict. Just last week an attempt was made on the life of the head of the High Peace Council Secretariat, Masoom Stanakzai, an individual who has worked tirelessly for peace.

Still the people of Afghanistan look towards a better future – and expect their leaders to work for it.

Finally, Mr. President, I would note that Afghanistan, together with the whole Umma, is preparing to observe the holy month of Ramadan. I sincerely hope that the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, observed in a spirit of compassion, can, in its own way through contemplation and prayers, help pave the way for a peaceful and prosperous future of a stable and united Afghanistan.

To my respected colleague Ambassador Tanin, to members of the Security Council, and all peace-loving people, I address traditional congratulations, Ramadan Mubarak.

Thank you for your attention

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