

UNAMA**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

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TRANSCRIPT

Excerpted remarks of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš, at a news conference with the Board of Commissioners from the country's Independent Election Commission (IEC)

(near verbatim; edited for clarity)**Kabul – Thursday, 31 July 2014**

Ján Kubiš: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Deputy Chairman and esteemed members of the IEC, colleagues from the Secretariat, IEC collaborators, representatives of the media, civil society – asalam alakoom. Let me join also [IEC] Chairman [Ahmad Yusuf] Nuristani in extending our congratulations and my congratulations: it's Eid-ul-Fitr. This is a holiday that we share with you, and the United Nations as well. So we are very happy to be able to be with you during these very, very important days.

Let me start by acknowledging the good work – very difficult but very important work – of the Commission, and congratulate the Commission on the adoption of the final decision on the criteria for the invalidation and recount that complete the regulatory framework needed, not only for the audit, but [also] for the adjudication of the results, and the recommendations of this audit. This opens the door to the next stage, and in a way almost the final stage, of the audit – it means the adjudication of the findings of the audit.

Let me also confirm how honoured and proud we are to be able to work in the closest partnership with the IEC and with the IECC [Independent Electoral Complaints Commission] in delivering jointly in this partnership the results of the election that will be accepted by the people of Afghanistan, and we will eventually [inaudible] the new legitimate President of the country. This is truly an unprecedented partnership – this work of a national institution in very close partnership and with the supervision of the international community and, notably, the United Nations.

Once again, while we fully respect the laws of the country and the mandates of the respective institutions, electoral institutions – in this case, notably the IEC – we are also

very much honoured that the IEC accepted this international supervision and partnership. This is unprecedented and we are very proud that we can work together hand-in-hand.

Yesterday's decision of the Commission is very important and one might have a question as to why it took all of us several weeks to come to this stage. I would like to confirm that this is because both – us and the Commission – worked very closely with the parties. The UN was mandated by the parties, by the two campaigns, to prepare a proposal based on best international practices that will complement the existing regulations of the Commission, adding additional points of international best practice in regards to the invalidation and recount criteria to ensure that every fraudulent ballot will be invalidated, but also that every valid vote of every voter of Afghanistan will be counted, and this is what was requested by the people, and this is what was requested by both presidential candidates.

And I am very much encouraged by the determination of the IEC and its workers to restart the audit this coming Saturday. Indeed, very soon we expect that the Commission, under the supervision of the UN and in this close partnership with the UN, will start the adjudication of the results of the audit.

I would like to confirm that we have enough international observers in place to work with the IEC staff members, with the candidate agents, with the domestic observers.

I would like to confirm that we have a sufficient number of UN and UNDP [UN Development Programme] supervisors that will work with IEC colleagues and with the party agents, and domestic and international observers.

I would like to confirm that one of the most eminent experts of the United Nations intends to arrive to Kabul tomorrow to work with the Commission in the process of the adjudication of the findings of the audit, and will stay here as long as necessary and will work in this partnership with the Commission throughout this process of adjudication.

And I would like to second and support the appeal of Chairman Nuristani: what is now needed is the full engagement of the parties, the full engagement of the international community and the full engagement of domestic observers, to work diligently without any delays, but also without any interruptions, throughout the whole process of the audit that will restart the coming Saturday. Indeed, any delays and any uncertainties have a major negative impact on both the political and economic situation in Afghanistan. It's high time to complete the process of the elections and to inaugurate the new President of the country. The audit process, designed according to the best international practices, will enable this.

Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Kabul News [translated from Pashto]: I wonder if both candidates did agree with your procedures or not, and will it take a long time for the process to be concluded?

Ján Kubiš [following comments by IEC Chairman Nuristani]: Let me just add one point, and this is to express deep gratitude to the staff of the IEC – people who worked during the holy month of Ramadan, and you know what kind of burden it can be to work in scorching heat in warehouses without food, without water. Nevertheless they tried to deliver as much as possible under pressure... I would like to acknowledge the hard work and the performance of the staff of the IEC during the preceding part of the audit. And I'm confident that they'll also work diligently starting this coming Saturday.

Ariana News [translated from Dari]: My question is to the UN SRSG [Special Representative of the Secretary-General] – if this proposal is the final proposal?

Ján Kubiš: The proposal that the UN presented – and you might remember Mr. Craig Jenness, the Director from the UN Secretariat responsible for elections – he was working with the parties on the proposal for two weeks-plus. So this proposal reflects the best international practice, the best UN practice, and is final.

For more than two weeks, Mr. Jenness was working with the parties, with the leadership, with technical experts, going back and forth, discussing different proposals, and finally he prepared a sort of proposal that reflects the overwhelming majority of points and concerns. Of course, the parties – both sides – they would like to have also some other points reflected. But what is important [is that] the parties respect the mandate of the United Nations to make such a proposal based on best international practices, and respect of the mandate of the UN is what gives us the confidence that the parties will diligently continue working with the audit.

Tolo News: *[inaudible]*

IEC Chairman Nuristani [translated from Dari]: *I did say that we had our own criteria and many proposals came from one candidate or both of them; also, as the SRSG said, the UN had criteria according to best international practices for invalidations that we approved after hours of discussions among the Commissioners.*

New York Times: Question to Mr. Nuristani. Could you read to us the new criteria for evaluation? Could you explain which were additions from the UN? Mr. Kubis, could you confirm which were the UN additions?

IEC Chairman Nuristani [translated from Dari]: We have 13 items in the invalidation. So I can give you a copy.

New York Times: Why not read them? They can't be very long.

IEC Chairman Nuristani [translated from Dari]: They are very long – two pages. We'll give you a copy.

New York Times: We would like to know which were the additions because it's very important.

Ján Kubiš: Just one point: you'll get the copy because it's a public document. The copy is available on the website of the IEC, and we can put it on the website of UNAMA. You'll have a full text not only of this particular decision but of every other decision that was adopted by the IEC that, in totality, create the regulatory framework for the audit.

The second point I would like to make is: you may wish to compare the criteria for invalidation and recount that were adopted previously by the Commission to the criteria for invalidation and recount that were adopted at this point in time by the Commission, and you'll clearly see the difference.

In the spirit of full transparency, if you or whoever would need any clarification, in regard to the differences between the two sets of criteria, we, our colleagues, experts at the UN, are ready to provide consultation to whoever is interested in this consultation. Not only to see what is written but perhaps what was the discussion behind it.

New York Times: Can you give us a quick resume now? Some of most important points?

Ján Kubiš: Every point is important. There is not 'most important.' Everything is important.
