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United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Release

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SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE VISITS MAZAR-I-SHARIF

Kabul, 6 April 2010 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Staffan de Mistura, visited Mazar-i-Sharif today where he promised the continuation of United Nations support even though the level of stability and development is higher than in other parts of the country.

Mr de Mistura first went to the famous Blue Mosque in Mazar in order to pay his respects to the most important religious sanctuary in the region, where he was hosted by religious officials and visited the Mosque's museum.

After visiting the museum, the UN envoy met pilgrims and visitors at the monument, the shrine of Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. The Blue Mosque is the third Shi'a sanctuary in the world, after Mecca (Saudi Arabia) and Kerbala (Iraq).

Mr de Mistura also met with Mohammad Noor Atta, the Governor of Balkh province.

"We are impressed by your achievements, and we would like to make them an example," Mr de Mistura told the Governor.

Assuring the Governor that development assistance would continue, the Special Representative added that "the United Nations has been here for many years, and will continue to support the Afghan people even when things will go better. We will make sure that the northern region will receive substantive aid, even if the security situation is far better than in other parts of the country."

He encouraged UN staff to maintain close ties with local communities throughout the region. "We have a strong office here. We will make it stronger," he concluded.

In the north of Afghanistan UNAMA has provincial offices in Sar-i-Pul and Faryab, with a new office in Jawzjan to be opened in the near future.

Mr de Mistura arrived in Afghanistan as the UN's top envoy on 13 March. Last week he visited local leaders and UN staff in southeastern Afghanistan.

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