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**UNAMA**  
**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**  
Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

**Briefing Transcript**

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**Briefing by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan  
Jan Kubis**

**NATO Ministerial Meeting, Brussels  
4 December 2013**

Secretary-General and Excellences,

I welcome the chance to join you today. I am particularly pleased to see the participation of our Afghan colleagues, Minister Osmani and Minister Daudzai, as they assume lead on multiple over-lapping transition processes – security, political and economic.

My message is simple – I do not deny the challenges but progress is being made. The trajectory is in the right direction.

There is risk. There is volatility. Gains are indeed fragile. However the fundamental elements to support stability in Afghanistan and the wider region, amidst the drawdown of international forces, are being established and consolidated, although not without temporary setbacks.

Two weeks ago, the Consultative Loya Jirga overwhelmingly endorsed the need for the rapid conclusion of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States. New conditions put forward by President Karzai as he rejected the jirga's appeal to promptly sign the Bilateral Security Agreement took many by surprise and were met by dismay inside and outside Afghanistan.

Yet we must not lose sight of the shared strategic interests of Afghanistan, the United States – and indeed the broader international community – in concluding an agreement.

The Consultative Loya Jirga demonstrated that the Afghan people, notwithstanding fatigue and misgivings, want the United States to stay. Most Afghans recognize that in order to build and sustain their state, their security forces, and their economy, Afghanistan will require large-scale international support through a decade of transformation to come.

In turn, the international community through a web of Strategic Partnership Agreements – around the region and across the world – together with pledges at Chicago and Tokyo followed its strategic interests and has made a long-term commitment despite competing priorities and growing Afghan fatigue.

The hope is that shared strategic vision and objectives will, with patience and flexibility, guide both sides in the final stages of the process of reaching agreement.

Clarity and certainty are indeed in everyone's interests and I noted that this meeting has given a strong message that it be reached soon.

Excellences,

The fifth tranche of security transition is proceeding as planned. There has not been a catastrophic collapse of security some doomsayers had predicted. The Afghan army and the Afghan police are increasingly stepping up to the challenge.

There are of course setbacks and the rate of casualties amongst Afghan personnel is of great concern. I pay my respects to those members of security forces – international and Afghan - who have laid down their lives.

I am pleased to note that both Afghan institutions and their international supporters are increasingly recognising that it is not just the numbers of army and police personnel that matter. Professionalism and sustainability are critical to legitimacy and effectiveness.

Again and again we hear from Afghans that perceptions of impunity and a lack of the rule of law are fueling violence. Greater focus on civilian policing roles, including law enforcement functions, is welcome.

As part of transition processes it will be important to help build best practice in terms of transparency, accountability and respect for human rights into the very core of support for Afghan security institutions.

Excellences,

Political transition is at the core of all efforts. The critical nature of a historic democratic transfer of power through elections held on time in full accordance with the Constitution is widely appreciated. This underpins all other efforts for a peaceful and prosperous future.

All three electoral management bodies - the Independent Election Commission, the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission and the Media Commission - are now established under an agreed legal framework, or, the first time one, the Media Commission, is chaired by a woman.

Technically, there has been significant progress meaning that planning and implementation are further advanced than any previous poll. Meanwhile, the sheer number of candidates - 11 for presidential polls and 2,713 for Provincial Councils, including 308 women - attests widespread Afghan interest. The ongoing voter registration top up exercise has seen over 3.1 million new voter cards issued to date, one-third of these to women.

I welcome NATO/ISAF's support for Afghan security institutions lead in protecting these polls in helping ensure the safety of voters, election workers, candidates and international and domestic observers. Security planning is again further advanced than previous elections and will be a critical element contributing to inclusive polls.

This requires realistic assessments and robust risk mitigation measures together with public awareness campaigns to instill public confidence. Security must not be hostage to political agendas on any side.

Excellences,

Afghanistan's regional relationships will become all the more important with the drawdown of international forces, and is indeed where its future lies.

I welcome recent positive signals from the new administration in Pakistan. The visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Kabul last Saturday was an important demonstration of increased normalisation of relations. A new tone is emerging amidst recognition that shared solutions are in mutual interest.

Afghanistan's High Peace Council was received at the highest levels in Islamabad the previous week. There is now broad recognition that political solutions will be the key to sustainable peace, security and prosperity.

Also the promise of the recent talks on the Iranian nuclear programme can, if fully delivered, could help create a more conducive environment for a peaceful and stable future in Afghanistan.

Excellences,

All said, I can only once again reconfirm that despite all challenges, progress is being made. Gains are fragile and there will be bumps on the road ahead. Determination as well as patience will be required in the coming period to finally bring clarity and predictability on the way forward. In the meantime, hold your course.

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