

# UNAMA NEWS

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## UN lauds Afghan forum as important step towards achieving peace

**4 June 2010 - The United Nations today congratulated the Government and people of Afghanistan as they concluded a three-day dialogue aimed at achieving peace in the country, calling it an important step in efforts to end conflict and restore stability.**

The Consultative Peace Jirga, which began in Kabul on 2 June, brought together some 1,600 participants, including 300 women, to chart the way forward in the country's peace process.

"This is a significant step toward reaching out to all Afghan people to promote an inclusive dialogue aimed at achieving stability and peace in Afghanistan," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement issued by his spokesperson.

"The United Nations supports these national efforts to end conflict in Afghanistan, and remains fully committed to working with the Afghan authorities and people as they strive for a peaceful life," the statement added.

Both Mr Ban and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) congratulated the Government and participants on the "process and outcomes" of the gathering.

"The participants of the Consultative Peace Jirga have committed themselves to move forward together and reach out to communities across the country," the mission said in a statement.

"It is essential that the momentum of this Jirga is maintained and utilized to take the next steps toward the Kabul Conference in July," it added, referring to the major international gathering on the way forward for the country that is scheduled to take place in the capital.

The July meeting follows the London Conference held in January, during which the Government and its international partners jointly endorsed a strategy of transition to greater Afghan responsibility for the affairs of the country.



### Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the Peace Jirga in Kabul

**4 June 2010 - The Secretary-General congratulates the Government of Afghanistan and the participants of the Consultative Peace Jirga on the process and outcomes of this important three-day dialogue.**

This is a significant step toward reaching out to all Afghan people to promote an inclusive dialogue aimed at achieving stability and peace in Afghanistan.

The United Nations supports these national efforts to end conflict in Afghanistan, and remains fully committed to working with the Afghan authorities and people as they strive for a peaceful life.



### UNAMA Statement

**4 June 2010 - The United Nations congratulates the Government of Afghanistan and the men and women attending the Consultative Peace Jirga on the process and outcomes of this three-day gathering.**

The Consultative Peace Jirga represents an important stepping-stone to create the conditions for a wider national dialogue aimed at ending conflict and establishing the stability and peace that the people of Afghanistan want.

The participants of the Consultative Peace Jirga have committed themselves to move forward together and reach out to communities across the country. It is essential that the momentum of this Jirga is maintained and utilized to take the next steps toward the Kabul Conference in July.

The United Nations stands ready to assist the Afghan authorities and all Afghan people to realise this framework for peace.

## Statement by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the Global Open Day for Women and Peace

7 June 2010 - This October, we will mark the tenth anniversary of the Security Council's groundbreaking resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which called for higher levels of women's involvement in peacemaking and peace-building.

This anniversary is an opportunity to reaffirm the core message of that landmark text: sustainable peace is possible only with women's full participation – their perspectives, their leadership, their daily, equal presence wherever we seek to make and keep the peace.

Progress has indeed been achieved. Many peace processes now regularly include consultations with women's peace groups.

In many post-conflict countries, the number of women in government has increased dramatically, and they have used their public decision-making roles to advance women's rights.

Within the United Nations itself, there are now eight women Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives; Bangladesh and India have deployed all-female UN police units to peacekeeping operations; and UN Police have developed strategies and measures to better protect women from violence.

But the gaps remain significant: too few women participate in peacemaking and peace-building, and we have seen a disturbing escalation in levels of sexual violence during and after conflict.

The "Global Open Day for Women and Peace" is meant to reinvigorate our efforts to realize the vision set out in resolution 1325. I count on all partners to support the United Nations in translating women's priorities into real and meaningful action.



## 300 police officers trained in gender concepts in domestic violence – UNDP Afghanistan

9 June 2010 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Afghanistan has trained 300 police officers in gender issues related to domestic violence.

At the launch of a three-day photographic exhibition at the Serena Hotel in downtown Kabul, Robert Watkins, UNDP Resident Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan, also emphasized that 800 Afghan women have so far been recruited into the national police force.

These gender mainstreaming and development activities of the Afghan National Police (ANP) are funded by the UNDP's biggest project in the country – the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA).

"We are proud of having a more capable, effective and transparent police through the LOTFA project," Watkins said. Acting Minister of Interior Munir Mangal represented the Government at the launch and, in his speech, he vowed to recruit more female police in the villages.

The UNDP Resident Coordinator highlighted that with support from UNDP-LOFTA, "99 per cent of the police force benefit from the electronic payroll system, 77 per cent receive their salaries through the banking system (electronic fund transfer), 300 police officers have been trained in gender concepts in domestic violence, 600 MoI (Ministry of Interior) officials have been trained in financial management, accountancy and human resources, and 800 women have been recruited into the police force."

Financially the largest UNDP project globally, LOTFA is a multilateral trust fund set up in 2002, providing a mechanism for coordinating contributions from international partners. The project prioritises covering police salaries and other police activities as part of the international community's support to rebuild the Afghan police force. It is managed by the Government, through the Ministries of Interior and Finance.

The largest contributors to LOFTA are the United States of America, European Union and Japan. Other contributors are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

Robert Watkins told the gathering that the photographic exhibition was aimed at "advocating for the Afghan National Police."

Titled "Enhancing Security & Rule of Law for Afghans," the exhibit of 90 photographs of Afghan police also features paintings by children aged 10-15 years old with the theme, "My Police: The Child's Eye View."

A project of the NGO Aschiana headed by Mohammad Yousuf, the paintings capture the children's perceptions of the police, and how the police activities impact on their daily lives.

By Aurora V. Alambra, UNAMA





## Afghanistan's world cyclist preparing for next tour

**9 June 2010 - Afghanistan's ace cyclist – who toured 14 countries on a bicycle in 2002-2003 with a message of peace – is planning to embark on a world tour again “within a few weeks.”**

Nadir Shah's upcoming tour has the added spice that his 13-year-old son, Feroz Khan, will join him and it will be filmed by an Afghan film crew. Shah, 43 and a father of seven (three boys and four girls) who hails from Surkhod district in the eastern part of the country near Jalalabad, told UNAMA “I want to show to the world, once again, our wish and desire for peace.”

The dentist-turned-cyclist said he plans to tour about 20 countries this time.

The tour is supported by the Government of Afghanistan and by Abdul Satar Khawasi, secretary of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House), and the Afghan Film Department of the Ministry of Culture and Information has assigned cameraman Jawanshir Haidari to film the tour.

In 2003 Shah's tour took him across the Middle East, Europe and the United States over 371 days. President Hamid Karzai asked him to donate his bicycle to the Kabul Museum in December last year where it is on display highlighting his efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan.

Nadir Shah told UNAMA that he is very worried about the escalating violence.

“It's very painful for me. I want to ask strongly all the countries to bring peace here. First of all, the Afghans themselves should work for peace. Then the international community, especially the United Nations, should help us,” he said.

Shortly after he completed his tour in March 2003 that ended at the UN headquarters in New York, the Government of Afghanistan declared Mr Shah a Peace Ambassador. Recalling his reception on this tour Shah said: “In Europe and America, all Afghans I met were shouting, ‘Love live Afghanistan and peace!’”

“When I returned, I was welcomed at the Presidential Palace by (President) Karzai and (Vice President) Fahim.”

Mr Shah said he received full support from his family, though they were concerned for his safety. “Normally, I was never away from my home for more than five days. My children were a bit upset when they didn't see me around for months. When they heard me speak on the radio, they thought I was inside the little box.”

When he was 11, his father had bought him his first bicycle to ride in going to school.

“Soon after, I started teaching cycling to my classmates and I became a good cyclist,” he said.

He said there was war everywhere when he was young. “So, there was no sport. The Government paid more attention to war, not sports.”

One thing he liked about the earlier tour is that he noticed that all the countries he crossed in Europe were living like a family even if Europe was at war 60 years ago.

“When I was entering Holland from Germany, I thought I had lost my way and asked the locals which way would lead me to Holland. They said I was already 20 kilometres into Holland. It looked all the same. I want to see my country like this.”

By Tilak Pokharel and Shafiqullah Waak, UNAMA



## Police officers complete management and good governance training in Kandahar

**5 June 2010 - Nineteen police officers have just graduated from a six-week training in management and good governance in Kandahar.**

The Canadian Civilian Police in Kandahar provided the technical and financial support for the course which saw the officers receiving training in the fields of management, good governance, tackling problems in crisis situations, handling criminals, and respect for the Afghan Constitution.

Speaking during the ceremony on Wednesday, Kandahar Police Chief Sardar Mohammad Zazai said “such courses/trainings are very useful for the police officers,” adding that “those who didn't participate in this round will get the opportunity to participate in the next round.”

Mr Zazai praised the police officers for their role and responsibility in helping maintain security in Kandahar. “Police’ is a well-known and respected word, and people should consider themselves and their property safe when they hear the word ‘police.’ After receiving the mentioned training, the Police would strive hard to implement the rule of law.”

As part of the National Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr Zazai said all police officers with low educational levels will be provided with short-term courses in order to build their capacity to perform their duties more efficiently.

By Mujeeb Rahman, UNAMA





## UN reaches 1.2 million Afghan children with polio vaccine after nearby outbreak

**7 June 2010 - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) has vaccinated more than 1.2 million children in Afghanistan against polio after an outbreak of the sometimes deadly disease in neighbouring Tajikistan, where it was thought to have been eradicated nearly one decade ago.**

Most of the 200 cases reported as of 5 June were near Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan, the target of WHO's vaccination drive earlier this month.

The agency vaccinated more than 1 million children in Tajikistan against polio last month.

To guarantee that no child is left unvaccinated in Afghanistan, where health coverage is poor in remote areas, WHO took a four-pronged approach, setting up immunization posts at border crossing points to reach all children travelling between the two countries; carrying out house-to-house visits; setting up mobile clinics; and having fixed teams in hospitals.

Afghanistan's Badakhshan region has been polio-free for some 10 years, making it all the more important to contain possible spill-over effects from outbreaks in neighbouring areas.

Polio, sometimes called poliomyelitis, is a highly infectious and sometimes fatal disease, and is often marked by acute flaccid paralysis among sufferers. It has been eradicated from much of the world, but experience shows that the virus can travel far relatively rapidly.

## Latest round of polio immunization launched in Farah

**9 June 2010 - Mohammed Azeem opens the iron gate to the compound where his family lives in the second district of Farah city. Outside, two female volunteers for the polio immunization campaign ask the 15-year-old boy about the number of children in the house and how many are under five years of age – the target group for polio vaccination.**

The whole routine is familiar. The young man responds casually that 13 children stay in the house, and brings the five members of the household who are to receive the vaccine. Two drops of liquid are put in the mouth of each child. The volunteers mark the door with clay – the house is now safe.

Monday, 7 June, was the first day of the three-day campaign launched by the Ministry of Public Health and its international partners – the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) – to fight the ongoing spread of the polio virus in Afghanistan.

It is the fourth such campaign since January, with four more remaining to achieve the target of eight rounds planned in Farah province this year.

Afghanistan remains one of the four countries with endemic polio circulation. Polio is localized mostly in security-affected areas such as Farah and other southern provinces. Thirty-eight polio cases were confirmed in 2009, and 10 so far in 2010. These numbers do not reflect the real extent of the spread of polio infection.

Iskandar Hannah, medical officer for WHO in Herat, coordinates the polio campaign in the western region of Afghanistan. He explains: "Not all children who carry the virus develop the paralysis. For each case of paralysis that we identify, we assume that one thousand people are affected."

The local communities are at the heart of each campaign. WHO, which provides funding and technical assistance to the Afghan Government for the project, relies on just one permanent staff in the province to manage the activity. The organization prepares trainers who teach coordinators who, in turn, instruct the teams of two volunteers that eventually go door to door to immunize children.

Hannah said the whole campaign "starts three weeks in advance, when we prepare the plans for the teams and the coordinators. Three days before the campaign, the vaccines are brought. By then, every actor has a map and the areas are well defined, so that no one is missed."

The plan includes 20 mobile teams on motorbikes to reach out to the areas where the nomadic population, the Kuchis, live. Teams go to kindergartens or are posted at checkpoints, bus stops and frontier posts.

This tight grip enables authorities to stop the virus transmission. Since January, one case was identified in Bala Buluk district whose origin was traced by WHO to a neighbouring country. "In such cases, we immediately react and carry an immunization in the community within two weeks," explained Hannah.

The head of the provincial department of Public Health in Farah province recalled: "Last year, the polio immunization campaign was not implemented in two districts, Bakwa and Purchaman, of Farah province. This campaign will be implemented in all districts of Farah province because there is an agreement between the elders, the tribal shura [council] and the Taliban to support the campaign."

The Taliban leadership in Farah has issued a letter requesting that the volunteers' activity not be hampered. However recent clashes south of the province threaten to reduce the teams' outreach.

Because the virus lives on for two months, many rounds of vaccination are necessary to eradicate it.

On Tuesday, 8 June, the second day of the campaign, Hannah deplored: "This time, we will not be able to do the campaign in six clusters of Gulistan district (at the border with Helmand province), because of ongoing fighting."

Only if every child under five can be reached will polio disappear – a goal the Government and its partners are still struggling for.

By Fraidoon Poya and Henri Burgard, UNAMA