



## Secretary-General's message to Fourth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan

*Delivered by Mr Martin Kobler, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan*

**3 November 2010, ISTANBUL, Turkey - I thank the Government of Turkey for its initiative in hosting this fourth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan.**

Since this forum was created in Kabul in 2005, it has grown from 20 to 60 countries. Most importantly, it has delivered results.

The new trade and transit agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan has now been signed and awaits endorsement by the legislatures of the two countries. I congratulate the Afghan and Pakistani governments on this achievement, which will benefit both countries.

I urge all Afghanistan's neighbours and other countries in the region to continue to push for progress on economic cooperation. I welcome your consideration today of transport infrastructure, energy sharing and counter-narcotics.

The RECCA must remain an Afghan-centred approach focused on concrete objectives that benefit all participants. It should complement the Kabul Process of transition to full Afghan leadership and responsibility. Each meeting should lead to real developments on the ground that, in turn, become the basis for progress in future meetings. That approach has been the key to the success of this forum to date, and it will remain so for the future.

Thank you again for your contributions to the vitally important work of peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. I wish you every success in your deliberations.

## Statement on the High Peace Council:

**By Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan**

**31 October 2010, Kabul - Today the United Nations held useful and constructive discussions with the High Peace Council of Afghanistan, responding to the Council's request for United Nations support to its crucial work.**

We commended the establishment of the High Peace Council and indicated the United Nations availability, on behalf of the international community, to support the Council technically in their future work and activities.

In this context, UNAMA announces the establishment of a special group of experts called the Salaam Support Group who will be available to the High Peace Council to support all aspects of the work of this important institution.

UNAMA also indicated its willingness to provide logistical support for the activities of the High Peace Council.

UNAMA's support to the High Peace Council is consistent with its Security Council mandate to assist the Government and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development. This mandate includes the role of assisting national reconciliation and encouraging regional dialogue and engagement aimed at achieving and sustaining peace.

## UN sets up expert group to support Afghan peace efforts

**31 October 2010, UN News Centre, NY – The United Nations mission in Afghanistan announced today that it has set up a group of experts to support the crucial work of a newly-formed council tasked with finding ways to ensure lasting peace in the country.**

The expert body, known as the Salaam Support Group, will be available to the High Peace Council to support all aspects of its work, Staffan de Mistura, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, said in a statement following "useful and constructive" discussions between the UN and the Council.

"We commended the establishment of the High Peace Council, and indicated the United Nations availability, on behalf of the international community, to support the Council technically in their future work and activities," said Mr de Mistura, who heads the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The Mission also indicated its willingness to provide logistical support for the activities of the Council, which was inaugurated by President Hamid Karzai earlier this month.

"UNAMA's support to the High Peace Council is consistent with its Security Council mandate to assist the Government and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development," noted the Special Representative.

"This mandate includes the role of assisting national reconciliation and encouraging regional dialogue and engagement aimed at achieving and sustaining peace."

## Remembrance ceremonies for first anniversary for fallen colleagues

*28 October 2010, Kabul* - Today marks the first anniversary of the attack on a United Nations guest house in Kabul which resulted in the death of five UN workers. The United Nations today held ceremonies in the capital, Kabul, and in regional centres to remember and honour our fallen colleagues.





## Road project to improve local economy of Kandahar's Daman district

**3 November 2010 - Local residents of Daman district in Kandahar province are confident that the recently launched eight-kilometre road construction project will improve their local economy.**

The road is being constructed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) at a total cost of 8,804,295 Afghanis. It will be completed in "approximately" four months.

Daman district is known for producing mouth-watering melons and watermelons for Kandahar province and rest of the country. The local residents believe that once the road is paved, they would be able to transport their melons and watermelons to the local market without these getting spoiled.

"Our fruits were spoiled due to bad road conditions, so they lost their price value in the local market. With better road conditions, we can easily transport our products to local markets where we can sell these at good prices. This will increase our harvest and will boost our local economy," said one of the residents from Daman district.

More than 6,656 people will benefit from the road project funded by the Canadian Government and implemented by the MRRD under the National Development Programme (NDP), an initiative earlier launched jointly by MRRD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2002.

The NDP is designed to eliminate poverty and provide better living conditions to communities. Kandahar City Mayor Mr Ghulam Haider Hamidi also informed farmers and media of the planned construction of a large and modern fruit market in the city. "We are planning to build a modern and large fruit market in the North of the city where farmers can bring their fruits and vegetables for sale," Mayor Hamidi told media correspondents at the Kandahar media centre.

There are several other projects ongoing in Kandahar city and in other areas. A 10-megawatt power plant has been installed at the industrial park in Kandahar to provide electricity to factories which earlier shut down due to the shortage of electricity in the province.

Another 10-megawatt power supply project is already in the pipeline and is expected to be ready within two to three months. "The generators will have the capacity to provide 20 megawatts of power both for the industrial zone and Kandahar citizens. This will provide job opportunities for the local population aside from providing electricity," Kandahar Governor Dr Toryali Wesa told the local media.

By Mujeeb Rahman, UNAMA

## Afghan villagers see better future for their children: UN-supported hydro project

**31 October 2010 - With a UN-funded micro-hydro project due to be completed next month, locals of Nawlam village in eastern Laghman province hope that the 30-KW electricity it generates will allow their children better access to modern technologies and education.**

During a visit to the project site Thursday by officials from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the villagers said the project also boosts their economy. UNHCR funded the project with contribution from the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

Afghan families who have returned from Pakistan, leaving behind their refugee life, make up most of the beneficiaries of the three-month project, which also includes a grain mill and a water canal that helps villagers irrigate their land.

Altogether 350 families, including 45 registered returnee families, are going to benefit from the project in the village about five kilometres from Mehterlam, the provincial capital. A village elder, Haji Yaseen, 60, who until now uses kerosene lamp for light, said the hydropower project is a great achievement at a time when "many people are still fighting."

"Now our children can read and write also in the night, and they can learn and use computers too," said the long-bearded Yaseen, adding that the village will also benefit immensely from the flour mill and the water canal. The elder, who has spent many years of his life as a refugee in Pakistan, also thinks the electricity will help improve the security of the village.

Another man from the village, Fareed Ahmed, 35, thanked the UN Refugee Agency for choosing his village to set up the projects even as the villagers have demands for more development assistance.

UNHCR contributed US\$ 58,317 (approximately 2.7 million Afs) for the construction of the reservoir and the two-storey powerhouse that houses a turbine and the mill, and for the diversion and construction of the water canal and its protection walls.

Under its cash-for-work programme, UNHCR provided US\$ 1.50 to each labourer per day, while WFP – under its food-for-work scheme – provided 50 kilograms of wheat, 3.7 kilograms of cooking oil, six kilograms of pulse and 0.5 kilogram of salt to each labourer every month.

According to UNHCR officials, the project is being completed with active community participation and will be a self-sustaining one. UNHCR has so far built nine micro-hydro projects in three eastern provinces – Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman – and another three are being constructed this year.

UN humanitarian agencies have been supporting the local Afghan population on a number of areas to improve their livelihood, and boost the economy and education.

By Tilak Pokharel, UNAMA







## Badghis province moves on water, electricity and roads

**28 October 2010 - Donors and government representatives met in Qal E Naw city on 17 October to mobilize resources and coordinate development in Badghis province, western Afghanistan.**

A large delegation flew from Kabul and Herat to attend the meeting organized by provincial authorities with the support of the United Nations' Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development and the United States Agency for International Development.

Participants were briefed by six different provincial departments including key areas of health, education and agriculture. "Badghis is perhaps the second or third poorest province in the country" declared Delbarjan Arman, Badghis governor, "however, the province has considerable natural resources."

The provincial authorities seek the assistance of the central government and its international partners to build upon the province's assets such as the pistachio jungle, the carpet industry or minerals, to develop three priority sectors: access to electricity, safe water and asphalted roads.

Members of the central government's delegation, which included the minister of economy and the minister of labour and social affairs, announced a number of development plans to be implemented in the province.

The deputy minister for water and energy, engineer Gulham Farrouk Qazizada, indicated that, within 18 months, 25,000 families would gain access to electricity through a contract with neighbouring Turkmenistan. He also announced funds for the building of 10 new dams had recently been allocated by Kabul.

Azita Rafat, Member of Parliament elected in Badghis province, cautioned the participants against the promises made: "I remember five years ago, another delegation came from Kabul to Badghis and promised support in the very areas we are discussing today: safe water, electricity and roads. Yet nothing has been done." She concluded her remark by saying: "I just hope we do not need to wait five more years to see change come."

It will take time to assess the support the province will muster following the forum, but the provincial authorities have clearly shown their intent to receive the attention of the central government and its international partners.

After Farah, Badghis is the second province in western Afghanistan where a donors' meeting has been organized. Another event will be held in Ghor province in coming months.

By Fraidoon Poya & Henri Burqard, UNAMA

## UNOPS supporting Afghan Customs Department in English language training

**31 October 2010 - The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is supporting the Afghan Customs Department with a package of training programmes in response to a request from the Government.**

English language training is a core part of the package, and the first priority identified by the Ministry of Finance/Afghan Customs Department is to train a group of customs officers at the Customs headquarters and a group at the Kabul International Airport.

Customs officers at headquarters deal with trade documentation in English language on a daily basis, to facilitate the flow of trade in and out of country. Customs officers at the Airport are in the front line dealing both with the trading community as well as thousands of passengers. The Afghan Customs Department acknowledges that by improving the communication skills of its team, it is also improving its services.

The English language training is the first stage in a packet of trainings being prepared by Afghan trainers in the technical field of customs operations, as part of the UNOPS/ Takhar Border management project.

Areas of expertise for training include customs valuations, customs law, customs data and tariff codes. Within Takhar Border Management Project, UNOPS agreed to support the Knowledge Management Unit at the Customs headquarters team, a group of Afghan trainers who can provide the training opportunities within the Afghan Customs Department.

The Knowledge Management Unit complements the Customs academy supported by the international donors.

## WHO tackles the parasitic disease Leishmaniasis – Herat province

**4 November 2010 - In the Islam Qala area, on the border with Iran, a new outbreak of Leishmaniasis has recently afflicted the local population.**

On Saturday 30 October tens of women and men lined up at a specialized clinic supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), where patients receive free treatment.

The parasitic disease – caused by sand fly bites - leaves disfiguring skin sores which only a very painful injection of Sodium Stibogluconate, repeatedly administered, can cure.

In Khosan district of Herat province the number of infections has increased during the past few years, with an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 cases according to the provincial health department.

Mina Gul, 34, her face disfigured, can't afford the medication to treat the disease. "I don't have enough money to go to the private clinics; I am relieved today that there is a free clinic here where I can go to for treatment," she explains.

But Dr Mohammed Yonos Nadeem, head of the Leishmaniasis and Malaria National Control Programme in Herat, calls for more support: "The injections and bed nets treated with insecticide that we have here today cover only 150 patients. This is not enough and, to better control the transmission, we need more support not only in Kohsan district but also in all parts of the province."

In an emergency initiative WHO additionally distributed 1,200 nets treated with insecticide, to cover doors, windows or beds for 3,600 people.

This is part of a larger plan to stop further transmission of the disease in the district and beyond.

By Fraidoon Poya, UNAMA