



## United Nations and Afghan officials unveil programme for Kabul Conference

**12 July 2010 - The top United Nations envoy in Afghanistan and leading Afghan Ministers today unveiled the vision for the upcoming Kabul Conference, focusing on the importance of the Afghan leadership in a new phase of the country's history.**

"This will be a successful conference of historic value," Staffan de Mistura, the top UN envoy in Afghanistan, told media gathered at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the joint press conference. "It will be an Afghan conference," he said, emphasizing that this will be the first ever such international gathering in Afghanistan.

Around 40 foreign ministers are expected to attend the one-day conference, with further deputy foreign ministers and heads of multilateral organizations such as NATO and the European Union. The conference will be hosted by the Government, led by President Hamid Karzai, co-chaired by the United Nations.

At last week's Joint Coordination Monitoring Board, also co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations, the Government presented to the donor community 23 national priority programmes in the areas of governance, social and economic development, and peace and security. These papers will be further refined in the lead-up to the Kabul Conference, and form the basis of a new focus by Government and donors alike.

"The expectation will be for realignment, a new key word," de Mistura told the press gathering.

Finance Minister Hazrat Omer Zakhilwal emphasized the importance of donors first aligning their support behind Afghan identified priorities and gradually shifting more support to be spent through the Government budget. "This," he said, "is not only about strengthening the legitimacy of the Government, which is important. We believe that alignment with Government priorities, and therefore Afghan people's priorities, leads to sustainable development ... greater self-reliance."

The Finance Minister and de Mistura emphasized that this process of realignment was not to seek further funding from the international community, but would strengthen the impact current levels of support.

The Kabul Conference, a follow up to the London Conference in January, and is part of what Finance Minister Zakhilwal called "the Kabul process", indicating that it is one step with more to follow toward Afghans taking full leadership and responsibility.

Also speaking at the press conference, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, who is the former Finance Minister and currently assisting the Government in organizing the conference, said the international community and Afghanistan have "reached a new phase of international cooperation."

He detailed two main objectives for the Conference: a unified national strategy to restore the national sovereignty of Afghanistan, and a restructuring of the way international assistance is supplied to national programmes.

"Our main point is that there should be fundamental change in the lives of the people," he stressed.

Zakhilwal added that the Government has put in place programmes to improve the country's financial management systems, as de Mistura focused on the need to ensure measures against reported corruption.

"One of the causes of corruption is the fact that our administration is very bureaucratic and complicated," said Foreign Minister Zakhilwal responding to a question. "So we are trying to simplify the administration."

"Each governmental entity will also create internal programmes against corruption," he added. Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmi Rasool also participated.

The Kabul Conference is expected to sign off on a communiqué which will signal the way forward, including strong measures to monitor implementation of programmes and their impact.

By Paulina Kubiak, UNAMA

## UNAMA condemns act resulting in deaths and injuries

**9 July 2010 - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan confirms that a Ministry of Interior escort supporting a UNAMA road movement was struck by an improvised explosive device in Parwan province yesterday, 8 July, on the main Kabul-Bamyan road.**

Three Afghan Ministry of Interior guards and one driver were killed and one guard injured. UNAMA offers its sincere condolences to the families of the guards and the driver who lost their lives, and to the Government's Ministry of Interior. UNAMA condemns this act, resulting in deaths and injuries.



## Voice of Arghandab “Arghandab Zagh” on air

**11 July 2010 - Voice of Arghandab (Arghandab Zhagh) is the latest local radio station in Arghandab district, recently launched by Toryali Wesa, the Kandahar Provincial Governor and district officials.**

The Government-run radio station will initially broadcast for seven hours each day with the intention to expand programming to 12 hours in the future.

Arghandab is located in the north of Kandahar city and is known for its fruits, especially its spicy pomegranates.

Speaking during the inauguration ceremony, Kandahar's Governor, Toryali Wesa said, “it is the obligation of local authorities to keep citizens up-to-date on Government activities and policies. The people of Arghandab will now be able to share their concerns and ideas with local authorities through this station.”

Arghandab's district Governor, Abdul Jabbar Marghani, called the inauguration of Arghandab radio “a major achievement” for the people of Arghandab, adding that, by establishing this station, the people of Arghandab will get the latest information on development, reconstruction and other activities in Kandahar.

Arghandab Zhagh, which can be found on FM 101.4, aims to raise public awareness and promote cultural and social ties among the local population.

By Mujeeb Rahman, UNAMA

## Students in Herat join the fight against drug abuse

**9 July 2010 - Dark scenes of blood dripping from giant poppy flowers and skulls and burning fields where beheaded farmers recline – these are just some of the paintings created by students of Behzad Art School that are now a part of an exhibition organized by various Government organizations and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Herat.**

To mark the recent International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Herat's provincial authorities and their international partners chose art students to sensitize the youth against drugs, through a nationwide exhibition that will also pass through the capital, Kabul.

According to the latest UNODC survey on drug use in Afghanistan, the country – now the world's highest producer of opium and cannabis resin – is faced with a major social challenge, with nearly eight per cent of its population addicted to drugs.

Herat province, where drugs are principally smuggled towards neighbouring Iran, is also affected with 50,000 drug users, according to figures provided by the Department of Counter-Narcotics.

Gulham Jailani Daghigh, director of the department, points to some success obtained by the provincial authorities in fighting drugs in Herat in 2009.

“Three tons of drugs were seized, 220 suspects arrested, and 28 vehicles seized with the help of the police,” he says.

Nevertheless, he calls on Herat's population to take part in the effort.

“It is our responsibility to fight drugs in our workplace and in our family. Currently, there are only three private clinics with 40 beds,” he says.

Various United Nations initiatives are working to solve the problem, from improved law enforcement to HIV/AIDS prevention and care for drug users, and alternative livelihoods for farmers.

Stuart Steinberg, a law enforcement consultant, tells students he came to Afghanistan to “train the Afghan Border Police to conduct counter-narcotics operations and help stop trafficking.”

He also explains to the young men and women how drug trafficking is affecting the lives of people all over the world.

Community policing, crime scene investigation and leadership and ethics are some of the subjects covered under this training.

UNODC has also been working since 2006 to build the capacity of officers and non-commissioned officers.

Meanwhile, three of the students' paintings will be sent to Kabul to be exhibited as a part of a nationwide effort to curb the use and trafficking of drugs.

By Fraidoon Poya and Henri Burgard, UNAMA



## Secretary-General's message on World Population Day

**11 July 2010 - This year, some 60 countries are collecting data and counting people as part of the 2010 census process.**

A census is the only statistical operation that covers the whole population and all areas of a country. UNFPA – the United Nations Population Fund – and other partners are supporting this massive effort in many parts of the world.

Access to good data is a component of good governance, transparency and accountability. Population data helps leaders and policy-makers to make informed decisions about policies and programmes to reduce poverty and hunger, and advance education, health and gender equality. Solid data is also needed to effectively respond to humanitarian crises.

The theme of this year's World Population Day is "Everyone counts". To be counted is to become visible. This is especially important for women and young people. Data that is sorted by gender and age can foster increased responsiveness by national decision-makers to the rights and needs of women and youth and help build a more equitable and prosperous society.

It is promising that many countries that were unable to complete a national census in the past have reported success during this current round. The next challenge will be to ensure the data is used to make evidence-based plans and policies that will improve opportunities for current and future generations. On this World Population Day, I call on decision-makers everywhere to make each and every person count. Only by considering the needs of all women and men, girls and boys, can we achieve the Millennium Development Goals and advance the shared values of the United Nations.

## Names for de-listing likely to be forwarded to Security Council

**14 July 2010 - Up to 10 names currently on a UN sanctions list related to Afghanistan are in the process of being forwarded to the UN Security Council for review, the top UN envoy in the country told the press on Monday.**

Staffan de Mistura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, was speaking at a joint press conference with Government Ministers to launch the Kabul Conference which will be held on 20 July.

The Sanctions list, known as the 1267 list, has 137 names of individuals or entities with alleged links to the Taliban or al-Qaeda. At the Peace Jirga held by the Government in Kabul in early June, the 1,600 participants called in the closing declaration for the removal of names from the list to assist efforts at dialogue to resolve the long-running conflict in the country.

Recent media reports have mentioned figures of up to 50 names being forwarded, but de Mistura clarified that he had information about 10 names. The Government of Afghanistan has also stated to the media that it is not preparing files for 50 names.

The Security Council visited Afghanistan in mid-June, including the chairman of the 1267 Committee, Austrian Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting

Ambassador Mayr-Harting confirmed to the press during this visit that the Security Council is in the process of conducting a review of all the entries on the list, of all people and all entities linked to al-Qaeda and the Taliban. He stressed that names could be added or taken off the list, and that the Committee "operates the review on a case-by-case basis," of individuals, "not categories of people or groups of people."

"The Committee bases itself on the following guiding principles: people who are to be delisted have to convincingly renounce violence; they have to lay down arms; have broken all links with al-Qaeda; and fully accepted, in the cases of Taliban, the Afghan Constitution," Ambassador Mayr-Harting told media in Kabul on 24 June. When de-listing of particular names is requested by the Afghan Government or another Members State, the Security Council committee will evaluate the information provided by the state before it.

"And at the end, of course, this information will be evaluated by each and every of the 15 members of the Security Council. (E)ach of the 15 members has to be convinced by this information, because...the de-listing can only take place if there is consensus amongst the 15 members," said Ambassador Mayr-Harting.

The list is updated from time to time in order to reflect the actual threat from individuals mentioned in it. "That means that in cases where the need for this preventive action is no longer there, entities or people can be taken off the list. On the other hand where there is a new threat, new entries should be made to the list. It should always be seen in this balance. Names which are no longer necessary can be taken off and entries which are necessary but are not yet on the list should be put on," he added.

The UN Security Council 1267 Committee was established in October 1999. Due to its complex nature, the current review process of de-listing has been extended to 31 July 2010.



## New hope for pregnant women in Bamyan

**14 July 2010 - Government representatives, UNICEF, religious leaders and women recently inaugurated a facility in Bamyan that aims to provide a safe place for women during the final stage of their pregnancy.**

"This place is needed in Bamyan like water in a desert. In the past not enough care was taken of mothers. This will change now," emphasized Dr Hamed Nazim, Head of Bamyan's Provincial Hospital.

Afghanistan's Maternity Waiting Home project was launched in 2007 in six provinces to bridge the gap between rural areas – with poor access to skilled care – and urban areas where health services are available.

"When a woman has complications we refer her to the hospital," explains Zoubaida-jan, a trained birth attendant and Head of the Women's Council in her village: Sayed Abad. "But it takes about two hours by donkey to reach the next health centre. At night and during winter, it is impossible."

"This facility is true proof of our joint efforts," said Haji Qasim, Deputy Governor of Bamyan. "Our communities bought the land, while UNICEF and the Ministry of Public Health provided funding for construction and supplies and the first year's operating costs. Together we must make this endeavour a success for the mothers of Bamyan."

According to Peter Crowley, UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan, every 30 minutes, an Afghan woman dies from pregnancy of childbirth-related causes. "Almost all of these deaths are preventable," he added. With 20,000 maternal deaths each year Afghanistan is one of ten countries in the world with the highest risk of maternal death.

"Very few women give birth in a clinic or a hospital, that's why this maternity waiting home is designed to be a place like home," explained Dr Ihsanullah Shahir, Provincial Director of Health in Bamyan.

A Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF (2005) estimate suggests that, in Bamyan, 98 per cent of deliveries take place at home, with over 320 maternal deaths occurring each year, a figure that places Bamyan among the top ten worst provinces to give birth in.

"This maternity waiting home can only be effective if it is linked effectively with other efforts. By providing a continuum of home, community, outreach and facility-based care we can address every stage of maternal, newborn and child health," emphasized Peter Crowley.

To promote the utilization of Bamyan's Maternity Waiting Home, a series of awareness-raising sessions have been initiated in health facilities, schools and mosques. Partners include a network of NGOs involved in Basic Public Health Services (BPHS), the Integrated Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition (IMCHN) programme, the Women's Affairs Network and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

"Mullahs in this province fully support the project," concluded Baba Mohseny, a representative of Bamyan's religious leaders. "To save a mother means to save a family, which is equivalent to saving the whole world."

By UNICEF

## AIHRC establishes 'Protection of Civilian Committee in Armed Conflict' in Kunduz

**11 July 2010 - The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Human Rights Unit recently established the Protection of Civilian Committee in Armed Conflict in Kunduz.**

According to Hayatullah Amiri, Head of AIHRC's regional office in Kunduz, the objective of the Committee is to convince Government authorities and all parties to the conflict to prevent and to reduce the civilian casualties.

"Based on national laws and the international conventions and treaties, we want to create a transparent mechanism among AIHRC, civil society associations, community elders and non governmental organizations to make decisions regarding the protection of civilians during the armed conflict" said Amiri. The Committee is expected to meet twice a month to discuss civilian casualties, to investigate damage to residential areas from armed conflict and to protect the rights of displaced people. Dr Hamyoon Khamoosh, Head of the Kunduz Regional Hospital, believes the establishment of the committee will be an effective step toward the reduction of civilian casualties.

According to a report published by UNAMA's Human Rights Unit, 2,412 civilian were killed in armed conflict in Afghanistan during 2009. UNAMA will publish its 2010 mid-year report on the protection of civilians in the coming weeks.

By Shamsuddin Hamedi, UNAMA