

**National Peace Jirga of Afghanistan: Importance of Peace in the light of Islam
18 June 2009**

**Remarks by Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan
Kai Eide**

Distinguished religious leaders of Afghanistan,
Members of the Parliament,
Respectable Elders and Intellectuals,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Salaam alaykum!

I am deeply honoured to be invited to this event. The UN was born as a result of war and suffering. It was created to strive for peace and to bring assistance to those who suffer.

The UN is different from all other international organizations. It has been in this country for more than 50 years. It has been here to work with and for those who are the most vulnerable and those who suffer most. And it has stayed here ever since – dedicated to the Afghan people.

When I arrived 15 months ago, I said that I respect this country's religion, its history and its culture. I said that I had come to serve the Afghan people. My respect for and dedication to the people of Afghanistan has grown day by day as I have witnessed its suffering, but also seen its talents. The people need social and economic justice, they need opportunities to enjoy their human rights to make full use of their talents and the resources of this fascinating country.

And the most important obstacle is the continued conflict, which produces more suffering, more deaths, more violations of people's basic rights and more poverty. This cannot continue. It has to come to an end. Therefore, there is no more noble cause than to work for peace. The role of you, the religious leaders of this country to mobilize the people and its leaders in a campaign for peace, is of critical importance if we are to succeed. I am here to show my support for your efforts and for your role.

We all know that it is not the brutal sound of weapons that will bring peace. It is ultimately only the quiet sound of dialogue that will bring peace. We need a peace process.

That must be a process which includes all parts of the Afghan society. If we want to unite this country for peace, no part can be excluded from that process. If some are excluded, the country will remain divided.

And it must be a process which respects and promotes the rights of all Afghans—men, women and children. A process which comes at the cost of the rights of parts of the population will not lead to durable peace.

This conference comes at the right time. In eight weeks there will be elections in this country. The UN does not support any candidate. It is impartial. It is up to the Afghans to choose their leaders.

But when the elections are over, a process of peace and reconciliation must be placed at the top of our agenda. We must mobilize for peace. Last September, the UN organized a day of peace. It was marked across the country – by hundred of events dedicated to peace. These events told us what the people want.

The religious leaders can and must play a prominent role in this process. So many times over the centuries, religions have been used to justify war and suffering. But religion is and must be a powerful tool, a powerful inspiration for peace.

Peace cannot be imposed from outside the country. It must be created from inside. It is your country. You know it. We – the foreigners – do not know this country well. Therefore, it must be a process that takes its inspiration from your culture, your tradition and your religion. It must be an Afghan made and an Afghan owned process. We can support you, your people and your leaders. I am dedicated to giving that support. And it is part of the UN's mandate.

Afghanistan is poor. But it does not have to be poor in the future. It has tremendous human and natural resources. To make full use of these resources, peace is needed.

So I am honoured to be here. I am dedicated to be the partner of those who seek peace. And I look forward to working with you.

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