



TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS BY DEBORAH LYONS, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HEAD OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR AFGHANISTAN, AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE END OF THE 2020 AFGHANISTAN CONFERENCE

Palais des Nations, Geneva, 24 November 2020

Ms. Lyons: Good evening everyone. After an incredible day, we might be a little tired but we are very happy. At the opening ceremony this morning, I mentioned that I was hoping that we would all approach the Conference with a spirit of resolve, and I must say that that came through in volumes. Truly what happened today, 66 countries and some 30 plus international organizations came together, the world came together, for the people of Afghanistan. I have said to some of the media earlier that the Afghan people really have known some very difficult and sometimes terrible days, but today, today was a good day for Afghanistan. International donors and many regional countries and international organizations came together to express emphatic support to the people of Afghanistan.

What was the message: we stand with you. We are steadfast in our support for Afghanistan, particularly now when Afghanistan begins to turn that critical corner toward peace, something that has been a long desired, yearned for vision for so many Afghans in the last many decades. We stand with you and support you in very concrete financial terms as we saw today. We stand with you as you move towards stability and a more prosperous future and your rightful place within the region of south Asia and central Asia, being able to contribute the way a country with such richness, such diversity, such incredible human capital, can contribute. We are backing the progress that despite incredible obstacles has been achieved since 2002. We, the international community, stand with you backing this progress. We are determined to assist Afghans preserve the gains that have been achieved and in fact go further to enhance those gains.

Loud and clear, we have heard over the last two days of the Conference that Afghanistan's international partners, including the many organizations, as well as the regional partners, are determined to provide, as friends do, incredible support, prepared to provide the necessary political, financial and technical support to the people of Afghanistan. But I wanted to also say that this does not come freely. It comes with conditions. It comes with concerns that the violence must be reduced, that a ceasefire must be achieved, that the peace talks must progress and must demonstrate progress in a timely manner, accepting that peace negotiations are complex and are time consuming, but progress must be shown, and also that the choices made in the peace talks may very well over time influence the ongoing commitment.



Other conditions mentioned by the Minister of Finance just now: on a strong mandate on anti-corruption measures, on ensuring that women's rights, minority rights, freedoms of the press, ethnic rights, religious rights continue to be maintained and in fact enhanced where possible. Our Finnish colleague mentioned the engagement of the civil society, the vibrant civil society in Afghanistan that has been a fundamental part of the development to date. And then of course, the importance, the all critical importance of building strong governance, strong government institutions, those institutions that are not just the hallmark of any bureaucracy, they are in fact the foundation of democracy and a fortress against corruption. So, we know that the challenges are daunting but we stand with you. The pledges provided and the decisions adopted here in Geneva, taken together with the peace talks underway now, are mutually reinforcing signs that not only is peace possible, but it is supported by the global community and it will, taken together, set the foundation that the young Afghan boys and girls so long for and so deserve. Thank you so much. I look forward to your questions.

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