



TRANSCRIPT

Press readout delivered by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons at Afghanistan 2020 Conference.

[as delivered]

Palais des Nations, Geneva, 24 November 2020

Ms. Lyons: Thank you so much. Well as we all know, the Afghan people really have seen many difficult, sometimes even terrible days. But today is not one of those days. Today, I believe, is a good day for Afghanistan and for the people of Afghanistan. The world has come together today. Both the international donor community and a number of regional countries, and a large number of international organizations, have come together to express emphatic support to the people of Afghanistan. What is 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. We stand with you as you move towards stability and a more prosperous future. Not simply for the country of Afghanistan itself but as I mentioned, a number of the regional partners have expressed firmly their support, consistent support for Afghanistan in terms of regional cooperation, regional connectivity.

So a stable Afghanistan will bring benefits for the people of Afghanistan, but will most certainly bring benefits for the region of central and south Asia, another good message coming out of today. It is also important to note that in spite of the fact that we are seeing very strong pledging on the part of the many countries that have already spoken, this money does not come freely. It comes with conditions: that the money will be well spent and Government will be held accountable for the spending of the money; that the preserves of the past, that's partly the gains of the past, will be preserved if the country will continue based on its strong democratic constitution to continue to build strong institutions of governance; that the important progress Afghanistan has made in human rights, ethnic rights, minority rights, those will be both continued and enhanced. These are critical issues. Strong measurements of anti-corruption are being identified as well so that we can reassure all taxpayers, all countries, that the money is being spent wisely and that it will be the people of Afghanistan themselves who will benefit.

Yes, the challenges are daunting, but with an event taking place here in Geneva that is mutually reinforcing with what is taking place right now at the peace negotiation table. These two movements, both a strong support from the international community and from the regional countries and large international organizations, alongside the two parties, the two Afghan parties sitting at the negotiation table, mean that not only is peace possible, but peace is being supported by the global community.



So let me just end by saying that in addition to this being a good day for Afghanistan, and I think an expression of the importance of multilateralism and how even during these challenging times of COVID, we all come together because we are all connected. We all come together to support a country that needs us. And so, a large message as well, coming out of this Conference is the need for the violence to be reduced. A strong call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, so that the people of Afghanistan who have already suffered too much, will be able to receive both the humanitarian support that they need but also the socio-economic support they need to deal with this pandemic. In closing again, today is a good day for Afghanistan and so it is also a good day for the world community. I thank the incredible country of Finland for the amazing support they have given us for this Conference and the Government of Afghanistan. This has been a true partnership, illustrative really, reflective of what the last 20 years of Afghanistan have been, a true global partnership. Thank you.

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