



United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

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UN ENVOY CALLS FOR “TOTAL CESSATION OF VIOLENCE” IN AFGHANISTAN ON 21 SEPTEMBER

The UN's top representative in Afghanistan, Tom Koenigs, on Tuesday appealed for “a total cessation of violence across the country” on 21 September, and days of tranquility ahead of that date, to allow for vital humanitarian initiatives to be carried out.

Speaking to journalists in Kabul, and accompanied by representatives of almost every UN agency working in Afghanistan, he called on all groups, all individuals, and institutions to support the peace effort. “In Afghanistan, we all know about conflict and insecurity. But what we have seen in these past weeks is that Afghanistan wants peace”

Afghanistan has suffered nearly 30 years of war, and in the past 18 months, it has also seen a rise in a Taliban-led insurgency. 21 September is marked worldwide as a day of peace, but this year in Afghanistan, a special effort has been underway for nearly two months to promote support for an actual day of peace and non-violence.

Adding their support to the appeal, several agencies stressed the need for a week of tranquility to precede the actual Peace Day, to allow for essential humanitarian activities, including polio vaccination drives and food deliveries to people in insecure areas of the country.

The campaign to promote Peace Day in Afghanistan has particular meaning for a country affected by so many years of conflict. Scores of groups have pledged support and action for the campaign, including business, civil society groups, media organizations, government ministries and regional authorities. The campaign has grown to encompass every region of the country, and numerous activities are planned over the remaining ten days.

These include special prayers in mosques around Afghanistan, or cultural events such as poetry readings, painting and writing competitions. Radio and television stations are programming round table discussions and phone-ins to discuss peace. There are arms-handover ceremonies, immunization campaigns, town and district clean ups, and a ceremony to hand over a large tract of land that has been cleared of mines. The major wireless networks have even committed, over the next ten days, to sending text messages of peace to all Afghan mobile phone subscribers.

“The response has been vast,” notes Tom Koenigs, “and it continues to grow. Help us make Peace in Afghanistan real.”