



United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

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Press Conference (*near verbatim transcript*)

Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Afghanistan

Nilab Mobarez, UNAMA Spokesperson's Office

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Nilab Mobarez, UNAMA (translated from Dari): Good morning to everyone. I am Nilab Mobarez, from UNAMA Spokesman's office. I would like to welcome you to our press conference. Our press conference today is special because Mr. Tom Koenigs the UN Special Representative for Afghanistan will share his farewell remarks with you and through you to the people of Afghanistan. Now I would like to give the floor to his Excellency Mr. Tom Koenigs to share with us all his remarks.

TALKING POINTS:

Salaam ul Alakum; Today I leave Afghanistan after nearly two years as the Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary General. I leave Afghanistan with both hope and concern. I am hopeful because Afghanistan continues to move in a positive direction, this hope is shared by the Afghan people. Afghanistan is moving from being a country decimated by decades of conflict to a progressive Islamic democracy striving to improve the lives of its peoples.

However I share the same concern as the Afghan people for the security situation, particularly in the south of the country .Despite the shared security challenge that we face, we have shown that progress can still be made, progress that can make a real and substantial difference to the lives of ordinary citizens.

Children have returned to school in their millions, basic health care is now available to over 80 per cent of Afghanistan's people. Afghanistan's is now one of the fastest growing economies in south Asia with year on year double digit growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Afghan people have regained their democratic voice with their own elected President, Government, National Assembly and an emerging free media.

The Afghanistan National Army is getting stronger day by day and is increasingly leading the fight to protect the people of Afghanistan; ultimately it must be the Afghan forces who lead all efforts to deliver peace. Afghan women are increasingly playing a full and equal part in the efforts to rebuild Afghanistan .Hundred's and thousands of Afghan women and widows have been empowered to support their own families by starting up their own businesses with micro finance loans.

Looking at the International commitment, in the last year we have seen the international commitment to help the people of Afghanistan strengthened and deepened with donor countries opening new embassies in Afghanistan and increasing the size of their presence significantly. Aside from the international military effort which has seen a doubling in troop numbers, we have seen over \$2 billion USD in new commitments from the international community to help build the capacity and equip the Afghan Security Forces over the last year – this is accompanied by a new European Police Mission to help build the Afghan national Police into a professional police service which is responsive to the needs and concerns of ordinary citizens.

However we have always said that military might is not enough, this must be accompanied by equal efforts to bring schools, hospitals and jobs to the people. To help coordinate these increased efforts, I have doubled the presence of UNAMA across Afghanistan's provinces with eight new field offices. These new field offices are open every day to listen to the concerns and needs of every citizens which we raised with the authorities to support their cause. UNAMA also continues to play a lead role in coordinating international efforts to support Afghanistan through the Joint

Coordination and Monitoring Board, responsible for implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, the five year blue print for rebuilding Afghanistan.

Over the last year we have also witnessed tribal communities from both sides of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan begin peace Jirga's. We saw a moving display of unity between tribal elders whose people are both suffering because of the on-going conflict. This was again made clear by the tragic events in Pakistan with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The people of Pakistan and Afghanistan are both suffering and it is only by both peoples joining hands can we defeat those who bring terror and violence to our communities.

These peace Jirgas are set to continue in the coming year, bringing people affected by the conflict closer together to develop a shared understanding and commitment towards bringing peace for all peoples. The International community will remain with you through all these efforts. Many of you know that human rights is an issue that is close to my heart and UNAMA has continued to champion the cause of Afghanistan's victims and the relatives of Afghanistan's war dead.

We cannot achieve true peace in this country without acknowledging the truth of the past abuses, and without protecting human rights and rebuilding the rule of law. We owe it to the victims to acknowledge their suffering and must make every effort to restore their dignity and make reparations for past abuses. Acknowledging past abuses is not a barrier to reconciliation; moreover it is a prerequisite for future peace and stability. Every opinion poll of the Afghan people over the last two years mirrors my own feeling – the people of Afghanistan are broadly supportive of the effort taking place to secure and rebuild Afghanistan.

People want to see these efforts increased further, as do I, so do the United Nations. We do not take this support for granted. We all have to do everything to increase our efforts to make this support even stronger. Progress is being made to cement peace and stability for the Afghan people but I hear the frustration of people who want to see faster progress, I share the same frustration.

Finally; we must stay united. We must pull together to continue this progress. We should not waste our time in blame games or to judge success or failure right now. Pointing fingers leads no where; we must continue to stand united in all our efforts to deliver peace, stability and progress for the people. All of us working on behalf of the Afghan people must continue to listen closely to their needs; we must stay close to the people and never lose sight of their hopes and aspirations.

With the continued support of the people and the determination of the Government and its international supporters I know that we can and will deliver much needed progress for the people of Afghanistan. I leave Afghanistan with a deep respect and admiration for the people of Afghanistan, and when I return to Germany I will continue to champion the cause of the Afghan people.

Thank you

Questions and answers:

Tolo - TV: What kind of challenges have you faced by the government throughout your mission and who will be your successor and what kind of job you will be doing?

SRSB: The challenges have been multiple but I think the basic challenges for the future are four. The first certainly is security. Deliver security to the Afghan people, it is the Afghan National Police who needs most attention.

The second is governance. Governance has to go to the provinces and has to be increased at the district level, the Government has to be present throughout the country with their institutions, with their police and with their justice institutions.

The third is counter-narcotics, with such a huge illegal economy the legal economy can not prosper. So, efforts must be made, success must be achieved in counter-narcotics.

The fourth challenge is regional cooperation. We see it with the destabilizing of Pakistan, peace in Afghanistan is challenged. So, these four priorities have to be attended to in the next years. The cooperation in the region doesn't only mean one country, but means all the countries in the region. All the six neighbors but also cooperation with the broader region because Afghanistan is surrounded by very conflicting forces. But Afghanistan has a chance for their pure location and for their Constitution to be a peace maker for the region and this area has to be applauded, has to be explored, has to be intensified and has to be considered.

Radio Azadi: Giving your experience over two years from Afghanistan, what efforts can contribute in straightening peace and also bring coordination among the development cooperation?

SRSB: The question of the coordination has been frequently asked. The coordination needs at the same time a coordinator and we have a very good coordinator that is the United Nations, but it needs also people who want to be and allow to be coordinated.

Coordination has three challenges:

The first certainly is coordination between the international community and the Afghan government. That is the most important and the Afghan government must be in the lead. It must be the Afghans who lead the process because it is your country, it is your region, it is your government, it's your security. So it must be an Afghan way to peace.

The second challenge for coordination is among the donor countries. These countries are very diverse and the interests are very diverse. So it needs huge effort to bring these countries together. I think the joint coordination and monitoring board is a good instrument to bring the government and international community together but also to bring the international community together among themselves. The working groups are active and the instrument created within the last two years I think is sufficient.

The third area of coordination is certainly the coordination within the Afghan government itself, and I must say this has greatly improved in the last two years and I hope it will improve further because it needs a permanent effort to bring very diverse interests together into one main stream which will lead to development of Afghanistan.

BBC: Have you reached in any conclusion in discussions with the Afghan government about the expulsion of two high level diplomats, because this is the first

time the Afghan government gives the order of expulsion of diplomats and that this happened during your mission?

SRSB: It happened not only during my time. It happened during my last week. And indeed we have spoken a lot with the government. We think the underlying assumptions from various parts of the government are misunderstandings. We UNAMA are not making any intelligence operations. We have no money to pay to anybody, because we do not make projects at UNAMA. We coordinate projects for others but we ourselves have not given money to anybody. I am sure, with the time, clarity will come up and information will be sufficient and also coordination between the different entities in the government concerned will help to clarify and I hope that the outcome will be that this affair will have soon an end.

We are certainly particularly concerned, that one consultant who works for us is still in jail and we will do everything to get him out. Even the governor Wafa; the principle actor in this drama; has said that UNAMA is not involved. So our consultant should be released. Let me say at the end of this press conference something about our cooperation, the cooperation of UNAMA with the press, with you dear colleagues.

I am very happy that we have a very very active press scene here in Afghanistan. I am also happy that we have the most liberal press law in the entire region in Afghanistan. For me the cooperation was very inspiring because your critical voice, your critical pen and your critical view was very important to correct our view to adjust, our view to what the people want; to listen to the people through you; and on the other hand it was very important for us to be able to speak to the people through you. And you have I think represented us throughout the time I have been here, in a very fair and positive way.

Thank you very much for that. So I wish you success and above all I wish you Press Freedom.

Thank you all
