



KEY MESSAGES ON THE PRESENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

I. Overall Situation

Afghanistan has just successfully completed its constitutional *loya jirga*. While this three-week process was at times difficult, and the product imperfect, the drafting of a new constitution is an important landmark. The next major step in Afghanistan's transition will be elections, with at least presidential elections likely to be held before September 2004. While there is a new sense of hope in Afghanistan, there is also a growing understanding of just how massive a challenge the economic and political reconstruction of the country is. The two biggest concerns of Afghans and their international allies are: a) continuing security problems, particularly outside of Kabul; and b) a fear that the international community will lose interest in Afghanistan before the country's reconstruction achieves sustainable forward momentum.

Key Messages:

- 1) The task of building a stable Afghanistan is a massive challenge. Success is vital for both the welfare of the Afghan people and the security of the region.
- 2) While significant progress has been made on numerous fronts since the collapse of the Taliban, success is not yet inevitable. In particular, continuing insecurity, especially outside of Kabul, constitutes a threat to both economic reconstruction and the holding of free and fair elections.
- 3) It is thus vital that the international community provide focused support to the Afghan people for a period of at least 5-10 years. It is vital that this effort be truly multilateral, with the active and cohesive participation of European, American regional and other actors.

II. Security

The current security situation in Afghanistan is uneven, which poses significant obstacles to reconstruction, as well as voter registration and elections. In 2003, there was a significant increase in attacks on both aid workers and representatives of the Afghan government. In general, security in Kabul is better than elsewhere, thanks to ISAF/NATO, but even Kabul is dangerous as seen in suicide bombing attacks against German, Canadian and British ISAF forces. Beyond the threat of extremist elements opposed to the Karzai government and the large number of militias operating outside the government's control, the greatest threat to Afghanistan's future stability is the production and processing of opium poppies, which has now spread to 28 of the country's 32 provinces.

A. Afghan Solutions

There is universal agreement that the solution to Afghanistan's security problems must be led by Afghans and rooted in Afghan realities. However, it is very clear that the transitional Afghan government currently lacks the necessary capacity and cannot ensure the country's security without the support of the international community. International efforts to date to address the most pressing security concerns and build Afghan security capacity have been inadequate and must be accelerated going forward. The most critical areas of intervention in the security arena are : 1) Training of the police and the Afghan National Army (ANA). The training of the forces continues to advance slowly and drop-out rates are high. Currently the ANA has only 5,000-7,000 soldiers under its control, far fewer than the leading warlords ; 2) In parallel, progress to date in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program is also slow. To speed up this process, Coalition forces should end their reliance on militias to support their operations, and more opportunities must be provided for both men and women to increase family incomes through other means ; and 3) More attention and resources must be focused on the drug economy, which now constitutes nearly half of the national

economy. Such efforts should focus less on small farmers involved in poppy production and more on those involved in the processing and smuggling of opium.

B. Role of the International Community

Afghans are a proud people, with a long history of opposing foreign military occupation. They are also a people exhausted by nearly 25 years of non-stop conflict. *Most Afghans appear to accept, and even support, a temporary role for international forces in Afghanistan, provided that they are seen as serving Afghan interests rather than pursuing an open-ended occupation.* The current foreign military presence in Afghanistan consists of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under NATO command and U.S.-led Coalition forces.

1. U.S.-Led Coalition

The U.S.-led Coalition forces that unseated the Taliban in 2001 continue to maintain a significant (10,000+) presence in Afghanistan. In addition to regular operations against Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants, these forces have undertaken reconstruction activities through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The manner in which soldiers have mixed combat, intelligence, and "humanitarian" actions has been a concern of the civilian humanitarian community from the outset of the conflict, given the potential impact on the perceived independence and impartiality of genuine humanitarian action in the eyes of Afghan communities. *As Coalition forces begin a significant expansion of PRTs in the south and east of Afghanistan, CARE and others in the NGO community urge all foreign military forces in Afghanistan to focus on building Afghan capacity in the security sector and to leave reconstruction activities to the Afghan government, NGOs, UN and other civilian actors.*

2. ISAF/NATO

ISAF was established shortly after the Bonn agreement, and, since January 2002, it has played an important role in stabilizing the capital, creating the conditions for significant reconstruction and progress in the political process. Many Afghan refugees have "voted with their feet", more than doubling the capital's population in the past two years. NATO assumed command of ISAF in August 2003. Shortly thereafter, the UN Security Council authorized an expansion of ISAF's mandate beyond Kabul. NATO is currently undertaking intensive consultation in Kabul, Brussels, and other world capitals on how to implement its expanded mandate. One model being explored for ISAF expansion beyond Kabul consists of Provincial Reconstruction (or Security) Teams. Such teams are currently led in various parts of Afghanistan by British, American, German and New Zealand forces. Among those governments reported to have expressed interest in supporting ISAF expansion beyond Kabul are those of Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Korea, Norway, Switzerland, and Sweden. The major constraint on ISAF expansion at present is the difficulty that NATO is experiencing in obtaining adequate contributions of funds, troops and equipment from its members and other governments.

Key Messages:

- 1) Current security conditions in Afghanistan are uneven. In a number of areas outside of Kabul, security is inadequate to allow reconstruction to proceed rapidly or to create favourable conditions for free and fair elections. Terrorist elements, warlord militias, and the drug trade all pose threats to Afghan security.
- 2) The long-term solution to Afghan security is adequate police and army capacity under the control of the Afghan state. Current progress in police training, army training and disarmament efforts is inadequate and must be accelerated.
- 3) Properly deployed in support of building Afghan security sector capacity, international military forces can play an important short-term role in stabilizing Afghanistan until it has the capacity to ensure its own security.
- 4) International military forces should focus on their area of expertise in improving security and should not blur the distinction between military and humanitarian action in Afghanistan. Humanitarian and reconstruction efforts should be the domain of civilian actors, except where needy populations can only be reached by military actors.

III. Reconstruction

Along with security, adequate investment in reconstruction is vital to a stable Afghanistan. Shortly after the collapse of the Taliban, international donors committed roughly US\$5 billion for Afghan reconstruction. For some time, the Afghan Government has been making the case that significantly more resources would be required over a period of 5-10 years. With the assistance of the World Bank and other international institutions, the Afghan Government has just completed a "recosting" exercise to establish the cost of Afghan reconstruction over 3, 6 and 12 year time frames. The "price tag" emerging from this new needs assessment is roughly \$28 billion over the next 7 year, or an average of \$4 billion per year. *While the Afghan Minister of Finance acknowledges that this is a lot of money, he makes the case that this is what is required to achieve the central goal of building a state that can provide for the stability and a minimum level of prosperity for the Afghan people. "Prosperity" in the Afghan context is defined as a per capita annual income of just \$500 in ten years, universal primary education and annual health expenditures of less than \$5 per person. These quite modest objectives will be achieved by implementing a private sector-led strategy to achieve annual economic growth of 9%.*

The next critical event in efforts by the Afghan Government to mobilize the required resources is a major donor conference, which is expected to take place in Berlin on March 8-9. The major goals of this conference, in addition to increasing the total amount of resources committed to Afghan reconstruction, should be : 1) Every effort should be made to make Afghanistan a success for *genuine multilateralism*. For this goal to be realized, recent increases in U.S. Government financial commitments to Afghan reconstruction should be complemented by new resources from Europe, Japan, neighbouring and Gulf countries, and international financial institutions. The U.S. Government, for its part, should not seek to unilaterally control international support for Afghan reconstruction and security; 2) For the Afghan Government to make best use of international investments in Afghanistan; donors should make those flows more predictable by making *multi-year financial commitments* to the maximum possible extent; and 3) The Afghan state recognizes that it currently lacks sufficient capacity to effectively manage the country's reconstruction. *Increased investments in capacity-building and accountability are vital to ensure the professional and transparent management of the international community's investments in Afghanistan.*

Key messages:

1. Significant increases in financial support from the international community will be required to achieve the central goal of building a stable Afghanistan that protects the rights of its citizens and does not pose an international security threat.
2. Support for Afghan reconstruction should be seen not as charity, but rather as an investment that also serves the long-term interest of the larger international community.
3. The upcoming donor conference in Berlin in March is an important opportunity for the international community to demonstrate its solidarity with the Afghan people. To the maximum extent possible, commitments should be made on a multi-year basis.
4. In return for its investment in Afghanistan, the international community is entitled to transparency and accountability from the Afghan Government. Efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan state, at central, provincial, and district levels must be expanded and accelerated.

IV. Preparations for Elections

The next major milestone in Afghanistan's transition is national elections. With the adoption of a new constitution completed, all eyes are focused on whether election can be held by June 2004, as envisaged in the Bonn process. The election process being organized by the United Nations, which has been criticised in certain quarters for slow progress in voter registration. For its part, the UN points out that, to date, it has only received \$40 million of the \$78 million required from donors to support the election process. The lack of recent census data makes voter registration difficult. Given a national population of 20-25 million, the UN estimates a total of up to 10 million eligible voters over the age of 18. To date, registration has only begun in regional centers, and nearly 630,000 voters had registered as of the end of January. Starting February 1, registration is supposed to be expand to provincial capitals. Of those registered to date, 22 % are female. Females represent from 13-17 % of the total in Gardez, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Kunduz to highs of 42 % in the Central Highlands and 33 % in Heart. Surprisingly, only 200,000 voters have registered to date in Kabul (21 % female), and many voters reportedly are still unaware of where to register.

On the whole, the registration process appears now to be developing some momentum, but the feasibility of registering the great majority of the eligible population by June 2004 remains very much in doubt. President Karzai and many members of his government appear to be pushing for elections by June, after which their Bonn mandate expires. Certainly, the American Government is pressing for elections by June. Although formal decisions have yet to be announced, the emerging consensus in Kabul seems to be that presidential elections are feasible in the June-September 2004 timeframe. While some continue to press for simultaneous parliamentary elections, most observers believe that such elections are technically infeasible until some time in 2005. Whether elections are not just technically feasible, but also desirable, is still the subject of considerable debate. Some believe that security and political conditions are not right for elections, while others fear a loss of momentum from delayed voting.

Key Messages:

1. Elections represent an extremely important step for Afghanistan. While it would be desirable to adhere to the Bonn timetable for elections, the quality and credibility of the elections is more important for the future of Afghanistan than the precise date of elections.
2. Currently, voter registration is behind schedule. The UN should make every effort to speed up the registration process, paying close attention to women's participation. Donors should provide the UN with the required financial and human resources.

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