



Dear Reader,

I am honored to inform you that the International Conference on Afghanistan is to be held in Kabul in July this year. The conference will be hosting more than 70 partner countries, international and regional organization and financial institution. This conference is a continuation of the London Conference in which an Afghan-led plan for improved development, governance and stability will be discussed. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will present the culmination of several months study and policy debate on Government priorities such as developmental plans in various fields like security, economy, and social development, the conference will as well discuss the ways to put those plans in practice. The conference will definitely not discuss the new financial commitments of the international society; rather, the agenda is to review the commitments of the Afghan Government and its international partners.

This international conference will be opened by President Karzai and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and co-chaired by Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Zalmai Rasul and UN Special Representative Staffan de Mistura.

For a significant number of reasons, this conference is highly important for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its international partners. We believe that the international conference on Afghanistan will open a new chapter in Afghanistan's engagement with the international community.

Manizha Bakhtari
Ambassador

Exit Afghanistan? Ambassador Bakhtari attends seminar at Stortinget



Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari delivered a speech at a conference organized by Socialist Left party (SV) at the Norwegian Parliament, Stortinget. The conference discussed exit from Afghanistan, and focused on Norway's role in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of troops and negotiation with the Taliban. Ambassador Bakhtari addressed the audience under the title *fighting for the peace*, and stated that the use of force is a necessary but not a sufficient mean to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan. Moreover, pointed out that reconciliation with Taliban is only possible if they accept the Constitution. Subsequently, the Ambassador mapped out the events of the recent Peace Jirga.

Other speakers included the Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, who stated that the responsibility for the current government was initiated in 2005, and the question now is not if we should be there or not, but *how* we are there and then when time is ripe to make a decision on when to withdraw the Norwegian troops. The Minister and Kristian Berg Harpviken, Director at PRIO, both agreed that for the Afghan society to be capable of governing themselves there (I) needs to be a focus on establishing a system of governance that is viable and (II) that there must be a regional approach to the challenges in Afghanistan.

Other speakers also included Elisabeth Eide, Helge Lurås and Marthe Gerhardsen. The former UN Special Representative, Kai Eide, pointed out several wrongdoings from Afghanistan, for instance the geographical distribution of effort. Instead of investing in the unstable areas, development aid and military effort should initially focus on relatively stable areas. There also needs to be a focus on what is actually needed and how to build capacity. Infrastructure and agriculture must be prioritized.

State Secretary (MoD) Espen Barth Eide, finalized the seminar by arguing that the point of the Norwegian engagement is to make the support redundant, and when afghans has illustrated capacity and will to govern – it is time to discuss withdrawal. Finally, Barth Eide added that even though mistakes were made in Bonn, there is still time to make things right.

Inside the Newsletter

News from Afghanistan

- Minerals worth 3 trillion USD discovered
- Peace Jirga in Afghanistan
- Dam construction contract signed

Afghan - Nordic Relations

- Finnish PM and Danish Foreign Minister visits Afghanistan
- Denmark supports educational programs
- Medal ceremony for returned soldiers

News

- New head of EUPOL
- NATO's Parliamentary assembly
- Message of condolence

Untapped minerals worth 3 trillion USD discovered in Afghanistan



Photo: Namesake Business

Untapped mineral deposits were in June discovered in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Minister of Mines, Wahidullah Shahrani, announced that Afghanistan's newly discovered mineral wealth is worth at least 3 trillion USD. Afghanistan has enormous natural energy and mineral resources including iron, copper, coal, gold, oil, gas and lithium which have huge potential for economic development. The latter is a soft, silver-white metal that is widely used as a key component in manufacturing technological instruments such as computers, and is therefore specifically attractive on the global market. The previously unknown deposits include so many different minerals essential to modern industry that Afghanistan could be transformed into an important mining center.

Minister of Mine Shahrani, is to visit UK to attract foreign investments for a sustainable use of Afghanistan's massive natural resources. Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines has prepared rules and regulations to ensure transparent biddings and contracts for mine investments, and the Ministry of Mines has recently completed a strategic plan. The bidding for the untapped Hajigak mine – an iron deposit of 2bn tons – will start in September.

Sustainable use of mineral wealth in impoverished Afghanistan would help tackle poverty and provide jobs for the Afghan people, according to Mr. Shahrani.

The National Consultative Peace Jirga in Kabul



Photo: World News

Wednesday June 2nd, around 1,600 participants, including 300 women, tribal leaders, religious leaders and members of Parliament, from across the country took part in the National Consultative Peace Jirga. During the three days event the attendees prepared and presented recommendations on how to move forward in the peace process, and attempted to reach consensus on how to approach peace talks with insurgents.

During the National Consultative Peace Jirga the delegates were divided into working groups to address a number of issues. Different proposals and details of the agenda were debated, including which representatives of the Taliban the government should talk to. The Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami dismissed the Peace Jirga, and refuses to hold peace talks until the foreign troops have left Afghanistan. The Peace Jirga decided to review all cases of Taliban suspects being held in Afghan jail, as a sign of goodwill to precede peace talks

with the Taliban, furthermore, to release those prisoners being detained on doubtful evidence. In conclusion, the Peace Jirga on behalf of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan called upon the United Nations and the international community to end the oppressing blockade of Gaza.

Contract on the construction of dam finalized



Ministry of Water and Power in Afghanistan announced that a contract with an Iranian firm to design a new dam which will be built in eastern Afghanistan has been finalized. Mr Ismail Khan the Acting Minister told Afghan media that: "Over the Kunar River in the Shigai area, the flow of the water will be blocked and the water will reach Jalalabad city. The power dam will be constructed 35 km away."

Once the construction is over, the dam will be able to irrigate over 30,000 hectares of land and provide many residents of Kunar and Nangarhar provinces with power, as it will be able to produce 45 megawatts of electricity. The project will cost around \$420 million. Ministry of Water and Power officials also told the media that the designing phase of four other dam projects is soon to be initiated.

Finnish Foreign Minister visits troops in Afghanistan



Photo: Helsinki Times/ Lehtikuva - Antti Aimo-Koivisto

Finnish Foreign Minister, Alexander Stubb, visited the Swedish-Finnish camp *Northern Lights* in Mazar-i-Sharif on 10th of June. A total of 140 Finnish crisis management troops are currently participating in the International Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. At the beginning of 2011 there will be an increase in Finnish support to a maximum of 195 soldiers.

Finland has this year also increased its overall support in civilian and crisis management, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the Finnish Foreign Ministry reports.

Danish PM visits Afghanistan



Photo: Reuters Photo

Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen paid an unannounced visit to *Camp Bastion*, the largest international base in Helmand and the main Danish *Camp Price* at the end of June.

He had meetings in Kabul with President Hamid Karzai, where he assured Denmark's continued support in the stabilization and rebuilding of Afghanistan.

The Danish Prime Minister stressed the importance of giving more role to Afghan security forces in operations against insurgents, according to a press release published by Afghanistan's Presidential Palace.

Denmark's supports Educational programs in Afghanistan



Photo: Danish Foreign Ministry

Denmark will from 2010 to 2013 spend 60 million USD to support educational programs in Afghanistan, with the goal to create an advanced educational system available to everyone throughout the country. The program will give financial and technical support by publishing educational books and building warehouses in the provinces to store them.

The National Institute of Management and Administration (NIMA) offer programs on administration and management.

They also offer courses in Information and Communications Technology to prepare graduates for jobs and careers in the public or private sector or for entry into university programs. An institute for further strengthening of NIMA will be established in Mazar-e Sharif, to further develop national human resource in Afghanistan. Denmark will, furthermore, improve local management in the Helmand province through offering local authorities training and education. The final part of the educational program initiated by Denmark is to build schools and to support an educational system that includes girls.

Medal ceremony for returned soldiers



Photo: Stian Lysberg Solum /Scanpix

The 3rd Norwegian contribution to the Operation Mentoring Liaison Team Kandak (OMLT KDK) has returned to Norway, and was in that occasion honored through a medal ceremony on June 28th at Akershus Fortress. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Defense Minister Grete Faremo thanked the soldiers for their contribution in Afghanistan, and honored the four soldiers who recently lost their lives. Ambassador Bakhtari attended the ceremony to express the gratefulness of the Afghan people for the international contribution made in Afghanistan.

New Head of EUPOL



Jukka Savolainen, who is currently working as the deputy head of department at the border and coast guard division of the Finnish Border Guard, has been appointed as the new Head of Mission of EUPOL in Afghanistan. EUPOL is EUs civilian crisis management operation in Afghanistan, and will be lead by Savolainen from July 15th. EUPOL Afghanistan was launched in 2007 to contribute to peace, security and safety to the Afghan people, through the establishment of sustainable and effective policing arrangements.

Ambassador expresses condolences over the death of two Danish soldiers



Photo: Forsvaret

On behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Afghan people I wish to express my deepest sympathy and most sincere condolences to all family and friends of Martin Kristiansen and Sophia Bruun. They both lost their lives while making a historic contribution to stability in Afghanistan and to the international effort of bringing peace to our country.

Manizha Bakhtari
Ambassador

Public debate on NATO`s future from the Baltic perspective



During the Spring Session of the NATO's Parliamentary Assembly from 28th of May to 1st of June 2010, the Latvian Transatlantic organization held a general debate in Riga. H.E. Abdul Rahim Wardak Minister of Defense of Afghanistan and Afghan Ambassador to the Nordic countries Manizah Bakhtari, represented Afghanistan. The core objective of the general debate was to review challenges of the war in Afghanistan, and to analyze the expectations and concerns of the Baltic countries about NATO's new Strategic Concept. Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak highlighted the International community's efforts on transferring security responsibility from International forces to the Afghan security forces, and thanked the International community and especially NATO, for their support to increase the number of soldiers in the Afghan National Army and National Police.

Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari stated that creating a strong parliament and other democratic institutions as freedom of speech and of the press is important in meeting the challenges in Afghanistan. Today Afghanistan is experiencing democracy and the existence of a modern constitution with Islamic principles and values of international civil society. This could not have been obtained without the help and support of the International Community. Millions of Afghan children now go to school and the access to health care. Services have increased from 8 % to 85 % in the past 9 years.

We can also account for several other large and essential achievements, the Ambassador said.

Ambassador expresses condolence over the death of four Norwegian soldiers



Photo: Forsvaret/Scanpix

I was deeply saddened when I learnt about the terrorist incident in Faryab Province which claimed the lives of four Norwegian soldiers while serving to bring security and peace for the people of Afghanistan, I condemn this terrorist act in the strongest possible terms. My thoughts and sympathies are with the families and friends of Christian Lian, Trond Arne Bolle, Andreas Eldjar and Simen Tokle. On behalf of President Hamid Karzai and the people of Afghanistan, I thank the people of Norway for their generous support to Afghanistan and for their commitment to the cause of peace and development in the world.

Manizha Bakhtari
Ambassador

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