



Dear readers,

I would like to start by personally congratulating the three winners of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize and the Norwegian Nobel Peace Institute for their remarkable achievements. The three winners, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee from Liberia and Tawakkul Karman from Yemen were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for their non-violent struggles towards peace-building and justice in their countries. Furthermore, they were praised for their significant efforts in gathering women and raising awareness about women's rights and team-building in dictator regimes. I had the honor to attend the August ceremony of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo City hall. The speeches were with the slogan of women's solidarity and the desire for a world where there is no conflict and war. I was amazed to have heard about the speakers' commitment, efforts, and struggles in order to start non-violent movements such as that of the White Shirt Women in Liberia. As it was mentioned, the prize goes not only to the women of Africa but also to women everywhere. Therefore, I congratulate all women for this achievement. On the other hand, with great hope for disarmament, elimination of violence of all kinds, green environment, justice, and peace, I would like to use this opportunity to wish all the citizens of the world a happy and prosperous New Year, 2012. I would like to especially convey my best wishes to the people and governments of the Nordic countries. I hope this year is a great start to explore new gates towards joy and peace in the world. May the New Year bring happiness to all nations including Afghanistan's people who have suffered because of the long years of war.

Peace,

Manizha Bakhtari
Ambassador



Second Bonn Conference in relation to Afghanistan

On the 5th of December 2011, the International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn was a crucial opportunity for the international community to reinforce their long-term commitments to Afghanistan. The Second Bonn conference was hosted by the German Government and was chaired by the Government of Afghanistan, the Bonn Conference brought together around ninety delegations and approximately one thousand participants. At the Second Bonn Conference ninety delegations and one thousand participants all shared one common objective in Afghanistan, this was to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for international terrorism. The common purpose of the Second Bonn Conference was: to build the capacity of the Afghan government and the Afghan national security forces so that Afghans themselves can be responsible for their own security and their own future.

In the last ten years media in Afghanistan extraordinarily strengthened

On Monday 26th December 2011, senior officials from Afghanistan's Information and Culture Ministry said: "Considering the other pillars of Afghanistan, media has been strengthened incredibly in Afghanistan over the past decade. There have been many positive changes in the media in Afghanistan since the establishment of the interim government more than a decade ago".

During an interview with a media in Afghanistan, the Deputy Information and Culture Minister Mr. Mubarez Rashidi said: "the Taliban regime did not allow TV channels to broadcast programs, even Afghanistan National Television programs were off the air and very few print media outlets operated in the country".



Counting the achievements of the media in Afghanistan Mr. Rashidi said: "Since the collapse of the Taliban regime, the number of visual, audio and print media outlets had soared to 1,400 including 50 TV stations. As many as 150 radio stations, including 34 government-controlled entities, around 1,200 media outlets, including daily, weekly, monthly newspapers and magazines and TV stations registered with the Ministry of Information and culture, 800 outlets are operational". Mr. Rashidi added: "the main reason that the number of media outlets increased in Afghanistan was because they were welcomed by people, the enormous increase had empowered the media to be considered as the fourth pillar of the government". Mr. Rashidi emphasized: "The media is considered the fourth pillar as long as it remains professional, otherwise, it can harm and mislead the society".

China increases its economic cooperation in Afghanistan



Photo: English.cntv.cn

The Chinese Government pledged to assist Afghanistan with 150 Million Yuan on Education, Agriculture and administrative capacity building. During the meeting between H.E President Hamid Karzai and Mr. Yang Jiechi, Chinese Foreign Minister at the sideline of the Bonn Conference, Mr. Yang Jiechi Said: "China is working on two projects, Ayanak Copper Mine and North Petroleum Mine, his country has interest to invest on other economical projects in Afghanistan".

He also added that China support electing Afghanistan as over see country on Shanghai Cooperation Organization.



Throughout the mentioned meeting Mr. Yang Jiechi, Chinese Foreign Minister promised to H.E. Hamed Karzai President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan that his country will cooperate 150 million Yuan in education, agriculture and administrative capacity building fields with Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Peace process efforts should be an Afghani Process

Mr. Michael Steiner the German Special "Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in a press conference said: "The Second Bonn Conference was not a peace conference but it helped to expedite the peace process in Afghanistan and the international community exerted their efforts that the peace efforts should be an Afghani process". He also pointed the traditional Loya Jirgah and added that the people of Afghanistan at their jirgah decided to talk for peace with the opposition elements and they have incorporated this in its resolution. As regards to the Second Bonn Conference he noted that the international community at this conference declared their commitments towards Afghanistan after 2014.



Photo: Nato's website

The response to a question regarding non-participation of Pakistan, whether that country will be liable to the decisions of the conference, he stressed that the Bonn Conference is a follow up of the Istanbul conference and at the Istanbul conference Pakistan had their commitments towards Afghanistan and the region. Though Pakistan legally has no binding towards applying of the Bonn Conference but politically Pakistan should implement all the decisions.



Afghanistan and Germany are Signing Strategic Partnership Agreement



German Chancellor Angela Merkel, during a meeting with H.E. President Hamid Karzai said that Germany is ready to sign a long term strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan.

Officials from Afghanistan said that Germany, in the frame of long term strategic partnership, will provide assistance to Afghanistan in fields of economy, education, professional trainings for youths and training Afghan National Security Forces. Chancellor Merkel said that as Germany has good experience in mine extraction, training Afghan experts to extract mines will be part of the strategic partnership too.

The German Chancellor emphasized on support for an Afghan-led peace process and said: " A speedy reconciliation process will guarantee more security to Afghanistan".

H.E. President Hamid Karzai also said that Afghanistan has been wishing to have strategic partnership agreement with Germany for a long time. He added: "Long existed friendship between Afghanistan and Germany is valuable and I hope that this friendship further expands in the future".

Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Norwegian Minister of Defence visits Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan



Photo: Forsvaret, Kim Gulbrandsen

Mr. Espen Barth Eide has been in Afghanistan many times before but this trip was his first visit as Norway's defense minister.

In his visit to Afghanistan Mr. Espen Barth Eide announced that Norway would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by the summer of 2013, not 2014 as earlier planned. He mentioned: "We're aiming for a controlled and responsible winding-down of our contribution to the forces in northern Afghanistan". He added: "From the summer of 2013, at the latest, we don't plan to have any Norwegian military forces permanently stationed at Maimanah."



Photo: morten-skandfer.posterous.com

Mr. Espen Barth Eide said that a smaller contingent of soldiers will continue to be stationed at Mazar-e-Sharif until the NATO-led international forces pull out at the end of 2014. They will concentrate on working as instructors at local military schools.

Mr. Eide noted that the process of turning over responsibility for security to Afghan forces began in July. He said the Afghan authorities fully support the decision made in 2010 for NATO to withdraw in 2014, and claimed the Afghan army is "steadily developing," both in numbers and quality. Mr. Espen Brath Eide highlighted that the Afghanistan security forces have shown they are able to plan and carry out some complex operations on their own. He also added: "the international forces will maintain "necessary support capacity" to back up the security forces in Afghanistan.

Norwegian Government funded a new radio station in Northern Faryab province



Photo: flickr.com

Officials from the Afghanistan Ministry of Health said that on Saturday 24th December 2011, the Norwegian-funded radio would broadcast their programs for 15 days on a trial basis. The Radio Station would be the first- ever radio station, aimed at broadcasting health-related programs in Afghanistan.



The state-run radio broadcasts would be focused on health-related issues, including messages and tutorials. Currently there are four radio stations in Faryab Province: Gurbat, Tamana, Qoyash and Turkistan, which is operating in the province.

Norway condemns suicide attacks in Afghanistan



Norwegian government strongly condemns the suicide attacks during the Shia Muslim festival of Ashura on Tuesday which killed around 60 people in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kandahar. Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian Minister Foreign affairs stated: "We extend our condolences to all those who have lost loved ones in the attacks. Nothing can justify such arbitrary, meaningless killings. Attacks on religious and other minorities undermine the Afghan people's efforts to build a stable, democratic and peaceful country".

He emphasized: "We intend to continue our long-term cooperation with the Afghan authorities with a view to promoting progress and a normally functioning society. Together, we must combat all forms of terrorism and violence and religious and ethnic intolerance".



Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre also said: "The Bonn Conference on 5 December showed that the international community is united in its support and solidarity with the people of Afghanistan".

The Nobel peace Prize 2011



The Nobel Peace Prize 2011 was awarded jointly to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the current President of Liberia, Leymah Gbowee, Liberian peace activist and Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni journalist and peace activist "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work". The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 92 times to 124 Nobel Laureates between 1901 and 2011 – 99 times to individuals and 23 times to organizations. Since International Committee of the Red Cross was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1917, 1944 and 1963, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 and 1981, that means 101 individuals and 20 organizations have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Afghanistan and France are Signing Strategic Partnership Agreement

On Tuesday 6th of December 2011, Afghan officials said: "Following a meeting with H.E. President Hamid Karzai during the Bonn conference, Mr. Alain Juppe, France Foreign Minister requested H.E. President Hamid Karzai to visit France in January 2011, to sign the strategic cooperation agreement between the two nations".

The officials also added that H.E. President Hamid Karzai promised French Foreign Minister to sign the strategic partnership agreement between the two nations in the near future.



According to the Afghan officials H.E. President Hamid Karzai is due to visit United Kingdom to meet British Prime Minister, David Cameron to discuss the strategic cooperation agreement between the two countries.

Afghanistan and European Union Strategic Partnership Agreement

Afghan Officials from the presidential palace stated in a statement that European Special Envoy to Afghanistan Vygaudas Usackas, during a meeting with H.E. President Hamid Karzai mentioned that EU will start working on the strategic partnership document with Afghanistan very soon.



During the meeting which was held at the presidential palace, Mr. Vygaudas Usackas said: "The matters that we are working on to be included in this strategic partnership document will be to help in observing human rights, reform the elections process, improve commerce, pave way for Afghanistan to have access to EU markets, and countering terrorism and narcotics." In this regard Afghanistan Presidential Office announced that the Afghan Government and European Union will begin working on strategic partnership agreement soon.

China and Afghanistan signed a major oil contract



On Wednesday 28th December 2011, Officials from the Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines announced that Afghanistan and China signed their first-ever oil and gas deal that would earn Afghanistan around \$7 billion over the next two 25 years. Under the major oil exploration agreement, the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) will develop three oil fields along the Amu River in northern Sar-i-Pul and Faryab provinces. The agreement which gives Afghanistan 70 per cent of net profit was signed between H.E. Waheedullah Shahrani, Minister of Mines and CNPC President Lu Gong Xun, in Kabul. In a press conference after the signing ceremony, H.E. Waheedullah Shahrani said: "extraction along the Amu River would begin in late 2012, which will bring enormous benefits to the government and it will be an important step toward (fuel) self-sufficiency in Afghanistan". According to the H.E. Waheedulla Shahrani a special army and police units would be created to provide security for the project. In the preliminary phase, the CNPC will invest \$400 million in the project, which is expected to generate thousands of jobs for Afghans. From a number of Chinese, Pakistani, Canadian, French and American companies participated in the bidding process, four were shortlisted. A government-appointed commission declared the Chinese company CNPC the winner.



The Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo
Accredited to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland

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