



Dear Readers,

Afghanistan is approaching the start of crucial phase in its partnership with the international community. The upcoming international Geneva Conference on Afghanistan in November will be a momentous occasion. The Government of Afghanistan will present its new national strategy for socio-economic development spanning the next five years. The international community will reaffirm its continued commitment as part of its enduring partnership with Afghanistan. The Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework will provide a refined partnership, based on mutual commitments for a peaceful, stable & prosperous Afghanistan. Strengthening governance will be a key focus for the Government, alongside other imperatives, such as state and peace-building, and regional connectivity. President Ghani emphasized this yesterday in his address to the 4th meeting of Senior Officials. Meanwhile, preparations for Geneva coincide with developments on ongoing efforts to end the conflict and achieve a dignified and lasting peace in Afghanistan. The past two months have seen important progress in the strengthening of regional and international consensus on peace, generated by the two meetings this month, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We thank our international partners for their renewed support for peace and also appreciate their astounding call for a cessation of Taliban attacks, for the group to engage in direct negotiations and to enforce a comprehensive ceasefire. We're confident that with close collaboration, the new era of partnership will witness profound progress on the common goal which we are collectively adamant on achieving. On behalf of my colleagues and I, we convey our warmest wishes to all fellow compatriots on the onset of Eid-ul-Adha. May you all enjoy the Eid holiday in peace, harmony, joy and compassion.

Regards,

Youssof Ghafoorzai
Ambassador

Fourth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Preparations for Geneva Conference on Afghanistan



President Ghani attended the 4th Senior Officials Meeting on July 28th. President Ghani opened his remarks remembering those who have lost their lives in the pandemic and thanking participants for their countries' continued support for peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. President Ghani stressed the importance of regional and international consensus to preserve the gains of the last two decades, including the constitution, the republic, human and women's rights. He thanked the international condemnation of the latest Taliban attacks and called for a humanitarian ceasefire and the start of direct talks conducting to peace. President Ghani informed the officials in attendance that despite the pandemic, the economy of Afghanistan is still in an upward trajectory. Afghan exports increased 11% in the first quarter of 2020, thanks to the cooperation of Afghanistan's regional neighbors and the air and land corridors. Revenue projection is at 12% of the GDP, a small reduction from the 13,7% planned before the pandemic. President Ghani reaffirmed the government's commitment to fight corruption and gave an overview of measures to be taken in the areas of accountability, governance, rule of law and management of resources in Afghanistan. The document resulting from the meeting will serve as a foundation for a national dialogue across all levels and functions of government to create a roadmap for the development goals of 2024.

Meeting with Curt Rice, Rector of Oslo Metropolitan University

On July 14th Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Curt Rice, Rector of the Oslo Metropolitan University at the Embassy. Ambassador Ghafoorzai welcomed Prof. Rice and stressed the importance of academical cooperation in a globalized age, aiming to reduce the gap in accessing knowledge, facilitating the free exchange of ideas and strengthening the cultural exchange between different cultures.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai suggested several areas of cooperation between the OsloMet and Kabul University, including education, technology and research. Prof. Rice agreed in the importance of cross-cultural exchanges and international collaboration and stressed that science and research open new doors and possibilities in developing countries.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Prof. Rice agreed on strengthening cooperation in specific areas between OsloMet and Kabul University in the near future.

First Lady Rula Ghani addressed the Arria-Formula Meeting of UNSC



On July 27th, H.E. the First Lady of Afghanistan Mrs. Rula Ghani participated in the Arria-formula meeting of the UNSC to discuss the participation of women in the Afghan peace process, promotion of their rights in any future peace agreement, and the importance of protecting the gains of the past 19 years. The meeting was held amidst an imminent start of the negotiations between the government and the Taliban. The meeting was hosted by Afghanistan and the UK as co-chairs of the UN Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan, together with Germany and Indonesia as SC co-penholders on Afghanistan. Members of the panel also included Ms. Hasina Safi, Minister of Women's Affairs, Dr. Habiba Sarabi, Member of the Negotiating Team, Ms. Ghezal Haris, Head of the Afghanistan Ombudsperson's Office, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, Ms. Deborah Lyons, and the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, Ambassador Alya bint Ahmed Al Thani, Representatives from the Security Council and Norway and Uzbekistan. The First Lady highlighted that Afghan women have been central in political discussions about peace and would remain proactively engaged in all stages of the process. Afghans were prepared to welcome the Taliban into Afghan society, but not at the cost of the participatory Republic with its institutions maintained and protected.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met Kai Eide, Former United Nations Special Representative for Afghanistan



Ambassador Youssof Ghafoorzai met with Mr. Kai Eide, former United Nations Special Representative to Afghanistan at the Afghan Embassy in Oslo. During the meeting Ambassador Ghafoorzai elaborated on the ongoing peace efforts and the importance of post peace international partnership and cooperation. Ambassador Ghafoorzai spoke about all aspects of the government's principled position on the peace process and underscored the importance of continued messaging by the international community in support of an outcome that meets the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. The reduction of violence, release of prisoners and start of direct peace talks were mentioned as priority issues to move the process forward.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Professor Elisabeth Eide of OsloMet

Ambassador Ghafoorzai received Prof. Elisabeth Eide from the Oslo Metropolitan University.



During the meeting Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Prof. Eide discussed several initiatives and areas of collaboration between the Embassy of Afghanistan and the Oslo Metropolitan University.

The initiatives discussed included speaking engagements of Ambassador Ghafoorzai about the peace process in Afghanistan, and joint cultural and educational events between the Embassy of Afghanistan and OsloMet.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai appreciated Prof. Eide's commitment towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan and her decades long dedication and friendship towards the Afghan people. Prof. Eide is a journalist with a long list of publications about Afghanistan, including books, articles and research papers.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met Per Albert Ilsaas, Norway's Special Representative for Afghanistan



Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Per Ilsaas, Norway's Special Representative to Afghanistan on July 28th. Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Mr. Ilsaas discussed several issues, including the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan, Norway-Afghan bilateral relations and the upcoming events and initiatives of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Per Ilsaas discussed issues such as the release of prisoners, need for reduction of violence and a comprehensive ceasefire, along with the early start of the direct peace talks.

H.E. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani hold Trilateral VTC Summit with the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan



President Ashraf Ghani met with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov of Turkmenistan and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan on second July 2020. The presidents held a discussion in the areas of regional connectivity, trade, transportation, peace and regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiatives discussed included the formation of a joint taskforce to tackle connectivity and transportation, the creation of a common tariff policy, establishment of a joint logistic center, and other projects related to trade and transit efficiency. President Ghani thanked his counterparts for their multilateral cooperation, especially for the restoration and operationalization of the Lapis Lazuli corridor, which he called a "transformative program". He emphasized that Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are united by a common history, culture, and traditions. The common economic future of the region is tied together and requires comprehensive cooperation. President Ghani also thanked President Aliyev for hosting the Online Non-Aligned Movement Summit in response to COVID-19. The meeting ended with a proposal to of organize an online meeting of the heads of transport agencies of the three counties in order to organize the formation of a joint task force for connectivity development.

Trilateral videoconference Afghanistan – Azerbaijan – Turkmenistan

A follow-up conference to the VTC summit was held on 13th July, attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mammadyarov, the First Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Rashit Meredov, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammad Hanif Atmar. The videoconference was a follow-up to the previous VTC summit held on July 2nd.



The participants worked out the details of the decisions adopted in the summit and agreed on the next steps to be taken for the implementation of the common initiatives. The participants agreed on a joint plan for transport, trade, energy and investment. The plan's goals are to facilitate trade by simplifying customs and developing the logistics infrastructure, improving regional collectivity by developing the railway system, stablishing fiber optic nets and boosting regional and international investment.

Meeting with the leadership of the Afghan Health professionals Association in Norway



Ambassador Yussuf Ghafoorzai met with the leaders of the Afghan Health Professionals Association in Norway. The Ambassador discussed the fight against Covid-19, including expanding health cooperation and transportation of medical equipment and medicines from Norway to Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai thanked the delegates for their cooperation and commitment towards the health sector in Afghanistan and emphasized the important role of health care workers in this crucial time to combat the pandemic.



The leaders of the Afghan Health Professionals Association in Norway expressed their support and interest for cooperation. The embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo promised to facilitate cooperation between the Afghan health sector and the Afghan Health Professionals Association in Norway in the near future.

President Ghani inaugurated Government's Food Distribution Program "Distarkhan-e-Millie"



On July 18th President Ghani officially inaugurated the Government's Food Distribution Program, "Distarkhan e Millie". The Food Distribution Program will be implemented in two phases, reaching to 34 provinces, 234 districts and 12896 villages in phase one and 34 provinces, 234 districts and 21842 villages in phase two, covering 90% of the population. It consists of a package of wheat, rice, oil, beans and soap, to a cost of 50 USD per family. The Government of Afghanistan will invest 86 million USD in phase one and 158 million USD in phase two. President Ghani appreciated international cooperation and the effort made by his team implementing the program at short notice and highlighted the commitment of the Government to address the humanitarian needs of the people.



The phase one of the Food Distribution Program will be implemented in the following weeks with the assistance of the Central Statistics Authority monitoring the number of families.

Video Conference Call between the Foreign Minister and the Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan



Acting Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar held a video conference call with the Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan Mr. Kjell Tormod Pettersen. Minister Atmar expressed his appreciation for the Norwegian position on the Afghan peace process and their continued cooperation with Afghanistan. Both sides exchanged views on the latest developments in the peace process such as mechanisms needed for monitoring a reduction in violence,



strengthening regional cooperation and consolidating regional consensus on peace, gaining the support of Afghanistan's international partners on the Afghan peace process, establishing a humanitarian ceasefire, release of prisoners by the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, and the importance of beginning intra-Afghan negotiation. Ambassador Pettersen highlighted the outcomes from the recent international and regional meetings on Strengthening Consensus for Peace, elaborated on the Norwegian government's views on the peace process, and reiterated their support for the Afghan peace process.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with a group of Afghan youth activists in Norway

Ambassador Ghafoorzai received a group of Afghan youth activists in Norway, on July 15th at the Embassy of Afghanistan. The Ambassador and the activists discussed the current situation of Afghanistan, the work of the young activists in Norway, their objectives, goals and upcoming plans. Ambassador Ghafoorzai welcomed and appreciated the strong commitment of the broad network of talented and energetic activists engaging in various activities in the community.



He encouraged the group to remain proactive and to play a role in helping to bring positive change on various national issues facing the country. In that regard, he also underscored their important role in various economic initiatives to address the needs of Afghans who have suffered from the economic impact of Covid-19 in Afghanistan. He also asserted that the Afghan diaspora can advocate for a successful peace process that protects the hard-won democratic gains which form the foundation of the new Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai also discussed various Embassy initiatives in the area of cultural diplomacy in which the diaspora could take part and contribute. A number of upcoming ideas and projects in this area were discussed with the activists.



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

NYHETS BREV
Monthly Newsletter Vol. # 99, July 2020

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