



Dear Readers,

On behalf of my colleagues and I at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo, I wish you all a very happy peaceful, joyous and prosperous New Year to you, your families and loved ones. 2020 was by no means an easy year. It was a year of new trials and tribulations, which compounded existing challenges and brought new hardships and difficulties in different ways around the world. The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic took the lives of more than one million peoples of different nationalities, religions and cultures. It was testament of the shared destiny of all of humanity in regards to the imperative of cooperation and solidarity. In this context, let us look into new year – 2021 - with confidence and hope for a better and more prosperous year, through greater international cooperation. In Afghanistan, we are hopeful that the long-standing efforts and sacrifice of the people of our country, and that of our international partners will lead to a dignified and lasting peace, based on the demands and expectations of all Afghans which have been emphasized in the clearest terms possible. With the next round of negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban set to begin this week, we hope the people's desire for a cease-fire will be come to fruition to spare any further innocent lives. We again thank all of our international partners for their continued support of our peace efforts. Here at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo, my colleagues and I look forward to continue fostering new initiatives in various fields with our Norwegian friends and partners in the context of our close and strong bilateral strategic partnership. In conclusion, we again express our best wishes for the swift recovery of all who were affected in last week's landslide in Gjerdrum, Norway. We stand in full solidarity and support with our Norwegian friends as they recover from that natural disaster.

Youssof Ghafoorzai
Ambassador

Ambassador Ghafoorzai issues congratulatory message on 58th Anniversary of Afghanistan-Norwegian diplomatic relations



30th December 2020 marks 58th years of bilateral relations between Afghanistan and the Kingdom of Norway. On the occasion, Ambassador Ghafoorzai highlighted that relations between Afghanistan and Norway has always been maintained based on mutual respect and the commitment to commonly shared values, especially those contained in the Charter of the United Nations. In his message he pointed to the start of a new era of cooperation between the two countries in 2001 and expressed his gratitude for Norway's important contributions in the past two decades within Afghanistan's and Norway's ever-closer and ever-growing bilateral Strategic Partnership, which continues to expand further.



To that end, he said Norwegian support in areas such as socio-economic development, defense and security, health and education, migration, strengthening of civil society groups, including women, youth and other vulnerable groups, has been an essential part of Afghanistan's many and profound achievements in the past two decades, which form the foundation of today's new Afghanistan. In the bilateral context, Ambassador Ghafoorzai said, the renewing Afghanistan and Norway's Strategic Partnership Agreement which will refine the scope and nature of cooperation between the two countries based on the evolving situation and new development objectives, as we prepare for the post-peace era in Afghanistan.

The Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo and the Nordic Women Mediators Network held Second Dialogue Meeting

On December 1st, the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo, together with the Nordic Women Mediators Network (NWM), held the second round of dialogue meeting between the Network and the women members of the Afghan negotiating team in Doha: Mrs. Fatima Gailani, Ms. Habiba Sarabi, Ms. Fowzia Koofi and Mrs. Sharifa Zurmati. Norway's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mr. Ole Lindeman, and Denmark's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mrs. Mette Knudsen, as well as various members of the NWM and members of Foreign Ministries of the Nordic countries were among the participants.



The second discussion was part of the dialogue process between women members of the Afghan negotiating team and women experts from the Nordic countries, with experience in the areas of peacebuilding, conflict resolution and reconciliation. During his opening remarks in the meeting, Ambassador Ghafoorzai, highlighted the impressive and important role of Afghan women in the negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban. The women members of the Afghan delegation in Doha have also thanked Norway and the NWM for their support on the peace process, recounted their experience in the first round of talks held in Doha and exchanged views on how future discussions on specific thematic issues could be beneficial to them, as they prepared for the next round of peace talks.

NORDIC WOMEN MEDIATORS

At the end, the NWM-members expressed their well to support and assist the Afghan women on the initiatives mentioned in the meeting and that they were looking forward to future meetings and cooperation.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai had a VTC meeting with Danish Ambassador in Kabul



Ambassador Ghafoorzai had a VTC meeting with Danish Ambassador, Mette Knudsen. The two Ambassadors discussed the recent developments in regard to the Afghan Peace Process, the renewal of the Afghanistan-Denmark Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), outcomes of the Geneva Conference on Afghanistan and collaboration between the Afghan Embassy in Oslo and Danish institutions in Copenhagen and the Danish Embassy in Kabul. During the meeting Ambassador Ghafoorzai, thanked the Danish Government for its proactive participation at the recent Geneva Conference on Afghanistan, at which the Government of Afghanistan and the international community began a new era of cooperation for the upcoming years, put into the framework of the newly adopted Afghanistan Partnership Framework (APF). Ambassador Ghafoorzai also referred to the finalization of the code of conduct and the formation of a leadership council, constituted by members of the high council and concerning the national reconciliation as important developments in the process.



Afghanistan very much appreciated the position of European partners in calling on the Taliban to engage in a ceasefire and commit to an outcome that preserves democracy, human rights and pluralism. On the Strategic Partnership Agreement, Ambassador Ghafoorzai said that the Government of Afghanistan look forward to-

-renewing the agreement with Denmark. In response Ambassador Knudsen mentioned that the Danish Embassy will follow with the renewal of the Strategic Partnership Agreement with our Foreign Ministry. The two sides also discussed joint initiatives involving the Afghan Embassy in Oslo and the Danish Embassy in Kabul in the spirit of enhancing bilateral cooperation. In that regard, Ambassador Knudsen welcomed the close cooperation between the Danish Embassy in Kabul, the Afghan Embassy in Oslo and the Nordic Women Mediators Network on the important role of Afghan women in the Afghan peace process. They also discussed a working visit of Ambassador Ghafoorzai to Copenhagen when the Covid-19 situation will permit.

Ambassadors Ghafoorzai and Lindeman discussed bilateral relation and enhanced cooperation



On 10th of December 2020, Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Norwegian Ambassador, Lindeman had a phone conversation to discuss the developments of the Peace Process and the renewal of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between Afghanistan and Norway; the outcome of the Geneva Conference, various initiatives between the Afghan Embassy in Oslo and Norwegian institutions and agencies, as well as initiatives between the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul and various Afghan institutions, including Kabul University. During the conversation Ambassador Ghafoorzai stated that the finalization of the code of conduct and a first meeting of the leadership of the High Council for peace and-

Reconciliation were important developments in the Peace Process. He reaffirmed that the Government of Afghanistan is firmly committed to the successful outcome of the peace process. In response Ambassador Lindeman said that Norway supports a peace process that is Afghan-led and supported by the people of Afghanistan. Norway is committed to providing whatever support is needed for the process, including the facilitation of talks.



Both Ambassadors underscored the importance of the partnership agreement, which has been the basis of the bilateral cooperation and relations between Afghanistan and Norway, and discussed adjustments in the text to reflect the new situation resulting from Geneva Conference, and new needs and priorities in the context of the post-peace development phase.



At the end, Ambassador Ghafoorzai mentioned the up-coming Embassy initiatives in the areas of economic diplomacy, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy.

H.E. President Ashraf Ghani addressed the Special Session of the UNGA in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic



At the beginning of the special session of the UNGA in response to Covid-19 pandemic, H.E. President Ghani expressed his gratitude to the President of Azerbaijan for taking the initiative to organize a Special Session on the COVID-19 pandemic. During his speech H.E. President Ashraf Ghani has offered his condolences and sympathies to those who have lost their loved ones on COVID-19 and elaborated on Afghanistan's strategy in response to the Pandemic according to the five phases of the crisis: acknowledgment, diffusion, adversity, relief and recovery. H.E. President underlined that as a result of the mentioned strategy and urgent action by the government of Afghanistan the mortality rate maintained relatively low. He added, that the pandemic transformed the way we do business, the way we communicate, the way we live. But it's not all negative. COVID pushed the digitalization of the world at a speed that was inconceivable. And moving into subsequent waves of the pandemic, we need to embrace digital technology to further a global dialogue around policy, accessing and distributing the vaccine. He also indicated, this pandemic has exacerbated existing gaps and inequalities across developed and developing nations and will continue to be the case even as a vaccine becomes available. He emphasized on the role of multilateral organizations in the joint distribution of the vaccine and called that the vaccine should be available for everyone.

Lastly he emphasized, because the first and second waves Covid-19 have exacerbated structural poverty and increased situational poverty, we must create a common approach to securing livelihoods and ensuring momentum in the economy while also promoting COVID awareness.

The leadership Committee of the High Council for National Reconciliation held its Second Meeting

The second meeting of the High Council comes after the negotiators in Doha agreed on the procedural rules of the talks and paused their negotiations for 23 days, to hold consultations on the recommendations of both sides which will be added to the agenda of the negotiations. During the second meeting of the High Council, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation said, the negotiations will resume on 5 January 2021.



Prof. Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, was one of the speakers of the meeting, during his speech he emphasized on the unity of negotiating team. Prof. Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf has also mentioned that the Afghan side are committed for peace and that peace is the demand of every Afghan. Former president Hamid Karzai has also said, the negotiating team "did a great job" and that Afghans are in urgent need of peace. During his remarks, the First Vice President, Amrullah Saleh, said, the conflict in Afghanistan is complicated and that its external dimensions are much greater than its internal ones. He highlighted that the peace process will be further complicated, if Taliban attacks continued against different segments of society. He also underscored the important flexibility to move the process forward.

Danish Embassy in Kabul provides additional support for the UNDP - Afghanistan



Danish Embassy in Kabul provides supports to the ACTION PROJECT with the contribution of ten million Danish Kroners. The project enhance Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJA) to focus on combating corruption and improve its capacity to address high-level corruption cases. ACTION PROJECT will use the additional fund form Danish Embassy to continue the capacity enhancement program for



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-judges, prosecutors and staff of ACJC in technical and functional level and will continue to work with civil society organizations in other provinces in Afghanistan. The Danish Ambassador in Kabul was among the key participants at the event and spoke about various Danish initiatives in support of efforts to strengthen governance in Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan's renewed strategy on combatting corruption and strengthening governance was highlighted at the international Geneva Conference on Afghanistan November, which endorsed Afghanistan's second national peace and development strategy (ANPDF-II) and the Afghanistan Partnership Framework (APF), which will guide the partnership and cooperation between Afghanistan and international community over the coming years.

The Government of Afghanistan established a Commission for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders



As per the decree of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in order to strengthen human rights advocacy and responses to national and international human rights concerns in Afghanistan, as well as in accordance with the provision of the constitution and the Afghan government's strategy to protect the defenders of human rights, a "Joint



Commission for the Protection of Human Rights" was established under the chairmanship of Second Vice President. The aim of the Joint Commission is to provide necessary and effective ground for the protection of human rights defenders and activists in Afghanistan. In the meeting the member of the Joint Commission discussed on the procedure and implementation of their activities. The member of the Joint Commission has also drafted a joint plan with non-governmental organizations to outline the mechanism for protecting human rights activists and obtained the opinions of domestic and foreign human rights defenders.

The Government of Afghanistan welcomed UNGA's Annual Resolution on "The Situation in Afghanistan"

H.E. Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Foreign Minister of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan strongly welcomed the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the Situation in Afghanistan, which was adopted by the Assembly on 10th December 2020.



The Resolution, adopted by a record number of UN member states, signaled the international community's continued commitment to end the conflict in Afghanistan through peaceful means. The Resolution emphasized the important of International support for the successful outcome of the peace process. H.E. Mohammed Haneef Atmar hailed the resolution as another strategic message of the international community's commitment to a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.



The resolution also reflected the concerns of Afghanistan and its international partners over the rise in the intensity and frequency of terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

Reduction in this vicious violence and agreement over a comprehensive ceasefire would lay the foundation of successful peace talks. Afghanistan would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for introducing the Resolution and the rest of the UN member states for voting for it to be adopted. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is looking forward to the continued support of its international partners as the peace talks enters its next phase.

Recently a new Irrigation Canal Opened in South-West Herat Province

Reconstruction work of a canal in Enjel district of Herat province was completed and operationalized. The canal was reconstructed to irrigate and increase agricultural land in Enjel district of the province.



With a length of fourteen kilometers, the canal has the capacity to irrigate thirteen thousand three hundred and eighteen hectares of land. At the same time an Irrigation Canal will be constructed in Kunar to supply water to hundreds of acres of fields in the province. The Canal is being built by the government at a cost of 41 million Afghanis in Nurgol district. With the construction of this canal, the water required for hundreds of acres of cropland will be supplied. The canal is set to be completed within the next six months.

