



Dear Readers,

### King Harald V of Norway Celebrates 84<sup>th</sup> Birthday



Norway's iconic red, white and blue flags were raised across the country on February 21<sup>st</sup>, marking King Harald V<sup>th</sup>'s 84<sup>th</sup> birthday and his 30<sup>th</sup> year as Norway's King and Head of State. On this high occasion, Ambassador Ghafoorzai extended his warmest greetings and congratulations to His Royal Highness King Harald. He further expressed gratitude for Norway's continued engagement and contributions for peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. He also underscored His Majesty's important role for Norway's unity, prosperity and in advocating these ideals around the world.



The King, after having received knee treatment earlier this year, is still recovering and celebrated his birthday with his closest family. The Royal Family is a unique and important part of Norwegian history and culture. We congratulate His Royal Highness in celebration of his birthday and 30 years of rule and wish him continued success and good health. His Majesty King Harald V received the best wishes of the diplomatic community based in Oslo in an online virtual commemoration book.

### Ambassador Ghafoorzai met Danish Special Representative for Afghanistan



On February 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met virtually with Ambassador Thomas Lehmann, Denmark's Special Representative for Afghanistan, to discuss the current situation in Afghanistan, developments in the peace process, Danish-Afghan bilateral relations and enhanced cooperation in the way forward. During the meeting, Ambassador Ghafoorzai gave an overview of the current situation in Afghanistan, including in relation to the peace process. He highlighted the importance of Denmark's continued partnership with Afghanistan and valued Denmark's participation and new commitments at the international Geneva Conference on Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai welcomed the appointment of Denmark's new Ambassador to Afghanistan Mary-Lou Julie Feinberg and expressed gratitude for the efforts of Amb. Mette Knudsen, former Danish Ambassador to Afghanistan, who has taken on her new position as Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai and Special Representative Ambassador Lehmann then went on to discuss developments in the Afghan peace process, the role of the international community and the importance of achieving an outcome that leads to a dignified and lasting peace supported by the people. On bilateral relations, Ambassador Ghafoorzai also appreciated and underscored Denmark's many important and valuable contributions for the security and integrity of Afghanistan and discussed enhanced joint cooperation in the way forward.

Last week, the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, the National Day of the Security and Defense Forces of Afghanistan was commemorated. The occasion was an opportunity to reflect on and pay tribute to the courage, dedication and sacrifices of Afghan Security Forces in defence of their people and country. In the past two decades, the ANDSF have emerged into a capable force, in partnership with the international community. The dedicated efforts of the ANDSF have been a key factor in the achievement of whatever gains that have been made in different sectors of society. As such, their service and sacrifice form the very foundation of today's democratic and pluralistic Afghanistan, and they are a source of national unity and strength in the country. Nothing better reflected the people's appreciation of their sacrifice than that of images aired of children of a fallen soldier walking up to members of the army and police, greeting them with flowers and thanking them for their service, in memory and tribute to their fathers, who lost their lives in the line of service. The National Day of the Armed Forces of Afghanistan is also an opportunity to highlight the important partnership, contributions and sacrifices of the men and women of international partner countries who have stood, fought and sacrificed alongside their fellow Afghan comrades. All the precious lives lost were and are for a common cause – to defend Afghanistan's democracy and fundamental freedoms, to secure and consolidate the foundational gains which form today's new Afghanistan and to prevent the country from ever again becoming a haven for international terrorism. We pay tribute to the memory of all who have served and sacrificed for the cause of peace and stability in Afghanistan, and helping ensure a safer and more secure world for all.

Regards,  
**Yusuf Ghafoorzai**  
Ambassador

### Ambassador Ghafoorzai met Head of Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee



On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Ambassador Ghafoorzai spoke virtually to Anniken Huitfeldt, head of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee in the Norwegian parliament, to discuss current developments in Afghanistan, including the Afghan peace process, the security situation, Norway's engagement in Afghanistan, and the way forward. Ambassador Ghafoorzai expressed his gratitude for the Norwegian parliament's support for Norway's engagement in Afghanistan, which covers various areas of collaboration. He gave an overview of the status of peace efforts, the important role of international partners in the process and emphasized in that regard, the importance of continued support to help achieve an end-state of lasting and dignified peace, which is embraced by the people. They also discussed the improvement of humanitarian aid and development assistance to Afghanistan and mutual commitments made at the international Geneva Conference on Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai also conveyed the interest of Afghan Women Parliamentarians to begin a dialogue with their Norwegian counterparts. The Embassy stands ready to initiate the start of this important inter-parliamentary dialogue. Such an initiative could be beneficial to both groups of parliamentarians, especially in relation to women's empowerment in the areas of democracy, human rights and peace-building.

### Ambassador Ghafoorzai met Japan's Ambassador to Norway

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, Ambassador Ghafoorzai received a courtesy call from Japan's newly appointed Ambassador to Norway, H.E. Mr. Kawamura Horoshi. In the meeting, they discussed Afghanistan-Japan bilateral relations, the situation in Afghanistan and collaboration between their two Embassies in Oslo. Amb. Ghafoorzai congratulated Ambassador Horoshi on his appointment and wishes him success in his new duties. He highlighted the historic friendship between Afghanistan and Japan which has evolved into an important partnership in the past two decades, with Japan making important contributions in various fields for



Afghanistan's development and prosperity. He also emphasized that the people of Afghanistan's deep respect and admiration for the dedicated efforts, service and sacrifice of the late Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, Japanese humanitarian worker who was leading an initiative in the area of water management and agricultural development, symbolized the people's appreciation for Japan's invaluable contributions to Afghanistan. Last year, at the initiative of the Afghan Embassy, a joint commemorative event was held together with the Japanese Embassy in Oslo to pay tribute to the memory, work and sacrifice of the late Dr. Nakamura with participation from the diplomatic community and representatives of the host country. The two sides also discussed continued close collaborations between their respective Embassies in Oslo to reflect on and further advance Afghanistan-Japan bilateral cooperations.

### Afghan Embassy Oslo Joins 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Meeting with Nordic Women Mediators Network and Members of the Afghan Doha delegation

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the Embassy joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting between members of the Nordic Women Mediators Network (NWM) and women members of the Afghan delegation in Doha, to discuss current developments in the Afghan peace process, the importance and possible roads towards a permanent ceasefire and the vital role of women in the ongoing negotiations. Dr. Habiba Sarabi and Mrs. Sharifa Zurmati spoke about the process, existing challenges and how to move the talks forward. To that end, the enforcement of a ceasefire and resumption of result-oriented talks are imperative.



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Further, members of the NWM Network shared their insight and extensive expertise of peace processes around the globe, including women's role in them and possible ways to achieve a political settlement and just peace for all Afghans. Ambassador Ghafoorzai stated that the dialogue between the NWM network and members of the negotiating team would be highly valuable. He also spoke about the way in which Afghan women had already taken on a substantial role in the peace process, reflecting the views of not only Afghan women but of all segments of society. Continued discussions on various topics, such as the cease-fire and other key issues would be important in the way forward.

### President Ghani Speaks at Inauguration Ceremony of COVID-19 Vaccinations in Afghanistan



On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the start of the vaccination program took place at the Presidential Palace in Afghanistan with the participation of President Ghani, the First Lady, the First and Second Vice-Presidents, Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Rudrendra Tandon, Speakers of both Houses of Parliament, Members of Cabinet and civil society. The first doses of the vaccine were allocated to health care staff and members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Afghanistan's Minister of Public Health, Mr. Wahid Majrooh, opened the event by expressing his gratitude for President Ghani's consistent support for health care workers and medical professionals, who make relentless efforts to save as many lives as possible in the country. Ambassador Tandon, of India reaffirmed India's support, historic friendship, and close cooperation with Afghanistan in battling all the far-reaching dimensions of the ongoing pandemic. President Ghani, in his closing remarks, highlighted the importance of the start of the vaccination program in combating the pandemic and preventing it from spreading in the country. As the government's initial analysis states, the pandemic could come in up to five waves for Afghanistan, demanding for a close look at multi-dimensional consequences. H.E. the President also conveyed immense appreciation for the dedication and commitment of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

He also praised the leadership of the Afghan Forces for not letting the virus spread among their own ranks and for having roughly 8000 healthcare service members itself. President Ghani expressed gratitude for India's deep-rooted friendship and cooperation, and stated that efforts are underway to receive a second batch of vaccines to cover 40% of the Afghan population soon. Moreover, precautionary measures such as wearing face masks, social distancing and increased hygiene should still be followed.

### President Ghani met with Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan



On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, President Ashraf Ghani met with Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan at the Presidential Palace and discussed the expansion of bilateral ties, regional cooperation and Afghanistan's peace process. Minister Kamilov presented the President of Uzbekistan's invitation letter to President Ashraf Ghani, inviting him to attend a conference on regional connectivity in Tashkent. At the conference in July 2021, the Presidents of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan will be joined by Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, and Foreign Ministers and representatives of the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union. The two sides also exchanged views on the implementation of MoUs in economic and cultural areas that had been signed between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan during the last two years. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan underscored the need for the reduction of violence and ensuring a sustainable and dignified peace in Afghanistan.

### President Ghani and NATO Secretary General Speak over Phone



On February 19<sup>th</sup>, President Ghani had a phone conversation with Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, to discuss the Afghan peace process, the meeting of NATO Defense Ministers, and NATO's enduring support for the Afghan Defense and Security Forces. Jens Stoltenberg covered the meeting of NATO Defense Ministers and said that NATO member countries will adopt an active diplomacy in the Afghan peace process to help it succeed. The NATO Secretary General expressed concern over the spike in violence in Afghanistan and said that all decisions of the NATO member countries will be condition-based and made in close coordination with the United States. Having referred to the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan, Mr. Stoltenberg said consultations on this issue are underway, but that no decision has been made yet. He added that reviewing the U.S.-Taliban deal by the U.S. Government is still ongoing as well. NATO's Secretary General stressed the need for a peaceful settlement to the war in Afghanistan and expressed support for a sustainable and dignified peace in Afghanistan. Jens Stoltenberg added that NATO remains committed to its mission and to supporting the Afghan Defense and Security Forces in their fight against terrorism.



## Foreign Minister Atmar Visits Moscow



The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammad Hanif Atma visited Moscow on official visit from 24 – 27 February at the official invitation of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation. The purpose of the visit was to expand bilateral relations, strengthen regional and international consensus on the Afghan peace process, and to increase cooperation in the joint fight against terrorism and organized crime in the region. During his visit to Moscow, Mr. Atmar met with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and a number of high-ranking Russian government officials. He also addressed scholars and students at MGIMO University which is a national institute for international relations in Moscow. During his speech, Foreign Minister Atmar said That MGIMO is one of the most renowned institutions with its 78 years of history in academic teaching and research. In his speech, the Foreign Minister focused on the main areas of historical relations and common assets of the two countries. 200 years of bilateral relations, common threats and interests, peace and security efforts, and a new chapter of cooperation between Afghanistan and Russia toward peace and welfare in the region were among the areas discussed. Foreign Minister Atmar reiterated Afghanistan firm commitment enhance collaboration in combatting terrorism and expanding economic relations. In this regard, he emphasized that the role of Russian Federation is highly valued.

## Ambassador Ghafoorzai meets Norwegian Powerbank Producer Company

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Ambassador hosted a first meeting with a Norwegian company which reuses electrical car batteries in powerbanks and other industrial and construction machinery.



The representatives of the company gave an overview of their work and ambitions, and introduced their latest line of products, including powerbanks for industrial or domestic use with 1,5 to 10 kwh of power that are able to provide energy for a family home of three for up to ten hours. The devices are easy to move, come with various ports for connections in domestic and industrial use, and could be assembled in Afghanistan too. The powerbanks could be used flexibly and widely, to replace air, land and water-polluting fossil fuel motors, to reduce running costs of businesses on a daily base, and to help Afghanistan gain energy independence through the use of locally produced renewable energy and electricity. A possible engagement in Afghanistan would not only provide the growing enterprise with good investment and production conditions, but would also add jobs and skills for the people and contribute to a shift towards renewable energy use and environment protection in the country. The collaboration therefore bears important potential for all sides and will be further delineated in the time ahead.

## The GoA is planning the construction of an international airport in Logar province

The Afghan government is constructing a new international airport which will cost \$2 billion and be operational in three years, according to officials of the Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (ACAA). ACAA officials say further that in the first phase, the project will cost \$200 million. This will immediately enable the airport to welcome domestic and international flights. The full completion of the project will required several years of work. ACAA Chairman Mohammad Qasim Wafayeezada said that the new airport in Logar will be used as an addition to Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul for the transport of products. He also said that the new airport will have the capacity of welcoming 10 million passengers and 100,000 cargos per year. It is expected that the airport will transform Afghanistan's geographical center into one of the region's main hubs for connectivity and trade. The airport will be built in the desert of Mohammad Agha district of Logar near the Ainak Copper mine. Progress made with the new project could will help increased frequent travel and transport of goods and products with the outside world, consistent with the country's priority of increasing regional and international trade.



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

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