



## Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo Norway, Denmark and Iceland



**Dear Readers,**

This past weekend, the last contingent of Norwegian Special Forces returned from Afghanistan after years of duty. However, despite the withdrawal of international forces, Norway has committed to support the continued operation of the field hospital at Kabul international airport for an extended period of time with continued presence of security and civilian personnel, and to take part in out-of-country training of Afghan security forces.

The efforts of Norwegian forces, including special forces, have been a central part of Norway's overall security contributions in Afghanistan. This has been essential not only from a security standpoint alone, but also in helping impact and enable broader progress across different fields, including democracy and pluralism and women and youth empowerment, among other important gains. The service and sacrifice of Norwegian security personnel will neither be forgotten by the people of Afghanistan nor be in vain. At the NATO Summit earlier this month, NATO partners reaffirmed their enduring support for security and stability in Afghanistan and for the preservation of all hard-earned gains over the past two decades. Other important decisions reached there on Afghanistan include the continued training and financial support to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, retaining a senior civilian representative's office in Kabul for continued diplomatic engagement and enhanced partnership with Afghanistan, as well as transitional funding to ensure the continued functioning of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude to H.E. Prime Minister Erna Solberg, Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide and Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen for conveying Norway's enduring commitment to Afghanistan's security and stability, which is still very much based on common goals and objectives. These engagements are part of the broader future bilateral Afghanistan-Norway cooperation, under our Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) which will be finalized very soon.

With a historic transition underway, Afghanistan is confronted with new challenges, which can and will be overcome with the imperative of national unity, which throughout history has helped the people of Afghanistan prevail over the most daunting of challenges. In this regard, we look forward to the continued partnership with our partners in this crucial juncture in our nation's modern history.

**Sincerely,**  
**Ambassador Youssof Ghafoorzai**

## Signing of Memorandum of Understanding on Partnership Between Oslo Metropolitan University and Kabul University of Medical Sciences



On June 11th, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo facilitated the signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Oslo Metropolitan University and Kabul University of Medical Sciences for the start of a long-term partnership between the two institutions in the areas of prosthetics, orthotics, and orthopedic engineering. The ceremony took place at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo, with participation of Amb. Ghafoorzai as host, Dr. Curt Rice, Head of OsloMet, Prof. Waheedullah Mohmand, Head of KUMS, and the heads of relevant faculties and departments of both universities.

Hailing the agreement, Amb. Ghafoorzai stated that “the start of any collaboration between agencies, organizations and institutions is beneficial to share experience, build capacity and advance progress in areas of mutual interest, but this MoU has special value because of its purpose, which is aimed at supporting the needs of Afghanistan’s disabled persons.” He further stressed that the four-decade conflict in Afghanistan has resulted in millions of civilians left maimed and wounded with physical disabilities, and that many have to deal with the physical and emotional challenge of having to cope with and recover from the severity of their physical injuries. Such collaboration would lay the foundation for additional initiatives that could benefit Afghanistan in achieving self-reliance in the treatment of disabled individuals and victims of war. With the signing of the MoU, collaboration between the universities would begin in the areas of: online teaching; course creation; physical exchange of students and staff; academic fellowships; capacity-building; joint research and training for the production of prosthetics and orthotics; as well as the provision of equipment for orthotic and physiotherapy branches of KUM’s teaching hospitals.





Rector Curt Rice, Head of OsloMet, expressed his gratitude to everyone involved in the process and to the start of this valuable cooperation, and stated that this MoU carries with it many opportunities that will help OsloMet fulfill its mission to deliver research-based knowledge which will solve society's challenges. Dr. Rice announced the extension of OsloMet's Kabul Mobility Grant to include KUMS in the creation of the opportunity for selected colleagues at their university to travel to Oslo, and expressed his gratitude to all partners involved - including Amb. Ghafoorzai for initiating and guiding this process.



Prof. Waheedullah Mohmand, Head of Kabul University of Medical Sciences, expressed his gratitude to Norwegian partners and to the Afghanistan Embassy in Oslo for facilitating the initiative. He stressed that the long-lasting violent conflict in Afghanistan has left many Afghans with disabilities and in the need of urgent help. Prof. Mohmand stated that this referendum is particularly important as it will result in increased knowledge, improved educational conditions for students, and possibilities for exchanges of students and lecturers between the institutions.

In his closing remarks, Amb. Ghafoorzai took the opportunity to highlight the important work of ICRC as one of the key international actors on leading initiatives aimed to help the disabled community in Afghanistan and to hail Mr. Alberto Cairo's lifetime work on helping the disabled community in the country. Ambassador Ghafoorzai thanked all participants and emphasized his gratitude for Dr. Rice's commitment to their second MoU signing in collaboration with the Afghanistan Embassy in Oslo. In February this year, Dr. Curt Rice and Amb. Ghafoorzai signed an MoU between Kabul University and Oslo Metropolitan University, to mark the beginning of a long-term partnership between the two universities. The first MoU covered academic areas of journalism, international studies, pharmacy, psychology, education, art, management, engineering, and administration.

## Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Secretary General Tore Hattrem, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



On June 3rd, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Secretary General of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tore Hattrem. They discussed national and international efforts for the Afghan peace process and continued Afghanistan-Norway bilateral cooperation in the next phase of Afghanistan's partnership with the international community, following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan in the near future.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai hailed the long-term friendly partnership between Afghanistan and Norway and highlighted Norway's important role during the past decades as part of NATO's mission in Afghanistan, on supporting and training the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), which was an important part of enabling ANDSF to lead security responsibility nationwide. The Ambassador gave Mr. Hattrem an overview of the government's comprehensive peace plan, aimed at ensuring a responsible and practical approach for ending conflict in Afghanistan and ensuring a lasting and dignified peace in the country. He also hailed Norway's important support and cooperation in various fields, which was an important part of the international community's broader engagement and partnership with Afghanistan. Secretary General Hattrem reaffirmed Norway's enduring partnership with Afghanistan in the way forward, during the post-international force withdrawal period. The up-coming renewal of the Afghanistan-Norway enduring partnership will span a wide range of fields: political & security cooperation, development cooperation, governance and the rule of law, cooperation for economic and social development, regional and international cooperation, and migration. The a partnership that will remain strategic and based on common goals and objectives.

## Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with State Secretary Audun Halvorsen

On June 22nd, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with State Secretary Audun Halvorsen. They discussed the outcome of the recent NATO Summit in Brussels, ongoing national, regional and international efforts to advance the peace process, the role of the UNSC in helping advance peace and security in Afghanistan, as well as the important current and future role of the UN for peace, stability and prosperity in the country.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai hailed Norway's important contributions in the various fields, including security, governance, development and women's empowerment and welcomed Norway's position of continued engagement and support for peace, stability and prosperity over the coming years – during the next phase of Afghanistan's partnership with the international community. He gave an overview of the government's continued efforts and approach to advance the peace process. In that regard, he highlighted that national consensus on a unified approach in the peace process has reached its highest level and will be an asset for the success of the process. He also underscored the important role of the international community to help steer the process towards the desired outcome. In that regard, international efforts to help influence the Taliban to honor their expressed commitments and join the national and global consensus on the need to end the four-decade conflict in the country were essential. State Secretary Audun Halvorsen highlighted Norway's continued commitment to security, stability & prosperity in the next phase of Afghanistan-Norway bilateral relations and cooperation, which was also reflected by remarks of Prime Minister Erna Solberg, Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide and Defense Minister Bakke Jensen in Brussels. Norway would also remain in strong support of Afghan-led and owned peace process & stands ready to provide whatever support that was deemed necessary. The two sides also discussed the important role of the UN, including the Security Council in helping promote peace, security and prosperity in the country. The renewal of the Afghanistan-Norway Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) will be the main framework of the next phase of bilateral cooperation & partnership between Afghanistan and Norway in the coming years.

## NATO Summit Reaffirms Commitment to and Support for Afghanistan



On June 14th, the NATO Summit convened in Brussels, in which Afghanistan was among the main issues on the agenda. The meeting's outcome reaffirmed NATO's enduring support for stability in Afghanistan and for the ongoing Afghan-owned and led peace process. The withdrawal of NATO troops opens a new chapter in the organization's partnership with Afghanistan.

**The Summit Communique emphasized four key issues in relation to NATO's continued and future partnership with Afghanistan:**

- ✓ Stand beside Afghanistan for security and upholding gains of the past twenty years;
- ✓ Continued funding and training of Afghan national defense and security forces;
- ✓ Maintenance of infrastructure, including Hamid Karzai international airport; and
- ✓ Continued support for Afghan-owned and led peace process.

On behalf of Norway, Prime Minister Erna Solberg, Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide and Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen attended the Summit meeting and highlighted continued support for Afghanistan during the post-withdrawal period. Prime Minister Solberg affirmed Norway's continued operation of the field hospital in Kabul until the end of 2021. Foreign Minister Soreide, stated that the field hospital is "vital for ensuring that Norway and the rest of the international community can continue to provide humanitarian help and development aid and support the peace process in Afghanistan." Defense Minister Bakke-Jensen stated that "Norway aims to help train Afghan forces outside Afghanistan under the auspices of NATO, and, in this way, assist them in ensuring security in their own country."

## Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with the Chargé d'affaires of the US Embassy in Norway, H.E. Shawn Crowley



On June 24th, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with H.E. Shawn Crowley, newly appointed Chargé d' Affaires ad interim of the US Embassy in Norway. They discussed the enduring partnership between Afghanistan and the United States of America, the next phase of this partnership following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, the outcome of the recent NATO Summit meeting in Brussels, continued support for Afghan national defense & security forces, the Afghan peace process and President Ghani's current visit to the United States of America.

Ghafoorzai hailed the long-standing strategic partnership between Afghanistan and the US, based on shared values, goals and objectives. He gave an overview of recent developments in the country, including enhanced national consensus on the peace process, the security situation, preparations by the government for the start of the new phase of the partnership with the international community and importance of sustained international engagement in and support for various areas, including for Afghan national defense and security forces. He underscored the importance of the new commitments by the United States for Afghanistan in the way forward, which was greatly welcomed and appreciated by the government and people of Afghanistan. Shawn Crowley reiterated United States' continued commitment to Afghanistan in the development, security, humanitarian and economic fields as well as the Afghan peace process. He also highlighted the importance of the visit to President Ghani and the accompanying delegation to Washington, D.C., in which bilateral talks on the next phase of the enduring partnership between Afghanistan and the United States were held. The United States remains firmly committed to a peaceful, stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

## President Ghani Meets with President Biden at The White House in Washington, D.C.

From 24-25th July, President Ghani and a senior delegation, including First Vice President Amerullah Saleh, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Dr. Abdullah Addullah, Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar, National Security Adviser Hamdullah Moheb and Habiba Sarabi and Fatima Gailani, members of the negotiating team of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, paid an official visit to Washington, D.C.



In the meeting with President Biden, the two Presidents discussed the enduring collaboration between their respective countries as military drawdown is ongoing. Additionally, the presidents talked about how they can work together to continue the implementation of assistance during the post-withdrawal period in order to preserve all hard-won gains during the past 20 years. President Ghani paid tribute to all Americans who sacrificed and have served with honor and dignity for the Afghan security and freedom. He expressed gratitude over US' assurance of continued support as international troops were withdrawing. "In times of transition, things happen. We're determined to have unity, coherence, national sense of sacrifice, and will not spare anything", stated President Ghani. During the official visit, President Ghani also met with President Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, representatives from the US Congress and Senate from both the Republic and Democratic parties, as well as the families of soldiers who have served in Afghanistan.

### **The visit outcome affirmed continued US engagement and support in various areas, including:**

- ✓ COVID-19 vaccines and emergency medical assistance.
- ✓ Other assistance related to dealing with the impacts of the pandemic.
- ✓ Lifesaving humanitarian assistance.
- ✓ Security assistance, including funding of the Afghan National Army.
- ✓ Development assistance to support a stable, democratic, and self-reliant Afghanistan.
- ✓ Diplomatic support.
- ✓ Encouragement for other international partners to continue their assistance in the post-withdrawal phase.

## Foreign Minister Atmar Met with Foreign Minister Søreide

On June 16th, 2021, Afghanistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Hanif Atmar met with his Norwegian counterpart Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide. Foreign Minister Atmar expressed gratitude for Norway's consistent support and contributions to Afghanistan over the past two decades. He welcomed the commitments of Prime Minister Erna Solberg at the recent NATO Summit meeting regarding the continued support of Norway and NATO after the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. This represents a new phase of Afghanistan-Norway bilateral relations and cooperation, as well as a new phase in the strategic partnership between Afghanistan and other NATO member countries. Foreign Minister Atmar highlighted the important role of NATO and its member countries for the preservation of the gains of the past two decades and reaching a comprehensive political settlement for dignified and lasting peace in Afghanistan.



On her part, Foreign Minister Søreide expressed condolences over the recent terrorist attacks in the country, including the attacks on polio vaccination workers in the Nangarhar Province. She also spoke about outcome of the NATO Summit, which affirmed continued partnership with Afghanistan. Based on the Summit outcome, Norway has asserted its readiness to continue its operations at the hospital at Kabul International Airport and to take part in the out-of-country training of ANDSF, among other commitments. The two foreign ministers also discussed the role of the UN in Afghanistan, the renewal of the UNAMA's mandate, and the UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan which took place on June 22nd.

## UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan

On June 22nd, the UN Security Council convened on the Situation in Afghanistan. The meeting was held under Estonia's presidency of the Council for the month of June. On behalf of Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar addressed the meeting and gave an overview of recent developments, including the political and security situation and the peace process.



He referred to the Taliban's failure to implement its commitments under the Doha agreement with respect to reduction of violence, severing ties with regional and international terrorist groups and sincere engagement in talks. These violations occurred at a time when the government of Afghanistan and the international community upheld commitments on their side. In that regard, he called for a joint comprehensive assessment on the violations and adoption of a common position by the international community to help change the status quo.

Speaking on behalf of Norway, Deputy Foreign Minister Audun Halvorsen highlighted that Afghanistan stood at a critical juncture, and that an immediate and meaningful reduction in violence and progress in the peace process was needed. He further emphasized the important role of women in the process and reaffirmed Norway's continued commitment to Afghanistan. "Norway and Afghanistan have a long record of partnership. This will continue even as the international military operation ends." He also stated that Norway's "substantial humanitarian and development assistance will be maintained," as will Norway's commitment to the Afghan peace process. In that respect, he alluded that with the withdrawal of international forces from the country, it was essential for the international community to renew its support for Afghanistan. Mr. Halvorsen stated that Norway would continue to support the ongoing peace efforts and considered the UNAMA mandate renewal in September to be a milestone in that regard.

## Renewal of the Norway-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement to be finalized soon.

Preparation for the renewal of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between Norway and Afghanistan has reached its final stage. The SPA was first signed in 2013 and then renewed in 2017 and spans the areas of political and security cooperation, development cooperation, governance and the rule of law, cooperation for economic and social development, regional and international cooperation, and migration.



The renewal of the SPA will extend the agreement for the overall framework for Afghanistan-Norway bilateral relations and cooperation and is a testament of the enduring partnership between the two countries. The upcoming SPA renewal comes at a time when international forces are withdrawing from Afghanistan and a new chapter of cooperation with the international community is commencing.

The renewal also testament to the enduring bilateral partnership and will help to consolidate past gains in various fields and overcome the remaining challenges. Since 2001, Norway has contributed with military personnel in Afghanistan and has also been involved in various humanitarian, development, governance and women's empowerment initiatives. The solidarity and friendship with Afghanistan extends back to more than four decades and Norway's contributions in Afghanistan have been an important factor for many of the gains made in various fields, and is highly valued by Afghans of all walks of life. The next phase of the strategic partnership will include a sustained focus on advancing shared goals and objectives.

### Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Estonia's Ambassador, H.E. Lauri Bambus

On June 22nd, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with H.E. Lauri Bambus, appointed Ambassador of Estonia to Norway. They discussed bilateral relations and cooperation in political, economic and other fields, the Afghan peace process, and Estonia's role as joint penholder on Afghanistan at the UN Security Council, together with Norway. Amb. Ghafoorzai hailed Estonia's contributions in Afghanistan in the security, development and humanitarian fields since 2001 and spoke about the importance of the UNSC's role at this important juncture in Afghanistan to help advance peace, security and stability in the country.

He gave an overview of developments in the peace process and the way forward, as well as the government's plan to end the four decades conflict in the country and achieve a lasting peace. In that regard, he referred to Estonia's military contributions to Afghanistan, under the former NATO-ISAF and Resolute Support Mission, as well as other contributions in the development, humanitarian and security fields. He highlighted Afghanistan's commitment to enhancing cooperation with all international partners, including Estonia, in the next phase of partnership following the withdrawal of international forces.



The two sides also discussed the role of the UN Security Council on Afghanistan, the open-debate on Afghanistan in the Council which took place on the 22nd of June and the forthcoming renewal of UNAMA's mandate in September. Ambassador Lauri Bambus reiterated Estonia's support for the people and government of Afghanistan in different fields, including continued support for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.



## Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Kai Eide, former Senior Norwegian Diplomat and UN Special Representative for Afghanistan

On the 24th of June, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Mr. Kai Eide, former Senior Norwegian Diplomat and UN Special Representative for Afghanistan (2008-2009). They discussed various issues regarding the current situation in Afghanistan, including the Afghan peace process, the important role of the international community in helping to steer the process towards tangible progress and a successful outcome for a lasting and dignified peace.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai spoke about new measures taken by the government to strengthen national consensus in the peace process, which is a priority in Afghanistan, as well as the way in which Afghanistan's international friends and partners, including influential personalities outside the scope of government, could also play an important role in strengthening the international community's overall support for an Afghan-owned and led process.

The Ambassador hailed Mr. Eide's many years of friendship, solidarity and commitment to the people of Afghanistan in his capacity as former Norwegian diplomat and UN Special Representative for Afghanistan. Also attending the dinner was Ms. Samina Ansari, Founder and CEO of AVYANNA Diplomacy.

## In separate letters, President Ghani congratulated Denmark on its National Day and Iceland on its Independence Day



President Ghani has extended his cordial greetings and felicitations to the government and people of Denmark and Iceland on the occasion of Denmark's Constitution Day, June 5th, and Iceland's Independence Day, June 17th.

On the occasion of Denmark's National Day, President Ghani congratulated Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and the people of Denmark on the occasion and expressed pleasure that the existing relations and cooperation between Afghanistan and Denmark have further expanded and strengthened as a result of joint efforts. President Ghani stated that Afghanistan greatly valued the friendship and support of Denmark, which, among other international partners, has consistently supported Afghanistan's efforts to achieve peace and stability. Denmark reaffirmation of commitment to and partnership with Afghanistan at the international Geneva Conference in November and the forthcoming renewal of the Afghanistan-Denmark Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) for an extended period is testament of the enduring bilateral partnership.

President Ghani also congratulated President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson on Iceland's National Day and expressed appreciation for the long-standing, friendly relationship and partnership between Iceland and Afghanistan. He expressed pleasure that Afghanistan-Iceland relations and cooperation have further expanded and stated that the Government of Afghanistan looked forward to working closely with the Government of Iceland to avail the opportunities and prospects available in order to further expand and strengthen the existing bilateral relations and partnership in the way forward. As a close partner to Afghanistan, Iceland has made important contributions in the security, development, humanitarian & other fields. Icelandic civilian personnel have served in various missions under NATO. Iceland was among the partner countries that reaffirmed its continued partnership with Afghanistan at last year's international Geneva Conference.



The Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo  
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