



Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo Norway, Denmark and Iceland



Dear Readers,

July has been another challenging month in Afghanistan. In addition to drought & the COVID-19 pandemic, the security & humanitarian situation has been exacerbated by Taliban attacks and violence, which has taken the lives of more than three-thousand five hundred people & displaced thousands of families. The scope of the violence includes grave violations of human rights & international humanitarian law and the number of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance reaching ever higher figures. And the attack on the UN compound earlier today marked yet another violation of international humanitarian law. These acts have been strongly condemned by the government of Afghanistan and international community and the people of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the heroic Afghan national security forces have overcome a new and different level of challenge on the ground, resulting from the withdrawal of international forces from the country. After initial setbacks, Afghan security forces have regrouped, re-organized, re-prioritized and have positioned themselves to regain and advance on new territory. The security effort continues in defending Afghanistan's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The dual track approach of defense and pursuit of a lasting and dignified peace through a political settlement is a vital national priority. The immediate hope and expectation is for tangible progress in the peace process, leading to a comprehensive agreement for a dignified and lasting peace. In any peace endeavor, flexibility and compromise is often a difficult but fundamental aspect of the process. The commitments stipulated in the Doha agreement of February 2020 were meant to provide a basis and framework for steady progress in the process. With the release of more than 5,000 Taliban prisoners and the now almost complete withdrawal of international combat forces from the country, Afghanistan & the international community have honored their end of the bargain. It's now imperative that the Taliban reciprocate & display the will, readiness & commitment that's needed for the peace process to move forward. In this regard, the role of the international community is now perhaps the single most important factor to shift the dynamics towards a more positive trajectory.

Throughout history, Afghanistan's resilience & unity have always defied seemingly impossible odds. We're confident that the country will, once again, prevail: overcoming the current situation & achieving the goal of a united, democratic, peaceful & prosperous nation. Of course, this objective also requires the continued support & partnership of our international partners, which has been affirmed & we highly value.

Sincerely,
Ambassador Youssof Ghafoorzai

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Thierry Bechet, the EU's Ambassador to Norway



On July 9th 2021, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with the European Union's Ambassador to Norway, H.E. Thierry Bechet. The two sides discussed recent developments in Afghanistan, including the withdrawal of international forces from the country, the security situation, the Afghan peace process, the important role of the EU and other international partners in the process, and the start of the new phase of partnership between Afghanistan and the international community.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai gave an overview of the security situation which was marked by increased violence due to new Taliban attacks in different parts of the country. The difficult security situation warrants urgent international humanitarian assistance to address the emergency needs of IDPs and other affected segments of society. He underscored the important role of the international community in helping to ensure fulfillment of Taliban commitments under the Doha agreement, which were essential urgent steps to help steer the peace process in the right direction and towards the outcome of a lasting and dignified peace.

Ambassador Bechet reaffirmed the EU's strong commitment to continued partnership with Afghanistan in the coming years, following the withdrawal of international forces from the country. The EU's long-standing principled position on and support for Afghanistan is highly appreciated and valued by the people and government of Afghanistan.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Per Albert Ilsaas, Norwegian Special Representative for Afghanistan



On July 12th, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Norwegian Special Representative to Afghanistan Per Albert Ilsaas. The two sides discussed the security situation in the country, escalation of Taliban-driven violence, including terrorist attacks, the exacerbated human rights situation, increased violence, and the urgent humanitarian needs of the people, including IDPs. Ambassador Ghafoorzai underscored the need for important measures to be taken by Afghanistan's international partners to assist the peace process in the right direction and towards a successful outcome.

In addition to various aspects of the peace process, they furthermore discussed the enduring partnership between Afghanistan and Norway and other international partners, following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, and strengthening regional and international consensus on dignified lasting peace in Afghanistan, including through the UN Security Council, in which Norway serves as joint co-penholder on the Afghanistan file together with Estonia.

The Ambassador welcomed Norway's continued commitments to Afghanistan as pledged at the recent NATO summit meeting. This includes Norway's decision to continue the operation of the field hospital at Kabul International Airport and readiness to continue financial and training support to the Afghan National Defense Security Forces, among other areas of cooperation in the areas of development, governance, health, and empowerment of women and civil society. Mr. Ilsaas spoke about recent international activities regarding the Afghan peace process and other areas. He also reaffirmed Norway's continued engagement and partnership with Afghanistan in the future.

President Ghani Spoke with US President Joe Biden and NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg



On July 23rd and July 27th, President Ghani held phone conversations with the United States' President Joe Biden and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. In his call with President Biden, the two presidents discussed the evolving and continuing partnership between Afghanistan and the United States, and underscored the importance of national consensus and unity for peace and stability. Presidents Ghani and Biden also spoke about various aspects of the continued partnership between Afghanistan and the US, including continued diplomatic and economic support for the Afghan government, security forces and the importance of preserving the many gains during the past two decades.

President Biden reassured President Ghani of the United States' continued support for the Afghan national defense and security forces and reiterated his confidence about the capability of ANDSF to protect and defend the country. In this regard, President Biden emphasized that the United States will continue to support Afghanistan in various sectors, including development and humanitarian aid, as well as financial support to the Afghan Security forces. The US administration's FY2022 request to Congress for \$3.3 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund prioritizes:

- ✓ The deliver of additional aircrafts, such as the three newly-refurbished UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters delivered to Kabul on July 16;
- ✓ \$1 billion to purchase and deliver key supplies for Afghan security forces such as fuel, ammunition, and spare parts;
- ✓ \$700 million to fund continued payment of salaries for Afghan soldiers.

The two presidents agreed on the importance of an Afghan-owned and led peace process in order to come together for peace and security, and that preserving the hard-won gains of the last twenty years should be in focus.

In President Ghani's conversation with NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, the two sides discussed the security situation in the country and the peace process, in which the importance for a negotiated settlement was underscored. Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed NATO's continued support for Afghanistan and the ANDSF, as decided at the recent NATO Summit meeting in Brussels last month, which included decisions to: continue to stand beside Afghanistan and protect the gains of the past twenty years; continue funding and training of ANDSF; maintain infrastructure, including Kabul international airport; and continued support for an Afghan-owned and led peace process.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Norway, H.E. Teimuraz Otarovich Ramishvili

On July 15th, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Norway, H.E. Teimuraz Otarovich Ramishvili. They discussed the recent developments in Afghanistan, including the security situation, the escalation of violence and terrorist attacks, the Afghan peace process and the importance of regional and international consensus and cooperation for peace and stability in Afghanistan.



Ambassador Ghafoorzai gave an overview of security situation in the country, national efforts on the Afghan peace process, the humanitarian situation resulting from increased terrorism and violence and the ongoing transition in regards to the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. He also highlighted the importance of strengthening regional and international consensus to achieve dignified and lasting peace in Afghanistan, including through the UN Security Council. Ambassador Ghafoorzai also underscored the important role of regional countries to help bring about an improvement in the overall situation, to bring an end to terrorist attacks by virtue of a comprehensive ceasefire and to move the peace process forward, all of which urgently required implementation of Taliban commitments under the Doha agreement.

The Ambassador of the Russian Federation expressed concern over the increased violence and attacks, especially in northern Afghanistan, and underscored the Russian Federation's desire for a durable and lasting peace, to be achieved through a political settlement. He also reaffirmed the solidarity and friendship of the Russian Federation with Afghanistan.

Renewal of the Kabul Field Hospital Agreement between Afghanistan and Norway

On July 12th, the governments of Afghanistan and Norway finalized the legal arrangement for Norway's continued role in providing essential services at the field hospital at Hamid Karzai International Airport. Over the past several years, Norway has been leading the field hospital at Kabul airport which has been one among many contributions from Norway for Afghanistan in various fields. The hospital has been providing essential health and medical services for the diplomatic community in Kabul.



Norway's decision to continue operation of the field hospital at Kabul International Airport was announced by H.E. Prime Minister Erna Solberg at last month's NATO Summit meeting in Brussels. In addition to the field hospital, Norway also announced its commitment to take part in the funding and out-of-country training of the ANDSF in the way forward. This commitment was highlighted by PM Erna Solberg, Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide and Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen at the NATO Summit. The field hospital is a key part of Norway's diplomatic and civilian presence in Kabul and is considered essential to ensure a continued international presence in Kabul. In addition, the field hospital is vital for ensuring that Norway and the rest of the international community can continue to provide humanitarian help, development aid and support the peace process in Afghanistan.

Foreign Minister Atmar Conveys Afghanistan's Solidarity with Norway on the 10th Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks in Utøya and Oslo

July 22nd marked 10 years since the horrific terrorist attacks in Utøya and Oslo which took the lives of seventy-seven people and left more than two hundred severely wounded. In a letter addressed to Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide, Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar conveyed, on behalf of the government of Afghanistan, solidarity with the government and people of Norway and to the friends and families of those who lost their lives.



“On this somber occasion, we in Afghanistan stand in full solidarity and friendship with the people and government of Norway as you remember and pay tribute to the lives of all those who perished on that tragic day. As a country that suffers from extremism and terrorism daily, we recognize fully the pain and the anguish brought about by such horrific acts.”

Moreover, Foreign Minister Atmar reiterated Afghanistan's gratitude for Norway's friendship and partnership which is deeply valued by the Afghan people and government. He further added that Norwegian sacrifices and contributions in Afghanistan, helped enable foundational gains in various sectors and that Afghanistan is proud of having been able to make these joint achievements together with Norway and other international partners. Afghanistan looks forward to deepening our bilateral partnership with Norway in the way forward for advancing common values of peace, tolerance, democracy and prosperity. Norway held a memorial ceremony on the occasion of the 10 year anniversary of the attack, attended by families and friends of those who lost their lives, Prime Minister Erna Solberg, previous Prime Minister and current NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, and the Royal family.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with India's Ambassador to Norway, H.E. Dr. B. Bala Bhaskar



On July 15th, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with India's Ambassador to Norway, Dr. Bala Bhaskar. The two sides discussed recent developments in Afghanistan, including the security situation, the escalation of violence and terrorist attacks by the Taliban, the humanitarian situation, regional and international efforts for peace in Afghanistan as well as Afghanistan-India bilateral cooperation and joint collaboration between the Afghan and Indian Embassies in Oslo.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai hailed India's many important contributions in Afghanistan in various sectors, which is very much appreciated by the people of Afghanistan. He also highlighted India's important role, as part of the broader regional efforts, to help strengthen regional consensus on peace in Afghanistan and, in that regard, to help bring about conditions for steady progress to achieve the end-state of a lasting and dignified peace, supported and embraced by the people of Afghanistan. Furthermore, he highlighted the important role of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, of which India is now a current member for a two-year period.

Ambassador Bhaskar shared his concern over the security situation and reaffirmed India's long-standing support for peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. The relationship between Afghanistan and India is firmly based on historical and cultural ties shared between the people and governments of both countries, Afghanistan-India bilateral cooperation includes the areas of security, governance, capacity building, development and education. Both sides also agreed to hold joint initiatives between the two missions in Oslo in the area of cultural cooperation.

President Ghani Addressed the Tashkent Conference on Regional Connectivity



On July 15th and 16th, the International Conference *Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity; Challenges and Opportunities* took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The conference brought together representatives from nearly 50 countries, including Afghanistan, China, Russia, the US, and the EU. President Ghani addressed the opening session of the conference, which was attended by President Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan and other heads of states, as well as ministers and other senior representatives for international and regional organizations.

President Ghani highlighted the current situation as one that poses opportunities, risk and turbulence and stressed that the way in which the region deals with opportunities and challenges defining the context in Afghanistan after withdrawal of international forces “could have a significant impact on the prospect of regional cooperation or confrontation.” With recent concrete international commitments for assistance and support, the new chapter of international relationship is now being framed. He further stated that Afghanistan’s reforms range from digitization of government to overhaul of national budget and revenue to construction of major irrigation and development projects. Moreover, heavy investments are being made to make tangible use of Afghanistan’s natural wealth, “from mining, oil and gas to renewable energy in geothermal, hydro solar and wind” being created.

Meanwhile, ending the conflict through a political settlement has remained an ultimate priority. The “end-state of a sovereign, united, democratic, peaceful and connected Afghanistan has been endorsed internationally and regionally,” and a clear road map has been presented by the government to achieve the objective. President Ghani once again called on the Taliban “to engage with the government to end the war and the destructive recent onslaught.” Relying on the people’s deep sense of patriotism, Afghanistan is confident in changing the challenging situation to one of opportunity. The resistance would continue until the Taliban come to realize that a political solution is the only way forward.

In relation to the theme of the conference, President Ghani underscored that the Afghan government would accelerate efforts on enhancing consensus on regional connectivity “both in terms of hardware and software in relationship and the rule of law which was essential for expediting the formulation and implementation of various programs and projects for regional connectivity.” He further called on the region to approach Afghanistan from the perspective of its potential as an “Asian Roundabout,” where Afghanistan has “for millennia served as a hub of flow of civilizations, cultures, goods, ideas and people.”

Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board Meeting Held in Kabul



On July 28th, the government of Afghanistan and international donors met in Kabul at the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board Meeting to review commitments and progress in the country. President Ghani, First Vice-President Amrullah Saleh and Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah, addressed the meeting as keynote speakers. Ambassadors from several countries gave remarks on the diverse topics discussed in various panels: national peace and development, innovative reforms, the Afghanistan Partnership Framework and rule of law and combating corruption.

President Ghani opened his remarks by paying tribute to all Afghan patriots, particularly those in the ANSDF, and men and women from the civil society, who have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend national values and the people of Afghanistan. He thanked international partners for their solidarity, friendship and support for the victims of the conflict, which has been greatly appreciated and essential. President Ghani also underscored that the withdrawal of international forces from the country presented an opportunity for Afghanistan to frame and implement sovereignty strategies in the manner that suits the country's conditions and history, "as well as the benefits of regional connectivity and global cooperation."

Returning to the question of peace, President Ghani, expressed gratitude to the international community for their commitment to Afghanistan's "agreed end-state of a sovereign, united, Islamic, democratic, peaceful and connected Afghanistan," which enjoyed strong regional and global consensus. He highlighted the government's commitment to the process, which has been demonstrated through enforcement of difficult decisions, including the release of 5,000 Taliban fighters and an offer for holding early elections. The government remains fully committed to a political solution and, to that end, has articulated "a widely supported program to serve as a bridge from an all out war to a just and lasting peace through a political settlement." In the context of the desired end-state, Afghanistan is "determined to defend the gains of the past twenty years and the generations that have gone before that." Moreover, the people and government of Afghanistan have the political will, national narrative, action plan and deep sense of patriotism to seize the moment for peace and stability.

Finally, President Ghani underscored the importance of continued international partnership and engagement, including humanitarian assistance and that he looked forward to exchanging views and adjusting the agenda of cooperation with international partners in the upcoming months and years.

UN Representative for Afghanistan, Mrs. Deborah Lyons, highlighted the importance of addressing the urgent and immediate humanitarian needs of over 18 million Afghans that were faced by a combination of challenges, including conflict, covid-19 and drought. The number of Afghans in need of humanitarian assistance doubled compared to last year. She highlighted the core priorities: an immediate and lasting end to the violence, unhindered access to humanitarian aid, increased funding for an effective response, and an enabling environment for activities of humanitarian partners. She also emphasized the need for sincere engagement by the Taliban in the peace process for a viable and successful outcome.

Eid al-Adha and President Ghani's Eid Message from the Presidential Palace

This year's Eid al-Adha was celebrated from Monday, July 19th, to Tuesday, July 20th. President Ghani held a traditional ceremony at the presidential palace in Kabul for the occasion, at which senior government and other political figures, including members of parliament and other influential personalities gathered for Eid prayers. In his remarks following the prayers, President Ghani congratulated the Afghan nation and the heroic Afghanistan national defense and security forces on the onset of this year's Eid.



He paid special tribute to the bravery, sacrifices and commitment of ANDSF as they serve to protect their homeland and people and underscored the importance of continued strong nationwide support for the ANDSF who defend Afghanistan's territorial integrity and sovereignty. He once again called on the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire to spare the people from more suffering and commit to a lasting and dignified peace.

President Ghani stated that this year's Eid came at a time of both challenges but also opportunities. At the moment, preparations were being made to improve the situation towards stability, including arrangements in the area of security. He also underscored the importance of Afghanistan's national unity at this crucial moment in time.

First Afghan Female Professional Pianist Graduates from Afghanistan's National Institute of Music to Perform in Major International Concerts

Maram Abdullah, a 19 year old graduate of Afghanistan's National Institute of Music has become the first female professional pianist to perform in major international concert halls. Maram joined the music institute after she returned with her family from Egypt, and during the past twelve years she has performed in ten countries, including in Europe and the United States. Maram Abdullah has been part of the Zohra Orchestra for the last five years. Her story will lead to more opportunities for other girls who also want to pursue their dreams, as some of the music institute's students are young women and girls.



Maram's story is an example of how the Afghan youth is prospering and pursuing their dreams, which represents today's transformed Afghanistan. Mariam first gained an interest in piano at the age of five and thereafter pursued her dreams with determination and conviction. By participating in major international concerts, worldwide, she will help represent the talent and skill of young Afghan women in the field of arts and culture.



The Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo
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