



Afghanistan:

MONTHLY REVIEW

March 2004

(including Berlin Conference)

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Berlin Conference

The Berlin Conference, held on 31st March and 1st April, brought together international donors to review funding over the next seven years based on a projected budget, presented by the Afghan government, of \$27.5 billion.

The conference was successful in that pledges were secured for the first year (of \$4.5 billion) which slightly exceeded the budgeted figure. Pledges for the initial three years were also encouraging, reaching over two thirds of the budget. Based on the pledges made to date, the USA stands out as the major donor, with an allocation of \$5.036 billion. It is followed by the EC, which has allocated \$1.421 billion. Among the other major donors are Japan (\$900 million), UK (\$850 million), Germany (\$729 million), Canada (\$440 million), India (\$400 million), Netherlands (\$285 million), Norway (\$253 million), Italy (\$263 million), Iran (\$254 million), Saudi Arabia (\$230 million), Spain (\$147 million), Sweden (\$144 million), the World Bank (\$553 million), Denmark (\$130 million), the Asian Development Bank (\$115 million) and Pakistan (\$105 million). It is noteworthy that the combined allocation from the European Commission and individual European governments totals \$4.525 billion. It is equally noteworthy that contributions from Afghanistan's immediate and near neighbours (including Pakistan, Iran, China, the Russian Federation, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Gulf States) totalled \$1.240 billion. The normal caution should be used in drawing conclusions from these figures in that governments vary in their willingness or capacity to actually disburse funds on the basis of pledges made and to do so in a timely manner.

The attendance of the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and of the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, were indicative of the high priority attached to the conference and to Afghanistan at the present time. This is clearly a reflection of the fragility of the Bonn Process, in spite of the small-scale incremental progress made on many fronts. There is understandable determination that Afghanistan should be held together while the situation in Iraq continues to give serious cause for concern.

The donor conference was preceded by a number of specialist conferences including one held from 29th-30th March which brought together representatives of Afghan civil society. This is of interest in reflecting the views of a broad cross section of Afghan opinion. The civil society conference concluded that there were serious risks in holding elections under present security conditions and called for a greater involvement of Afghan civil society in the process. It also advocated that elections should not go ahead until 70% of the electorate had been registered and that the DDR process should be based on a demobilisation of entire militia units rather than a downsizing process within each one. A copy of the press release issued at the end of the conference is attached as an appendix.

“Securing Afghanistan’s Future”

In preparation for the Berlin Conference, the Afghan Government produced a substantial strategy document entitled “Securing Afghanistan’s Future”, which is now in the public domain. The report received significant input from key ministries, from international financial institutions and the UN system.

The document states that “Afghanistan is aiming for a small yet effective government whose role will, as far as possible, be limited to ensuring the security and safety of citizens, creating an enabling but properly regulated environment for the private sector and ensuring that all

citizens have access to basic services”. As in the National Development Framework, there thus remains a strong emphasis on the role of the government as being to provide a regulatory framework for a strong private sector. The report makes it clear that there will be no state-owned enterprises but does envisage some investment by the state to lay the foundations for future private-sector activity.

The programme anticipates annual growth of 9% in the legal economy based on agriculture, mining, industry (including construction, transportation, telecoms and manufacturing) and services. It recognises that this growth rate will still leave a vulnerable population of around 4 million who will need support through social welfare initiatives. A stated aim of the Afghan government is to raise the per capita annual income from less than \$200 to \$500.

The government seeks to finance the wage portion of its recurrent expenditure in five years and the entire recurrent budget in nine years.

Of the budget of \$27.5 billion, \$13.5 billion is earmarked for improvements to the physical infrastructure, \$2.7 billion for education, \$2.6 billion for security measures, \$2.3 billion for livelihoods and social protection, \$1.4 billion for health care and \$0.4 billion for culture, media and sport.

Of this, \$7.2 billion will be needed to fund the government’s recurrent expenditure. The balance would be for specific projects, including major capital projects. Primary among these will be reconstruction of the major highway system linking the major cities, referred to as the ring road.

The report notes that, apart from agriculture, the economy depends very heavily on small-scale enterprises, primarily at the household level. It identifies potential for expansion through the development of hydropower and the exploitation of gas reserves in northern Afghanistan estimated at 120 billion cubic meters. Private investment opportunities will also be sought to further develop telecommunications and to explore and extract new oil reserves, together with substantial mineral reserves, including coal, iron ore, salt, copper, quarry materials, marble, industrial minerals and gemstones. The report nonetheless notes that “investor perception of the difficulties of doing business in Afghanistan constrains funding from international markets for exploration and development”.

The recent opening of several international banks in Afghanistan is seen to be significant in facilitating both international trade and inward investment.

In noting the constraints to economic progress, the report states that “until key concerns around the security situation and the extent to which rule of law is followed are addressed, the level of private investment will be limited”. The document stresses the low level of general education, the shortage of specific professional skills and poor health indicators as undermining of the capacity of the country to achieve significant growth in the short term. It adds that “investments in human and social capital will not be productive if citizens do not enjoy basic protections and guarantees” and emphasises that “an integrated strategy must address core structural issues of human rights, human security and the rule of law”. Concern is expressed about the “increasingly heavy demands ...being placed on national resources and capacities, not least by large numbers of returnees and ex-combatants seeking to reintegrate, and by the rapid growth of urban centres”. In this context, “pressures by asylum countries to accelerate the rate of return” are said to exacerbate the “significant pressure on already fragile

national resources". It also comments that there "are currently strong and concentrated interests in Afghanistan who are angling for a weak central government which will allow them to undertake narcotic production and illegal natural resource exploitation".

In focusing on capacity considerations, the document presents a key dilemma that the government faces in, for example, relying very heavily on NGOs to provide education and health services and thus needing an ongoing international presence yet being constrained in building up its institutional base because it is unable to offer terms and conditions of employment which are competitive with those provided by international organisations and the diplomatic sector.

Emphasis is placed on the low socio-economic base from which progress has to be made. The report notes that a recent estimate of the Human Development Index for Afghanistan places the country second-worst in the world after Sierra Leone. Among the indicators noted are the average maternal mortality rate of 1,600 per 100,000 (increasing to 6,500 per 100,000 in Badakshan), the infant mortality rate of 165 per 1,000, the under five mortality rate of 257 per 1,000 and the rate of chronic malnutrition (moderate and severe stunting) of around 50%.

Developments in Herat

It remains unclear what the sequence of events was that led to the killing of Ismail Khan's son, Mirwais Siddiq who was also Aviation Minister, on 21st March. It would appear that he was killed by the forces of General Zahir Naebzadeh, who was appointed military commander of Herat by the Afghan Government last autumn as an outcome of a policy decision that no regional governor could hold military as well as civilian responsibilities. This policy decision, in part, reflected concern at the fact that Ismail Khan, who had been the de facto ruler of Herat from 1992 to 1995, had quickly filled the power vacuum left by the departure of the Taliban and re-established his old fiefdom. President Karzai was mindful of the power accorded to Ismail Khan by virtue of his control over his own militia and, while according him the position of Governor, had sought to reduce his power base by appointing a separate military chief. This may have led to tensions between the two men which linked with the complex dynamic between Ismail Khan and the Afghan government in which Ismail Khan was seen to be resisting the efforts of the government to achieve greater control over the Herat region. The fact that Ismail Khan has been benefiting from substantial customs revenues and only handing over a relatively small proportion of these has clearly been a cause for concern at the centre. The events that led to Mirwais Siddiq's death may therefore be linked with efforts by the government to put some pressure on Ismail Khan to give up his fiefdom. It is of interest that Ismail Khan had returned from Kabul only a couple of days previously where the US ambassador is said to have prevailed upon him to accept a cabinet post in Karzai's government or the governorship of another province. However, there is a risk that these efforts will have further added to the prevailing instability within Afghanistan. Notwithstanding the concerns that have been expressed about the authoritarian style of Ismail Khan's leadership and his conservative approach, he has been able to provide a high level of stability to Herat and to operate an effective administration, both of which have facilitated a strong local economy. Recent developments seem likely to undermine this stability and lead to challenges to his power base, both from the government and from local contenders in Herat and the surrounding provinces.

The despatch of 1,500 members of the new Afghan army in the immediate aftermath of the assassination was presented as a peace-keeping initiative and, although these forces played no

role, their continued presence may be seen as an effort to assert the government's writ in Herat. Ismail Khan has appointed his own military commander after defeating the forces of Zahir Naebzadeh but the latter may continue to represent a threat to Ismail Khan's power base, particularly if he forms alliances with other disaffected power holders in the area.

Elections

In response to multiple expressions of concern with regard to the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections while the conditions to permit free and fair elections remain elusive, President Karzai recently announced that the elections would be postponed until September. He added, however, that these would include parliamentary elections as well as presidential elections. There had previously been speculation that parliamentary elections would be postponed until next year.

The decision to hold both presidential and parliamentary elections within 2004 has provoked even greater concern amongst key stakeholders and observers. It is not thought to be realistic, under prevailing security conditions, to anticipate that the various power holders would refrain from seeking to influence the outcome through pressures of various kinds. Account also needs to be taken of the active steps being taken by the Taliban and other radical elements to undermine, through threats of violence and terrorist activity, what is seen as a US-sponsored electoral process. Further, the logistics involved in drawing up and agreeing district boundaries, electing district and provincial councils etc., in order to provide the conditions for parliamentary elections to take place, would be enormous under the best of circumstances. To implement such a process in a situation of serious insecurity in many parts of the country would test the capacity of any organisation and it is far from clear that the UN has the necessary capacity. Further, the staff engaged to carry out the process are highly vulnerable to targeted violence.

The International Crisis Group produced a report entitled "Elections and Security in Afghanistan" on 30th March. In the report it commented that there "is a real risk that elections under present conditions will merely confirm an undemocratic and unstable status quo". The report is highly critical of progress made to date under the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme), not least in relation to the militia forces of the Defence Minister, General Fahim. It notes that this will be further undermined if a proposal to establish new Special Forces-led militia units (Afghanistan Guard Forces) goes ahead, to compensate for inadequate capacity within the US-led coalition forces to engage in the "war on terror". The document comments that plans to strengthen the international military presence over the coming months will not provide sufficient capacity to ensure adequate security for elections. In this context, it notes that NATO, which currently has responsibility for the ISAF operation in Kabul and the German-led PRT in Kunduz, plans to create new Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Maimana and Faizabad by June 2004 and, at the same time, bring the British-led PRT in Mazar and the New Zealand-led PRT under NATO command. By September, it is planned that additional PRTs will be established in Chaghcharan, Qala-i-Nau and Farah. The plans also include a transfer of authority for the Herat PRT from the US-led coalition forces to NATO but this transfer may be reviewed in the light of recent developments in Herat. In addition to this planned expansion of PRTs in the north and west, it is envisaged that further PRTs will also be established at some point by NATO in the southern Pushtun belt but no dates have been set for these. In the meantime, current and future PRTs in this area will come under the US-led coalition forces. These will continue to have a "hearts and minds" objective linked to the war on terror and are unlikely to

be effective in providing security for elections. Conversely, it is envisaged that the clear focus of the Mazar PRT on improvement of the security environment will also be manifest in the PRTs which come under the ISAF mandate.

The report notes that UNAMA has identified a series of benchmarks which, it considers, should be met before free and fair elections can take place. These include: “ a vigorous disarmament and reintegration program aiming at the cantonment of 100 per cent of heavy weapons and the demobilisation and reintegration of no less than 40 per cent of the Afghan Military Forces’ [as the militia are collectively known] troop strength ...[and] promoting the deployment by NATO and the Coalition of international military forces, both static and mobile, in numbers large enough to assist effectively domestic security forces in the protection of the electoral process against extremists’ attacks and factional intimidation and interference”. The International Crisis Group argues that elections should be held only when the necessary measures have been implemented.

In concluding, the ICG report states that without “a reinvigorated disarmament and reintegration process, political and economic life in both the centre and the provinces will continue to be dominated by the gun or the shadow of the gun. Elections under the prevailing conditions will only confirm this reality – something that is understood by the commanders who control the Ministry of Defence and have steadfastly resisted efforts to dismantle their militias”.

In an effort to provide security for the elections, the US and other governments have put additional resources into police training, to give those currently attached to the various militia and other recruits the opportunity to receive some basic grounding in human rights and other policing principles. With the new courses limited to two to four weeks duration, the newly trained police cannot be expected to inspire confidence within the population.

The electoral registration process has been uneven to date, with a particular concentration in the Kabul region. The south and south-east have seen extremely low rates of registration. 1,662,702 people had registered by the end of March. 29% of these were women. The process of registering political parties is also facing enormous obstacles and, under present security conditions, those parties which do succeed in securing registration will inevitably face difficulties if they do not have the backing of major power holders.

The war on terror

Global media attention was focused this month on the efforts of the Pakistan army to step up their operations in the tribal areas of Pakistan in pursuit of individuals thought to be linked to Al-Qaida. Although these operations, which were centred on the Wana area of South Waziristan and involved 70,000 soldiers, resulted in a reported 167 arrests, no high profile figures were captured. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who was thought to be in the Wana area where the military were concentrating their searches, was not among those taken. However, those arrested were said to include Pakistanis, Arabs, Chechens, Uzbeks and Uighurs (from China’s Xinjiang Province). A tape thought to be produced by Ayman Al-Zawahiri was subsequently broadcast on Al-Jazeera television.

On the Afghan side of the border, the US-led coalition forces established new bases to strengthen their capacity to prevent the flight of Al-Qaida and other radical elements. This new offensive, named Operation Enduring Freedom, has required the despatch of an

additional 2,000 US soldiers to Afghanistan, bringing the total to 15,500. Continuing civilian casualties brought about by coalition operations can be expected to undermine the efforts of their forces to win hearts and minds and these efforts will be further undermined by leaflets distributed by the Taliban which threaten villagers who cooperate with the US military.

The Pakistan Government has similarly risked alienating the population in the Wana area by the use of tactics based on the employment of overwhelming force. Its military operations have thus caused significant displacement, created civilian casualties and destroyed homes. In addition, in an effort to intimidate the population, the Pakistan military has sealed shops and businesses, seized vehicles and dismissed those deemed not to be cooperating from government jobs. Thousands have had to flee their homes because of the intensity of the fighting, many having to seek treatment for their injuries in the hospital in Wana. The arrest of 16 tribal leaders, on the grounds that they were not cooperating with the efforts of the Pakistan military, will not have helped relations. The MMA (Muttahida Majlis –e- Amal), which controls North-West Frontier Province and also wields considerable power in Baluchistan, has expressed its concerns in the strongest terms in the national parliament. The principle Pushtun nationalist party, Pukhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, has also expressed its opposition to the military operation in South Waziristan. Recent reports that the US government is putting pressure on President Musharraf to launch a further offensive raise fears that tensions between the government and the population of the tribal areas could become acute, provoking a major internal crisis. The appointment, by President Musharraf, of a Punjabi to head the offensive would appear to have accentuated the ethnic dimension in the dynamic between the government and the tribal areas, which has been manifest in differential treatment being accorded to Pushtuns and Punjabis among Pakistan military taken prisoner. However, there have also been reports that certain tribal groups are actively seeking to cooperate with the government in searching out people in their midst from other parts of the Islamic world and are challenging the right of political parties to speak for them. The efforts of the Pakistan government to win hearts and minds may therefore be bearing some, albeit limited, fruit.

Human Rights Watch report

Human Rights Watch has produced a new report entitled “Enduring Freedom”: Abuses by U.S. Forces in Afghanistan.” The report concludes that “the United States is maintaining a system of arrests and detention as part of its ongoing military and intelligence operations that violates international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In doing so, the United States is endangering the lives of Afghan civilians, undermining efforts to restore the rule of law in Afghanistan and calling into question its commitment to upholding basic rights”. The report details “cases of excessive force during arrests, arbitrary and indefinite detention and mistreatment of detainees”. The document also sets out to demonstrate that the U.S.–administered detention system in Afghanistan “operates almost entirely outside of the rule of law”. With reference to search operations, the report comments that “US military forces have repeatedly used deadly force from helicopter gunships and small and heavy arms fire, including undirected suppressing fire, during what are essentially law-enforcement operations to arrest persons in uncontested locales.” It adds that the “use of these tactics has resulted in avoidable civilian deaths and injuries.” Concern is also expressed that “Afghan soldiers deployed alongside U.S. forces have beaten and otherwise mistreated people during arrest operations and looted homes or seized the land of those being detained”. The document notes that the “routine arrests and indefinite detention of persons who have no genuine

connection to armed opposition groups has angered many Afghan communities and lessened their willingness to cooperate with US forces”

Xinhua News Agency reported on 15th March that a delegation of tribal elders from Barmal District in south-eastern Paktika Province planned to visit Kabul to express their concerns to President Karzai and the US-led coalition over “the insulting treatment” applied by coalition forces. A member of the delegation complained that, contrary to “culture and tradition”, coalition forces would search houses, “occupy them for as long as 15 to 20 days” and “arrest and terrify” the population based on “wrong intelligence reports.”

Security

A Turkish engineer and an Afghan security guard were killed on 5th March in an ambush in the Shah Joy district of Zabul Province in southern Afghanistan. A second Turkish worker and another Afghan security guard were kidnapped in the ambush. All the men were working on reconstruction of the Kabul to Kandahar highway under a subcontract to the US construction firm, the Louis Berger Group. The ambush is thought to have been carried out by Taliban elements. The Taliban were also thought to be responsible for an attack on members of the Afghan National Army on the same day near the Pakistani border. Seven soldiers were killed in the attack.

On 6th March, a Director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society was killed near Qalat, the provincial capital of Zabul Province. Armed men forced his car to stop, dragged him from the vehicle and executed him.

On 13th March, about 60 Taliban fighters were said to have raided a government office in southern Kandahar Province. On the same day, two rockets flew over the centre of Kabul. One failed to detonate and the other exploded on an open hillside. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

A compound housing UN officials engaged in the electoral registration process was attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and gunfire in the Chamkani district of Paktia Province on 14th March. No one was injured.

Factional fighting between two commanders of Hisb-e-Wahdat resulted in the deaths of four civilians in Daikundi district of Uruzgan on 15th March. A Commissioner for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission commented that serious fighting often erupted over issues of opium trading and the collection of forced taxes. He added that the human rights problem in Daikundi was one of the worst in Afghanistan, prompting an exodus to Iran and Pakistan.

The US-led coalition forces have established a new Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghazni, an area which has seen particularly high levels of violence against aid personnel, resulting in a number of deaths. Although the US military has stated that the PRT will provide the conditions for NGOs to operate in the area, it is likely that NGOs will not want to run the risk of being associated with the US government that any cooperation would imply. The targeted killings of aid workers to date have clearly been a consequence of the difficulties faced by the aid community in seeking to maintain an image of humanitarian neutrality and impartiality in the midst of coalition operations linked to the war on terror. Even if NGOs returned to Ghazni and sought to maintain their distance from the PRT, they

would remain targets of the Taliban. Any effort to seek the protection of the PRT would heighten the level of risk and the PRTs are, in any event, not resourced to provide effective protection for the aid community.

Key Minister leaves the Afghan Government

The departure of the Planning Minister, Haji Mohammed Mohaqiq, from the government on 8th March may create a rift between radical elements within the Hazara party, Hisb-e-Wahdat and others. It would appear that Mr Muhaqiq, who is a senior commander of Hisb-e-Wahdat in Mazar-i-Sharif, walked out of a cabinet meeting, expressing his anger over a plan to transfer some of his powers to Ashraf Ghani, the Finance Minister. This hasty departure was officially deemed by Hamid Karzai to be a resignation from the cabinet. Mr Muhaqiq subsequently disputed that he had resigned and claimed that he had been illegally dismissed because he had previously announced his candidacy for the position of President. He also levelled charges against those brought in from the Afghan diaspora to take government positions that they were seeking to destroy those who had fought as jihadis against the Soviet occupation. In so doing, he highlighted a significant source of tension within the cabinet. He was replaced by a Western-educated technocrat, Bashir Dosh. The Hazara population continues to be represented by the leader of Hisb-e-Wahdat, Karim Khalili, who is one of the Vice- Presidents.

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue report

Entitled “Assistance to Justice and the Rule of Law in Afghanistan: A strategic analysis”, this report seeks to provide an independent analysis of the processes involved in reconstructing “Justice and the Rule of Law” in Afghanistan. It defines the “Rule of Law” sector as comprising the activities of the police, the prosecution, the legal profession, the courts, the correction system and human rights institutions and notes that Afghanistan could be said to be in a transition “from one form of government, with almost no international involvement, to a new form of government, with a high level of international involvement, against a background of ongoing, chronic insecurity”. The report comments that the “Rule of Law” was not given the prominence it required at Bonn in December 2001 and has tended to be regarded as a subset of the achievement of security, even though the establishment of the “Rule of Law” goes well beyond the achievement of stability and security. It thus notes that it is up to the Afghan government to manage the development of state institutions.....in a manner consistent with the protection of its citizens and the maintenance of national security”. In arguing for a much higher profile to be accorded by the international community to the “Rule of Law”, the report stresses the need for action to be underpinned by much greater risk analysis relating to the causes of conflict and the existing picture of capacity and practice across the country. The report also argues for much greater coherence across the sector, with stronger leadership from within the government and the UN. To this end, it urges the international community to give much greater priority to a strengthening of management and administrative capacity within the permanent institutions of the Afghan government, namely the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of the Interior. The report comments that the Judicial Reform Commission was “not able to overcome factional, institutional and personality issues among the permanent Justice institutions” and that it “has struggled with self identity, between facilitating implementation...and implementing directly itself – often with solid practical success, but equally without the full involvement or real support of the permanent institutions”.

A particular conclusion of the report is that the decision of the international community to encourage donors to have a significant role in the implementation of programmes, in order to reduce the burden on the UN and enable it to have a “light footprint”, has resulted in a fragmented approach to reconstruction. This has also, in the view of the authors, meant that donors have struggled to perform a role for which they are not institutionally prepared while the long experience of the UN in the rule of law sector has not been fully utilised. The success of the Italian government in producing a streamlined criminal code is nonetheless praised.

The report draws attention to the fact that police salaries are still not paid (for reasons which remain unclear) and stresses the serious implications of this while police morale remains precarious and their public image far from secure.

An interesting comment on the degree to which external agendas influence outcomes is made when the report comments that “just when a people, hoping to see the end of years of conflict and suffering, need time to work out their future path, the international community sets its own momentum, determined by other interests and pressures”.

DFID country strategy

The British Government’s Department for International Development has recently published its strategy for Afghanistan in a report entitled “A changing nation: DFID support to Afghanistan”. The DFID report notes that, of the £200 million pledged by the UK Government at the Tokyo Conference of January 2002, £150 million has already been provided. It adds that the UK has since increased its pledge to £500 million over 5 years. It notes that initial priority was given to the provision of immediate assistance to the most vulnerable in response to the drought and the large scale return of refugees. Since the spring of 2002, however, the focus has been on the process of helping to build an effective state, “with a solid political and economic framework”, together with initiatives to improve security and income opportunities. 48% of funding has been allocated to the provision of direct support to the government administration through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. A further 28% has been allocated to humanitarian programmes, 9% to Sustainable Livelihoods and Counter-Narcotics, 5% to Public Administration Reform and Economic Management and 4% to the political process and Security Sector Reform.

Refugees

The Iranian government has announced that the 1.46 million Afghans still in Iran will “face more restrictions”. Statements issued by the government suggest that Afghans are likely to experience even greater enforcement of existing restrictions on their right to work and to educate their children. They will also be barred from opening bank accounts and enrolling in state universities. Special permits will be needed for them to rent property. These pressures can be seen as part of a trend which has been manifest since the mid 1990s and which have been instrumental in the return of 706,000 Afghans from Iran since December 2001. It is thus of concern that a number of European governments continue to use the return of over 2.3 million refugees from Pakistan and Iran as an indicator of the success of the US-led intervention in Afghanistan of October 2001 and of the Bonn Agreement. This claim runs counter to evidence from a number of sources which makes it clear that this return was a consequence of significant pressures on Afghans in both countries, including a withdrawal of

specific rights and entitlements and growing police harassment. In spite of these pressures, a substantial proportion of returnees returned again to Pakistan or Iran.

Economic developments

The Chinese Government has agreed to rebuild a major irrigation project 50 km to the north of Kabul. This was originally completed, with funding from China, in the 1970s, but has since fallen into disrepair, exacerbated by war damage. The project, which will benefit 24,800 hectares, will cost \$10 million. Work was due to start at the end of March and was expected to take 2 years.

The US government has started work on placing a second layer of asphalt on the Kabul to Kandahar highway. It is also reviewing designs to reconstruct 100km of the two most deteriorated sections of the Kandahar to Herat highway.

Appendix

CIVIL SOCIETY FROM AFGHANISTAN -PRESS RELEASE BERLIN 30 March

AFGHAN REPRESENTATIVES OF AFGHAN CIVIL SOCIETY HIGHLIGHT KEY AREAS FOR ACTION PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS IN LEAD UP TO BERLIN CONFERENCE

Forty Afghans from a wide range of civil society organisations including women's, youth, media, political and human rights groups as well as religious and traditional leaders, from all over Afghanistan, were invited by the German government to Berlin for a two day meeting from 29-30 March.

The meeting was preparatory to the two day donors' conference in Berlin which begins on 31 March. It was jointly organised by the Afghan Civil Society Forum-swisspeace and the German Friedrich-Ebert Foundation.

"This important meeting comes at a critical juncture for Afghanistan and provides a rare opportunity for the Afghan perspective from the ground to be heard" said Susanne Schmeidl of swisspeace based in Kabul.

The discussions held by the civil society representatives examined the implementation of the Constitution, the chances of holding free and fair elections by September, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process and the role of the international community in rebuilding the country. Concerns about the security situation and the state of DDR in particular dominated the discussions. "Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is the de facto peace process in Afghanistan. Without DDR there will be no security and hence no environment for sustainable democracy in the country. DDR is a pre-requisite for the holding of free and fair elections now scheduled for September." The concluding statement issued at the end of the conference reads as follows:

"Afghan civil society recognises that there have been significant achievements in the peace process so far, but at the same time is deeply concerned at the lack of progress in critical areas. The urgent need to include civil society stake holders in the development of all the democratic processes and institutions in Afghanistan was stressed by the participants. The lack of information received by the general public on the democratic processes now getting underway was highlighted. The participants called for the elections to be postponed until the majority of the voter population had a chance to register for the elections.

The challenges involved in holding presidential and parliamentary elections in September 2004 are formidable. "It will require all the stakeholders to work together, including civil society, political parties, government institutions and the international community, if the elections are to be held within the given time-frame" said Grant Kippen, Country Director for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Kabul and resource person for this meeting.

Recommendations
from “Civil Participation Society Participation in Afghan Peacebuilding and Reconstruction”
Conference
Berlin, Germany, 30 March 2004

Preface

Afghan civil society recognises that there have been significant achievements in the peace process so far, but at the same time is deeply concerned at the lack of progress in critical areas. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is the de facto peace process in Afghanistan. Without DDR there will be no security and hence no environment for sustainable democracy in the country. DDR is a pre-requisite for the holding of free and fair elections now scheduled for September. There is an urgent need to include civil society stake holders in the development of all the democratic processes and institutions in Afghanistan. We are deeply concerned that it will not be possible to hold free and fair elections by September given the current security situation and the fact that meaningful processes of consultation with the Afghan people have yet to begin. It is essential that the Afghan people are informed and engaged in all democratic processes and civil society organisations have an invaluable role to play in partnership with the government in this regard.

The role of the international community remains central with regard to the provision of security and protection of human rights in this transitional period.

The participants of the civil society conference supports the demand of the Afghan government for further financial support by the international community.

1. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

- The key objectives of the DDR process must be implemented within the framework of the Bonn Agreement. For the DDR process to succeed it must defactionalise the Afghan Military Forces (AMF) by decommissioning by units.
- To ensure effective heavy weapon cantonment this process must take place under the international supervision of ISAF/NATO.
- An independent commission of representatives from civil society to include the media should inspect and monitor the DDR process and inform the Afghan public on its progress at regular intervals.
- A detailed and comprehensive strategy must be developed immediately to halt the illegal trafficking in narcotics and weapons.
- The DDR process must be seen by Afghans to be under the control of qualified and experienced Afghans. To this end, the government must institute relevant administrative reforms based on skills and knowledge. This is vital if public trust and confidence is to be built in the DDR and other processes.
- The formation of the Afghan National Army (ANA) must be accelerated to bridge the security gap that will be further widened by any successful DDR process. To this end, conscription should be considered as one option to replace the voluntary recruitment system.

2. Elections

- Elections should not proceed until at least seventy percent (70%) of eligible voters have registered and seventy percent (70%) of the political parties that have already submitted their application to the Ministry of Justice have been formally registered.
- The government should ensure transparency and accountability with respect to campaign expenses of the competing parties and independent candidates within the electoral law.
- Competing political parties and independent candidates must have equal access to resources fundamental to electoral campaigning.
- An independent media commission must be established to monitor the activities of the media and to assure equal access of all registered parties and independent candidates to the media.
- In order to address complaints put forward by voters, political parties and individual candidates an independent electoral court should be established.
- The role of national and international election monitors must be formally recognized by the electoral commission and that these efforts begin at least three months prior to the start of the election period.
- The participation of women in the electoral process is of vital importance. Through women's organizations the international community should allocate specific funding for capacity building, promotion of women's participation and raising of awareness.

3. The Role of the International Community

- Security is *the* pre-condition for democratic development and reconstruction in Afghanistan
- The expansion of peacekeeping forces along similar lines to those in Kabul is essential if security is to be established throughout the country.
- International pressure must be maintained on all states parties to uphold the non-interference declaration ratified on 22 December 2002.
- The international community must increase its commitment to counter-narcotics and the provision of alternative livelihoods
- Judicial reform, including the training of judges and qualified criminal justice professionals, must be accelerated and increased financial and technical support provided.

4. Implementation of Constitution

- The government should be committed to work with civil society organizations to implement the constitution.
- Afghan civil society should be committed to establishing a national movement to support and monitor the implementation of the constitution.
- Civic education and constitutional literature must be included in the curricula of schools and universities.

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