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An Alternative View: Afghan Perspectives on Development and Security

Summary of Conference Proceedings, London, United Kingdom
26th January 2010

Conference organised by BAAG in collaboration with ACBAR and in co-operation with the High Commission of Canada in London

Foreword

Listening to Afghan views on how the security and development challenges facing their country could be addressed was the main purpose of the conference, 'An Alternative View: Afghan Perspectives on Development and Security'.

This one-day event was organised by the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group in cooperation with the Agency Coordinating Body of Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and the Canadian High Commission in London in the run up to 'Afghanistan: The London Conference', the high-level international conference held on 28th January 2010. It brought a group of Afghans representing a cross-section of Afghan society: parliament, government, human rights organisations and activists, humanitarian and development NGOs together with academics, politicians, journalists, aid workers and diplomats from a number of countries to discuss what an effective international response to the crisis in Afghanistan should look like.

The nine Afghans who took part were unanimous that the country has made significant progress since the Taliban regime fell at the end of 2001. Yet they also spoke of the worsening security, the lack of progress in rebuilding the justice sector and in curbing corruption. They stressed that people's trust in the government has been undermined by corruption and lack of accountability. They highlighted how the level of trust in the international community has weakened due to perceptions of ineffective development strategies. They argued that improvements in security in Afghanistan can only be achieved on the foundation of trust among the people, the government and international actors. Trust and confidence, they stressed, must be rebuilt and in order to do so both the government and the international community must have the courage to listen

to the demands of the Afghan people and to work in their interests. They argued that lessons must be learned.

In the following 20 pages the reader will find Afghan views on what those lessons are. They were presented in a non-critical and constructive way. The report also includes views of academics and researchers who have carried out extensive research in some of the poorest and most insecure areas of Afghanistan, often studying Afghan perceptions.

There are many who would benefit from reading this report. 2010 is often cited as perhaps the most critical year in Afghanistan's current conflict. The British government is reviewing its engagement in Afghanistan as part of their strategic defence and security review. The US government's major assessment of their new counter-insurgency strategy is due to take place in December. The Afghan government is preparing to hold an international conference in Kabul in July. As governments make preparations for these important events, this report comes as a timely reminder of the importance in consulting, listening to, and learning from the expertise and experience held within Afghan civil society.

I would like to thank all those who made this event possible: the speakers, the chairs, BAAG members who provided funds and helped us organise it and DFID which part-funded it, the Canadian High Commission which hosted it and helped with logistical support and the Foreign Office for its crucial assistance in securing visas for the Afghan visitors.

Abdul Basir,
Director, BAAG

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Acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACSF	Afghan Civil Society Forum
ANCB	Afghan NGOs Co-ordination Bureau
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
BAAG	The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Programme
CSHN	Civil Society and Human Rights Network
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (NATO)
IMF	The International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SWABAC	The South West Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Co-ordination
UN	The United Nations

Executive Summary

On January 28th January 2010, delegations from the Government of Afghanistan, the UN, countries contributing troops to ISAF, and major donors gathered in London for an international conference with the stated aim of renewing their mutual commitment towards helping Afghanistan emerge as a secure and prosperous nation.

In the run up to this International Conference on Afghanistan, the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), in co-operation with the Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), organised a one day conference at the High Commission of Canada to give voice to just some of the demands of Afghan civil society in relation to development, accountable governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Celebrating some of the developments that have been achieved – an increase in the provision of education and healthcare, progress in freedom of speech and the introduction of new technology - the panellists warned that lessons learned from past mistakes must be transmitted into future policy if the progress achieved is to be sustained and developed further.

They called for brave and pragmatic steps to be taken to ensure a culture of accountability in Afghanistan; both in relation to Afghan authorities and the multitude of international actors that have a presence in Afghanistan. In this context, they questioned how a flourishing, strong and stable Afghanistan can emerge from the embers of decades of conflict when a veil of silence is drawn around past human rights violations and atrocities. They stressed the importance of transitional justice; not only in breaking the cycle of impunity that they feel has embedded itself in Afghanistan's political life, but also in promoting a wider respect for and confidence in the rule of law in Afghanistan.

International donors were criticised for paying only belated attention to the justice sector. Panellists argued that even now insufficient resources are being committed to this critical component of the state. Panellists called for an integrated, holistic

approach to establishing the rule of law. It was suggested that development of justice sector through both the formal justice system and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms must be treated as an opportunity to ensure that women's constitutional rights are protected.

Panellists called for effective investment in all three branches of government in order to ensure that they are able to apply the checks and balances necessary to ensure the objectivity and accountability needed for real development and security in Afghanistan. They noted a growing distance between the people of Afghanistan and its government. They argued that the Government needs to take practical steps to effect genuine consultation with communities across the country to determine local priorities for development, security and economic growth. They called for the Government of Afghanistan to institute merit-based systems of recruitment, transparent appointment processes, and to ensure the implementation of credible mechanisms to enforce professional standards, codes of ethics and disciplinary procedures within national and local government.

Panellists called for the international community to institute good humanitarian and development donorship; They argued that development policy and practice must be decoupled from military counter-insurgency or security strategies in light of growing evidence that military aid is not effective in either enabling development or in "winning hearts and minds". Panellists stressed that the competing security agendas at play in Afghanistan and the structures put in place in an attempt to reach their differing security objectives have undermined processes to strengthen Afghan institutions and to achieve sustainable security.

International donors and the Afghan Government were asked to commit over the long-term to the socio-economic development of Afghanistan through support for a coherent and co-ordinated aid strategy that is Afghan-led and independent from the military. Panellists argued that concepts introduced to support development and governance in Afghanistan should be grounded

within an Islamic framework and with an increased recognition of 'local realities' that takes into account social and cultural norms, power dynamics and social protection systems.

The calls of Afghan civil society have been consistent over the last 9 years, their voice has got louder. It has grown in strength and unity of vision, but, as it was so pertinently put by one panellist during the course of this conference, the real question remains 'have those with the power to change policy and strategy in Afghanistan got any better at listening?'

Introduction

The conference began with an introductory speech by the Executive Director of Mercy Corps Europe, Mr Mervyn Lee during which Mr Lee emphasised that:

Sustainable development can be achieved in Afghanistan. Across Afghanistan, there are people, both Afghan and International, working with communities, supporting them to effect positive change. In Helmand, for example, Mercy Corps has recently worked with local people to establish an agricultural high school with an enrolment of 600 students. It has set up programmes to support and expand local agro-business and it has worked with the Ministry of Agriculture to improve the ministry's skills base at a provincial level.

The International Community has made mistakes in Afghanistan. International donors and policy makers need to do more to listen to the people of Afghanistan and to be accountable to them. Civil Society's understanding of local needs and its expertise in, and understanding of the best mechanisms for aid delivery at a local and national level have not been maximised.

Much of the aid spent in Afghanistan has been squandered in an attempt to achieve quick results, rather than on the delivery of needs-based sustainable programmes that foster real change. To work effectively, the delivery of aid needs to be principled, based on needs, focused on sustainable results and delivered through appropriate and

efficient channels including government, local government, the private sector and civil society.

Keynote Speech

The Keynote speaker, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, began his speech with the proposal that it is through reflection on, and acknowledgement of, the mistakes of the past that a positive future can be drawn. In this context, Ambassador Brahimi stated that:

Mistakes were made at the Bonn Conference. At the time, it was recognised that the 35 Afghans present at the Conference were not representative of the rich society of Afghanistan. In recognition of that fact, their immediate task on return to Afghanistan should have been to bring the majority of people who were not represented at Bonn into the peace process. Ambassador Brahimi speculated that if the vision for Afghanistan, as laid out in the Bonn agreement, had been well implemented, then the people of Afghanistan would have forgotten that those who drew it up were not representative. Instead, the following mistakes were made:

Firstly, the political reality at the time meant that the Taliban could not have been represented at Bonn. However, after Bonn, the question of whether to engage the Taliban in peace negotiations was almost unanimously rejected. Questions relating to where the Taliban had gone, their number and their intentions were not given the consideration that they merited.

The second mistake was to delay rolling ISAF out across Afghanistan. After the arrival of ISAF in Kabul, it quickly became apparent that the international forces enjoyed popular support among the majority of people. On 25th Jan 2002, Kofi Annan called for ISAF to be expanded outside of Kabul. Yet his request for an extra 5000 troops was met with indifference by the International Community.

The third error was made in summer of 2003, when there was relative peace. At that time there should have been a critical examination of the progress made and policy changes required. Instead, the many actors in Afghanistan - UNAMA, the

international governments, the donors and the NGOs - all politely ignored one another, each pursuing their own objectives.

At that time, they also avoided carrying out a critical evaluation of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). By 2003, it was apparent that the OEF military campaign was a campaign in the wrong place, at the wrong time and for the wrong objective. It was part of the strategy of the 'war on terror', but most of Al Qaeda had left Afghanistan in 2001. By 2002 the activities of OEF were beginning to create angry and violent opposition.

Lastly, everyone involved at the political level in 2001 should have been more cognisant of the geopolitical reality of the region and ought to have put more effort into reassuring Pakistan that peace and security in Afghanistan was in its best interest.

Moving forward, it is not only the donors, the military and PRTs that need to reflect on past mistakes. While there is much to celebrate in the actions of the UN and the international NGO community, improvements in that sector too are still to be made.

Too many multinational organisations still spend too much money on themselves. They continue to adopt an arrogant attitude towards the Afghans. They do not listen. They do not see them as equal partners, who are to be supported, not directed, in rebuilding their country.

Finally, Ambassador Brahimi emphasised that his reference to 'a light footprint' was meant as an acknowledgement of the strong capacity and capability of the Afghan people. For example, in 2001 the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, employed approximately 8000 Afghans and less than 20 foreign staff. Afghans should have been resourced to develop the institutions of Afghanistan and to deliver basic services, rather than the host of international staff who were shipped into the country for that purpose.

There is an abundance of talent and expertise in Afghanistan. Civil society actors are the unsung heroes of the good that is happening in Afghanistan.

It is now up to them to see how they and the Government of Afghanistan can work together to create the stable and secure Afghanistan that they deserve.

First Panel Discussion: How to make development work?

Arezo Qanib

Program Officer Educational Training Centre for Poor Women & Girls of Afghanistan (ECW)

Abdul Salam Rahimy

Director, SABA Media

Sarah Parkinson

Communications and Advocacy Manager, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

Shinkai Karokhail

Member of Afghan Parliament and Founder member and Trustee of the Afghan Women's Education Centre

Mohammad Musa Mahmodi

Executive Director, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

Chaired by David Loyn

BBC Developing World Correspondent

Evaluator, Professor Jenny Pearce

Director of International Centre for Participation Studies, University of Bradford

In the first panel discussion of the conference, panellists considered approaches to development in Afghanistan. Reflecting both on progress achieved and the enormous challenges that remain, panellists sought to draw out some of key lessons learned on development and to identify ways forward to ensure progress towards sustainable development objectives.

Current Development Policy

Panellists agreed that there have been positive developments in Afghanistan over the last nine years. Improvements in education and in healthcare provision, in freedom of speech and the

growth of an independent media, as well as the expansion of private enterprise and new technology were cited as examples of recent achievements. Yet, they all emphasized that, to date, the development process has not sufficiently benefited the majority of the population; particularly those who live in rural areas, where access to essential services remains sporadic, basic economic infrastructure is weak and poverty is endemic.

Drawing on the findings of a longitudinal study carried out by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Sarah Parkinson reported that from a poverty perspective, particularly in relation to household economies and food security, many households within the poorest provinces, such as Saripul in the north of Afghanistan, are distinctly worse off than they were in 2002-3. The main reasons for this include limited economic opportunities, increasing urbanization with limited social protection, natural disasters and an increase in pressure on natural resources as a result of population growth and the return of refugees and IDPs in areas where there are existing problems with natural resource management systems.

Panellists identified a number of faults with current development policy that they felt has contributed to this backwards slide in development in Afghanistan. Sarah Parkinson stressed that in provinces such as Sar-i-pul, where there have been relatively few security issues, it is not insecurity that is the main challenge to poverty reduction. Both she and Mohammad Musa Mahmodi suggested that development policy in Afghanistan has been subordinated to the political and military interests of donors rather than grounded in the realities of the majority of Afghans. It was suggested that instead of co-ordinating and co-operating with government and civil society, the development policy of international donors has often been driven by ideology or assumption rather than evidence.

It was reported that this problem is further exacerbated by a form of institutional amnesia that exists within many donors' aid structures (military and civilian alike). International technical experts

brought into the country to work with the Government of Afghanistan, or through provincial reconstruction teams and other military structures, often lack knowledge of the local context and culture on arrival and do not then stay long enough to make use of any such knowledge once gained. As a result, many development efforts have been prescriptive, rather than indigenous and responding to Afghan needs.

Sarah Parkinson contended that an additional barrier to development in many parts of Afghanistan was the continued domination of powerful gatekeepers and leaders whose commitment to development varies. Where their intent is malign or driven by self interest, their control over resources and aid flows has been manipulated to their benefit rather than that of the wider community, particularly the most vulnerable.

All panelists argued that short-term planning, political expediency and a pre-occupation with military strategy among troop contributing countries has impeded the establishment of a participatory, Afghan-led development process that focuses on and addresses the problems faced by the majority of Afghans.

Arezo Qanih, Shinkai Karohail and Abdul Salam Rahimy reflected that development strategies to date have been too centralized and top-heavy. Abdul Salam Rahimy described a growing disquiet in the regions. People are feeling increasingly alienated from the capital. They are critical of government corruption, frustrated at a lack of identifiable progress at a local level and tired of local power struggles and inter/intra-tribal conflict that undermines local security and development.

Arezo Qanih, Abdul Salam Rahimy and Mohammad Musa Mahmodi all stressed that in regions across Afghanistan, there is considerable anger at the conduct of the international forces. Each civilian death as a result of the operations of international forces resonates through local communities and undermines the ability of NATO/ISAF to achieve its key objectives. Local resentment and sensitivities are aggravated further by a lack of public

accountability and acknowledgement of responsibility for such incidents. It was reported that anger at house searches and at the conduct, when in transit, of military convoys towards other road users have created a sense being 'alien within one's own homeland' among an increasing number of Afghans.

Abdul Salam Rahimy noted that the extremely effective PR machine of the insurgent groups has been quick to exploit such concerns and to produce powerful propaganda that has increasing potential to undermine peace, development and security in Afghanistan. Two of the panelists, however, noted and welcomed the new emphasis on civilian protection within ISAF and the increased efforts of some international forces to sensitize their soldiers to the culture and values of Afghan people. Yet they warned that political will and continued commitment will be needed to ensure the transition of such strategies from rhetoric to reality throughout Afghanistan.

Governance, accountability and the rule of law

It was argued by the panellists that civilian development can only contribute to stability if it is defined and legitimised by and made accountable to the Afghan people. Shinkai Karokhail MP emphasized that encouraging a more responsive state is key to ensuring development success and poverty reduction in Afghanistan. At present, government is plagued by a lack of capacity, government offices with no clear authority - particularly at provincial level - and convoluted bureaucratic processes. Promoting merit-based appointment systems, building social capacity, and addressing corruption and abuse of power must be a priority for the Government of Afghanistan and international donors alike.

Shinkai Karokhail emphasized that the Afghan Parliament, which currently suffers from a lack of experience, must be strengthened to play an effective role in examining and challenging the work of government and protecting and promoting the rights of its citizens through the enactment of sound legislation.

Both Shinkai Karokhail and Mohammad Musa Mahmodi emphasised that the presence of key actors in government and parliament who have a poor human rights record has impeded progress towards the implementation of laws to protect human rights, despite the existence of a human rights framework.

Shinkai Karokhail highlighted that local powerholders, former commanders and warlords present in Government and parliament have also sought to undermine the introduction of mechanisms that would lead to greater accountability. The international community was criticized for its silence in relation to matters concerning the installation of discredited Afghan human rights' violators in key government posts. This, three of the panelists argued, has allowed a culture of impunity to embed in Afghanistan that, if left unaddressed, will undermine all future efforts to build the rule of law in Afghanistan

Mohammad Musa Mahmodi warned that moving forward, processes for peace and reconciliation, while essential, must be closely tied to transitional justice if viable and durable peace is to be built. Shinkai Karokhail, Mohammad Musa Mahmodi and a number of participants at the conference emphasized that human rights must be at the heart of any efforts to seek a political solution to the conflict through negotiations and incentive packages directed at insurgents. Abdul Salam Rahimy argued that the wider inter/intra tribal conflict dynamics also need to be considered in negotiations for peace and reconciliation. Conditions need to be built that allow people to live without violence.

Abdul Salam Rahimy, Shinkai Karokhail and Mohammad Musa Mahmodi reflected on the lack of progress in establishing the rule of law in Afghanistan. It was argued that this critical component of state has not received sufficient attention or support from the international community. The justice system was criticized for being unaffordable and inaccessible in areas outside of the capital. It was noted that it suffers from a low level of human resource and physical

infrastructure. The poor quality of legal education has led to the violation of the rights of many individuals, particularly women. Deep-rooted corruption has meant that innocent people are being convicted of crimes they have not committed.

Panellists emphasized that there must be substantial increase in investment in the Justice Sector. An integrated, holistic approach to establishing the rule of law is needed. It was suggested that development of justice sector through both the formal justice system and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms must be treated as an opportunity to ensure that women's constitutional rights are protected.

Both Arezo Qanih and Shinkai Karokhail emphasized the importance of including women – as the primary educators in the family – in national consultations on policy to ensure their perspectives are adequately represented. It was argued that concrete strategies are needed to ensure implementation of the National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan and the newly signed Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, through, for example, the recruitment of more women in the security sector, the justice sector and across government.

All panelists emphasized that there is no quick fix for Afghanistan. International support will be crucial to Afghanistan's development for many years. Two of the panelists welcomed recent steps taken by a number of donors to learn the lessons from past policy mistakes. Sarah Parkinson asserted that this has led to improvements, for example, in microcredit and agricultural policy, which are now more pro-poor. Panellists and conference participants stressed that the London Conference is an opportunity to redress further some of the problems created by earlier short-sightedness. It was stressed that the international community must not sacrifice the progress made so far for political expediency, or for the sake of an exit strategy.

Panellists concluded that steps need to be taken to ensure that development processes are Afghan led

and in the interests of the majority of people of Afghanistan. Concepts introduced to support development and governance should be grounded within an Islamic framework. There must be an increased recognition of on 'local realities' that takes into account social and cultural norms, power dynamics and social protection systems. Finally, it was argued that for these measures to take hold, better co-ordination and co-operation between international donors, the Government of Afghanistan and development agencies is needed.

Second Panel Discussion, Security: 'Whose Security?'

Orzala Ashraf Nemat

Civil Society Activist & Programme Development Facilitator, ICCO

Muhammad Suleman Kakar

Deputy Minister, Admin and Finance, Ministry of Education

Farhad Jawid

Country Director, Marie Stopes International

Stuart Gordon

Academic and Lecturer, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst

Jawed Nader

Civil Society Activist and Head of Afghanistan Land Authority

Chaired by James Darcy

Director of Programmes, Overseas Development Institute

Evaluator, Peter Marsden

Author

In the second panel discussion, the participants explored the theme of security in Afghanistan. They examined both what security means in the volatile Afghan context and the different security agendas at play in Afghanistan, which they contended range from:

- Security as it is perceived by the

International Community, in particular America and its allies, which in the post 9/11 era focuses on curbing the potential threat of international terrorism exported from the region.

- Security in the national and/or provincial context which is perceived as achieving some form of political stability and which may be affected by actions taken within government to consolidate political powerbases.
- Security for the individual which is perceived as having the freedom to live lives without fear or coercion.

The panel suggested that these agendas, each competing for space within the Afghan context, are not necessarily compatible with one another. Consequently the strategies put in place to achieve their intended 'security' objectives have the potential to work against each other and to undermine longer term security for the majority of Afghans.

All participants agreed that progress has been made in establishing governance structures and extending service delivery beyond that which was achieved during the civil war and under the Taliban. However, it was suggested that the delivery of aid to, and the construction of the architecture of the state in, an area was not in itself sufficient to create sustainable security.

Aid and Security:

Orzala Ashraf Nemat, Farhad Jawid and Stuart Gordon argued that the assumption made by many international military and policy makers that security can be addressed through the application of aid is over simplistic.

The significant uplift in resources delivered through military structures in an attempt to deliver security effect was not working. Rather than enhancing the state building process, the creation of this parallel structure for the delivery of development aid was

undermining both governance and development at a local level.

In the context of development, panellists emphasised the importance, in the eyes of the beneficiary communities, of implementing participatory programmes as a means of achieving positive sustainable change. They stressed that community involvement and creating a sense of ownership was critical to achieving the accountability and sustainability needed to create long-term development. Examples of successful participatory programmes cited by participants included the establishment of Peace Councils in districts across Afghanistan, the introduction of community conflict resolution programmes and the National Solidarity Programme (though all three panellists added a caveat that NSP was not without fault).

Farhad Jawid, Orzala Ahsraf Nemat and Stuart Gordon examined the disadvantages of the distribution of aid for the purposes of generating force protection and intelligence benefits among local communities. It was suggested that this kind of 'securitization of development' for counter-insurgency objectives has potential to impact on service provision, particularly medical provision, transforming it from a right guaranteed under international humanitarian law into a benefit based on conditionality.

Farhad Jawid and Orzala Ashraf both argued this was also creating considerable challenges for NGOs, who, in previous periods of conflict in Afghanistan, had been perceived by local communities as independent channels of humanitarian and development assistance. It was asserted that as the military have assumed the role of the distributors of aid, local perceptions of the nature of, and motives behind, the provision of external assistance have changed. As a result, NGO workers lives have been lost or put at risk.

The panellists concluded that the use of aid for military objectives distorts the flow of aid generally away from areas of humanitarian and development need. Farhad Jawid illustrated this by highlighting

the imbalance in the distribution of aid in Afghanistan. Both he and Stuart Gordon argued that donors are increasingly focusing on pumping aid to areas that are insecure, or in which their military forces are operating with little evidence that it creates any sustainable security or development effect, while more stable provinces which face equal or more acute humanitarian or development challenges are being overlooked.

Security and Governance:

In the context of security and governance, panellists challenged the assumption made by some in the international coalition that aid delivered in sufficient quantities, even when it is delivered externally and in a scatter gun way by an intervening force (often through private contractors) rather than government structures, will have a cumulative impact on community perceptions of the state and help in the formation of an implicit social contract that will lead to political alignment and therefore security. Three panellists contended that this is a naïve approach. Donors should shift their focus from generating development product to the critically important process of effective development and good donorship. What matters to the majority of Afghans is integrity of process in the delivery of aid.

Stuart Gordon stated that research recently carried out for the Feinstein Institute, Tufts University indicates that many Afghans perceive the creation of a political economy of aid in Afghanistan as extremely dangerous. They contend that inadequate oversight mechanisms of development aid delivered through the military or PRTs means that it is easily manipulated to fit particular patronage, ethnic or tribal agendas to the exclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalised. This lucrative aid economy, in turn, has resulted in the consolidation of a noxious elite that have an interest in subverting or retarding the state building process. Orzala Asraf Nemat, Farhad Jawid and Stuart Gordon emphasised that for the majority of Afghans tackling corruption is seen as key to achieving longer-term development, security and stability.

The Legitimacy of the State: Building Institutions

Panellists argued that the continued diversion of aid to the military and a lack of co-ordination and consultation with the Afghan Government about the delivery of such aid at a local level had impeded the development of effective institutions of local government and undermined the legitimacy of the state.

Deputy Minister Mohammad Suleman Kakar emphasized that institutions are integral to any modern state and the quality of those institutions is integral to its success. He proposed that without a strong vision, unwavering dedication and determined development of the capacity of the state at all levels, the first steps that have been taken towards a stable Islamic constitutional democracy will not succeed and the security of the people will not be assured. Afghanistan must be a state in which institutions are strengthened by effective investment in their capacity at both national and sub-national level. Deputy Minister Kakar emphasized that the political will and sustained commitment of the International Community is needed to achieve this. However, they must work with Afghans as equals; actively listening to their Afghan partners as they take the lead in driving the process forward.

Deputy Minister Kakar further argued that security can only be achieved when it is set within a wider vision of the whole state-building process; a vision that encompasses and gives equal weight to political and economic growth. In this context, the development of the structures of state at all levels is instrumental. All 3 branches of government need to be supported to apply checks and balances to each other to ensure impartiality, objectivity and accountability.

The National Assembly must evolve into a responsible and representative political and legislative body. The stability of Afghanistan's Islamic constitutional democracy must be strengthened by empowering elected assemblies at all levels.

The Executive must be supported to be more accountable to its people. Panellists noted a growing distance between the people and its government. They argued that the government needs to take practical steps to effect genuine consultation with communities across Afghanistan to determine local priorities for development, security and economic growth.

Appraisal processes that identify attitudes and behaviour that undermines the integrity and professionalism of ministries need to be integrated into the architecture of state. The gap between provincial/district and central level administration must be bridged if implementation of new laws and procedures meant to protect vulnerable groups, especially women, are to take hold. The international community was encouraged not to shy away from support for initiatives to promote women's rights, but rather to ensure that such initiatives were Afghan-led and grounded in Afghan women's experiences.

The Judiciary must be strengthened as a check to real or potential abuse of authority, and in ensuring the rule of law and justice. Orzala Ashraf Nemat warned of the danger of a singular focus on building defence capability without counterbalancing it with equally strong support for justice and the rule of law. A situation that, she argued, may ultimately end in military dictatorship. Outlining the relative lack of investment in the justice sector and its low capacity, panellists argued that the greatest challenge to judicial reform is a lack of judicial institutions at the provincial and district level and therefore a lack of access to justice at a local level. It was noted, however, that despite the lack of trained prosecutors and lawyers at provincial level, there are very few programmes and limited funding for training in this area.

Both Orzala Ashraf and Farhad Jawed stressed the importance of constructing a justice system set within the tenets of Islam that embraces equal rights and dignity for all its citizens. They argued that while the informal justice sector has a very important role to play in some respects (for example in local conflict resolution), an over

reliance on it will result in the emergence of a judicial system that is neither clear, nor transparent, and does not adhere to the international norms and standards that the country has ratified nor to those that are contained in its Constitution.

Deputy Minister Kakar, Farhad Jawid and Jawed Nader stated that economic growth is an essential precondition for strengthening the state-building process and achieving sustainable security. Jawed Nader and Farhad Jawed proposed that the prevalence of poverty and lack of job opportunities, particularly in rural areas, perpetuates cycles of local conflict. They argued that heavy investment in economic infrastructure and human capacity at the sub national level is required if the country is to achieve an increase in employment opportunities and a growth in local productivity. They emphasized that there is an urgent need to address land issues, particularly its access, ownership and use as well as the inequitable distribution of resources, if a sustainable reduction in poverty is to be achieved.

Reconciliation: A means to an end or an end in itself?

Reflecting on recent debate about peace talks and reintegration, Jawed Nader proposed that there was a lack of a uniform and consistent national, regional and international stance about talking to Taliban.

Jawed Nader asserted that at an international level, while the Afghan Government has announced that it is ready to open talks with all insurgent groups, including their leaders, international donors continue to distinguish between moderate Taliban and the 'hardliners' whose names remain on the UN Security Council's list of terrorists and who remain key US targets. Regionally, Pakistan is at war with the Pakistani Taliban, but has provided safe heavens for their Afghan counterparts.

At a national level, the general opinion in Afghanistan is not entirely convinced that speaking of peace with the Taliban will end up in achieving

long-term security. Jawed Nader argued that the word, Taliban, still reminds Afghans of the negation of individual liberties, ethnic and sectarian violence, structural and institutional discrimination and the egregious abuse of women's rights.

Jawed Nader proposed that the US, NATO members, regional actors should support the Government of Afghanistan to devise a joint reconciliation strategy to be led and implemented by the Afghan government. He suggested that in order to build the required level of trust, international actors should consider measures such as removing Taliban leaders' names from the terrorists' list provided that they renounce violence. Negotiations should take place in neutral venues such as Saudi Arabia. However, Jawed Nader emphasized that, most importantly, any process of peace-talks must ensure not only that the participants renounce violence, sever links with international terrorist organisations and accept the Afghan Constitution, but it must also ensure that they respect the rights of their fellow citizens. The ultimate goal, Jawed Nader argued, is not talking with the Taliban and their inclusion in mainstream society, but a long term vision of institutionalizing a culture of peace and justice in Afghanistan.

In this context, it must not be forgotten that the Taliban are not the sole faction that committed flagitious human rights abuses and war crimes in Afghanistan. The role of transitional justice therefore must not be underestimated. Three panellists emphasized that the protection of human rights and transitional justice must not be compromised in the current attempts to achieve reconciliation and reintegration; the human rights' violations of the past must be acknowledged.

Finally, it was suggested that the future security and stability of Afghanistan lies in its ability to incorporate peace and the values of tolerance, pluralism, obedience to law and respect for human rights. Jawed Nader, Orzala Ashraf Nemat and Deputy Minister Kakar proposed that if sustainable peace is to be built and cycles of violence addressed peace-building should be supported through the integration of peace building and conflict resolution

into the education curriculum for Afghan children and support for grassroots peace-building in rural villages and remote areas across Afghanistan.

Third Panel Discussion: Civil Society Statement to the Co-hosts of Afghanistan: The London Conference

Chaired by Lyse Doucet,

Presenter and Correspondent, BBC World Service

Engineer Sayed Jawad Jawed

Director of Help the Farmers Organization (HAFO) and Chairperson of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)

Ms Arezo Qanib

Program Officer Educational Training Centre for Poor Women & Girls of Afghanistan (ECW)

Engineer Jan Mohammad

Coordinator of SWABAC

Dr Omar Zakhilwal

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Ambassador Kai Eide

UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan

Mr Ivan Lewis MP

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Mr Bill Rammell

Minister of State for the Armed Forces

Mr Mike Foster MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development

During the last session of the Conference, 3 Afghan Civil Society Representatives, chosen by 6 Afghan civil society networks to travel to London to represent the views of Afghan Civil society,

presented their main recommendations on security, governance and development in Afghanistan to ministerial representatives of the co-hosts of Afghanistan: The London Conference.

Civil Society's Statement for the London Conference

The Ministers and Ambassador Eide were asked to reflect on the issues of concern that had been highlighted both during the panel discussions over the course of the day and in the statement by Afghan Civil Society for the London Conference (which can be read in full at: http://www.rb.se/SiteCollectionDocuments/St%C3%A4llningstaganden/London_statement_21JAN10.pdf).

Jan Mohammad opened the debate, stressing that improvement of the security situation in Afghanistan can only be built on the foundations of trust between Afghans, civil society, the government and the international community.

He proposed that the Afghan people's trust of the international community's intervention in Afghanistan has been directly undermined by ineffective aid strategies, the inequitable distribution of aid weighted towards insecure provinces, civilian casualties resulting from military operations, and the lack of respect for Afghan culture and traditions.

Trust in the Afghan Government is being undermined by corruption and a lack of accountability. He criticized initiatives such as the Community Defence Initiative, which, he argued, have the potential to legitimise and empower militias and local commanders who have in the past abused a high number of Afghan civilians. Jan Mohammad argued that emphasis should instead be placed on adequately equipping and training legitimate, mandated governmental forces and ensuring that they are accountable for their actions.

Sayed Jawad Jawed emphasized that for good governance to emerge in Afghanistan those in a position of power over the legislative process, policy

and resources must be made accountable to the people. Enhancing the rule of law is instrumental in achieving this. It is through the enhancement of the rule of law and access to justice that Afghanistan will attain long-term peace and prosperity. Concerted efforts are needed to improve awareness and understanding of existing laws at district and provincial level, particularly on issues relating to women's rights.

Sayed Jawad Jawed stressed that transitional justice too is critical to establishing a wider rule of law in Afghanistan. He emphasized that the acknowledgement of and the provision of redress for past human rights violations is a matter of crucial importance for the majority of Afghans. The international community should support initiatives aimed at bringing those responsible for past human rights atrocities to justice. He argued that the International Community should also strongly advocate that a proper vetting process is put in place in the forthcoming parliamentary elections to bar those from standing who face credible allegations of involvement in human rights abuses, or of links to militias or the drugs trade.

Sayed Jawad Jawed reflected that if public confidence in governance at national and sub-national level is to increase, it is important to institute merit-based systems of recruitment, transparent appointment processes, and to ensure the implementation of credible mechanisms to enforce professional standards, codes of ethics and disciplinary procedures within national and local government.

Finally he highlighted that national gender equality policies must be fully implemented. International donors should encourage the accelerated implementation of existing policies for the advancement of women in Afghanistan. They should strengthen employment opportunities for women and actively encourage initiatives to ensure the participation of women in decision making processes, particularly in rural areas, to ensure due attention to gender and women's needs.

Arezo Qanih reminded the Ministers and

Ambassador Eide that the development model for Afghanistan must be led by Afghans, and be accountable to Afghan citizens. Development aid should not be linked to military objectives. Instead, it needs to be redirected to ensure sustainable approaches to the reduction of poverty. Policies developed should ensure that the strategies and decisions made meet both the needs of Afghans, particularly rural Afghans, and the advancement of the private sector.

Arezo Qanih argued that economic infrastructure must be rehabilitated in order to achieve a reduction in poverty and a move towards socio-economic development. Credit should be made more widely available. Private sector growth must be encouraged. Due attention should be paid to maximising returns from Afghanistan's mineral wealth. Investment should be made in hydro-solar and wind power. She noted that there is currently untapped potential for Afghanistan to build up its production capacity, and to increase revenue through exports. However existing systems need to be evaluated and developed. For example, to assist those who are predominantly dependent on agriculture, land and water management strategies need to be revised in accordance with traditional systems and community requirements.

Arezo Qanih ended her presentation by reminding Ministers that the development of human and social capacity is among the most critical priorities for Afghanistan. In this context strengthening access to healthcare and education are key. More than half of the population are children (49% under the age of 15). Continuous support to education is essential. Special attention should now be directed towards secondary and higher education systems and to vocational training and literacy programmes.

Arezo Qanih highlighted that one in five children do not live until their fifth birthday and every half hour, a woman dies from pregnancy-related complications. Afghanistan is the only country in the world where women have a shorter life expectancy than men. The main causes of morbidity are related to water born diseases (30%), respiratory illness (12%) and fever (19%) and

malnutrition. She asserted that despite the progress in improving the provision of basic health care services across Afghanistan, more must be done to improve real access to, and the quality of, medical services. More training needs to be provided to health staff in rural areas, particularly women. Existing medical facilities must be properly resourced with the necessary medical supplies and equipment.

Recommendations to the Co-Hosts of the London Conference

Jan Mohammad, Sayed Jawad Jawed and Arezo Qanih stated that 6 Afghan civil society networks (ACSF, AWN, SWABAC, ACBAR, ANCB and CHSN) recommended the following measures to improve security, governance and development in Afghanistan:

- Ensure all Afghan security forces are properly trained in human rights and international humanitarian law.
- Institute rigorous, culturally-appropriate protocols for all security forces involved in house searches and raids.
- Establish an independent complaints and investigation unit to hold Afghan National Security Forces accountable for their actions.
- Provide incentives for peace by allocating aid according to need rather than the degree of insecurity and poppy cultivation, with the objective of handing over management to the local government.
- Reconsider approaches that link security and development, and military strategy and reconstruction; avoid the militarization of aid.
- Excessive use of private security companies should be discontinued.
- Rigorously enforce existing legislation by structuring and developing the formal justice system, improving the quality of police and raising awareness among the population regarding their rights and obligations as well as clarifying and strengthening the respective roles of the police and the judiciary.

- Bring war criminals to justice and ban any suspected war criminal from official positions within the government.
- Enforce professional standards, codes of ethics and disciplinary measures not only in the administration but also in the private sector to increase transparency. Corruption and abuse of power should be investigated by an independent commission and sanctioned according to the law.
- Take concrete measures to enforce rights of women and strengthen their role within the Afghan society by increasing access to justice and economic opportunities.
- Sustainably develop Afghanistan's natural resources, such as mineral, water, wind, and sun by increasing investment in those sectors. Provide more support to the agriculture sector, particularly programs targeting small and poor farmers are underfunded compared to those living in poppy cultivating areas.
- Expand secondary and higher education opportunities for young people, as well as vocational and literacy programs for young people and adults.
- Improve the access to health services not only by building infrastructure, but also by providing more training to health staff from rural areas, particularly women, and by adequately equipping medical facilities.

Response by Ministers and Ambassador Eide

In response to the issues raised by the civil society representatives and by the panellists, Minister Zakhilwal paid tribute to the role that civil society and NGOs have played not only over the last 9 years, but also during the past periods of conflict, when in the absence of government, they delivered services to the people of Afghanistan. He also commended the instrumental role that NGOs continue to play as partners in the development of services across Afghanistan.

In answer to criticisms of how development assistance has been delivered since the intervention in 2001, both Minister Zakhilwal and Ambassador

Eide emphasized that aid could have been delivered differently and with greater impact. Minister Zakhilwal recalled that immediately after the intervention, Afghan civil society had emphasized the need for development processes to be Afghan owned, Afghan led and focused on the priorities of Afghans. Nevertheless, despite the fact that donors were well versed in the fundamentals of aid effectiveness as articulated by Afghan civil society, they, and perhaps the Government too, did not listen. From beginning aid delivery was donor led and subordinate to the priority of donors. As a result, it undermined Afghan institutions rather than built them.

Ambassador Eide argued that there continue to be serious problems in the co-ordination of aid in Afghanistan. Currently PRTs have vast amounts of money at their disposal. Of the 18,000 PRT projects implemented in Afghanistan, 15,000 are under a value of US\$100,000. The majority of these projects are 'Quick Impact Projects' implemented by the military and/or Provincial Reconstruction Teams and done without consultation with the Afghan authorities or with the villagers, thereby compromising their impact. Ambassador Eide further suggested that when projects are implemented by the military, they become more of a target for the insurgency, thereby also undermining their sustainability.

Ambassador Eide asserted that it is possible and necessary to decouple military and development strategies. To do so, donors need to shift the way that they operate, altering the lens of their focus away from short-term projects. He argued that the geographic distribution of aid also needs to be addressed; Not only because that is a fair approach, but because stable areas are the growth engines of the country that will allow Afghanistan to stand on its own feet.

Minister Zakhilwal too advocated for a fundamental shift in the way the aid is delivered in Afghanistan. He reflected that, although rhetoric of support for Afghanistan among international donors has increasingly embraced the language of 'Afghan ownership', sustained efforts are needed if the

concept is to be translated from policy to practice. Afghans need to be provided with the resources to assume ownership of development and security in their country.

Ambassador Eide agreed with Minister Zakhilwal that there is a substantial difference between policy and practice in aid delivery in Afghanistan. He highlighted the fact that many donors, while simultaneously advocating for Afghan ownership of security development processes and pressing for the government to be more accountable to its people, do not themselves provide that government with accurate information on how, where and how much money is being spent in Afghanistan, thereby undermining its capacity to put in place coherent development strategies.

In response to concerns expressed by some in the audience relating to government corruption and capacity to deliver aid, Minister Zakhilwal argued that government capacity, both to deal with corruption and to deliver aid, will grow stronger once the international community starts to invest its resources in and through the government's line ministries. He noted that this year, only 20% of all the resources coming into the country are being channelled through the government and 10% of that 20% is earmarked. Minister Zakhilwal argued that there is something wrong with an aid system when Provincial and District Governors do not have sufficient resources at their disposal to develop and deliver services, yet the discretionary funding granted to the military in the same province is more than the total amount of discretionary funding that the whole of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has at its disposal.

The Minister stressed that the international community must commit to increasing its direct funding to the Government of Afghanistan from 20 to 50 per cent. This requires political will and pragmatism from the donors.

In response, Parliamentary Under-Secretary Foster argued that the Department for International Development is putting 50 per cent of the 510 million that it has committed to Afghanistan over 4

years through the Afghan Government systems. He argued that the UK recognises that the best way to ensure sustainability is to support the Government of Afghanistan in its outreach to communities, ensuring that local people understand that the benefits that they receive are derived from the Government of Afghanistan rather than from the international military or from donors. He asserted that the UK places great emphasis on the civilian side of operations in Helmand. DFID has £72 million to spend over 4 years, whereas the other UK government departments have £50 million. The PRT is civilian led. Further, he stressed that while the UK military does have money to spend, it is spent on the security aspect, enabling a security position in which good development can take place.

Ambassador Eide responded that the UK is one of the better donors in Afghanistan. However he expressed concern that in response to the troop surge, the international troop contributing countries may feel compelled to demonstrate that the investment in troops is having an impact on the civilian side. Ambassador Eide expressed concerns that as a result, the 'Quick Impact' impulse may become more entrenched and as a result, more will be done by the military. He argued that unless the PRTs start off loading as much of the civilian work as possible to Afghan society, the surge will come to represent an entrenchment strategy rather than the transition strategy to which the troop contributing countries make reference.

Minister Lewis responded that there is a need for a balanced and cohesive strategy that responds to the demands of Afghans in terms of their calls for security and for a government that they can respect; one that delivers services for the people without corruption and that offers them a sense of hope and a standard of living in which their basic needs and human rights are met. Minister Lewis agreed that the process needed to achieve this must be Afghan led with civil society at its heart. However, he asserted that PRTs can be part of the solution and should not be seen as a threat.

Ambassador Eide suggested that as far as most donors are concerned, the fault lies in the fact that

they are pursuing a militarily driven strategy and yet the military is fundamentally wrong in the way in which it measures success. Commanders measure success in the number of projects that they can open and the amount of money that they can spend during their rotation in Afghanistan. He argued that success must be measured in a completely different way. Donors have to be much more strategic and sophisticated in their thinking.

Bill Rammell countered that the UK's strategy in Afghanistan is not predominately a military one. He argued that the military strategy is a precondition; responding to an insurgency that is not just targeting troops, but also the civilian population. The military component, therefore, is providing a security response. However this military component is clearly linked to development and governance reforms. In this respect, Minister Rammell contended that the PRTs of today in comparison to those of four to five years ago, are much more successful.

Minister Lewis suggested that the problem, at present, is not with the strategies, but with delivery and implementation. He asserted that too often debates about how to achieve change are taken from the perspective of the government, of the politicians. Yet, it is civil society that holds the key to governance and security, and in that context, women have a key role to play. History shows us that in conflict areas, it is women, when empowered, who have the potential to change conflict dynamics.

In relation to achieving security, both Minister Lewis and Minister Rammell emphasized that reintegration and reconciliation must be part of an integrated approach to achieving long-term security in Afghanistan. When pressed on what impact processes of reintegration and reconciliation may have on women's rights, both Ministers stressed that political discussion and reconciliation is a tried and trusted process in conflict resolution. The mechanisms put in place to achieve reconciliation and reintegration must be Afghan and Afghan led, not imposed from elsewhere. Yet in any process of reconciliation, there have to be boundaries and

non-negotiables. One of which, it is hoped, will be respect for and furtherance of the rights of women.

Concluding Remarks

Concluding remarks were delivered by James R Wright, High Commissioner for Canada and by Laurent Saillard, Director of ACBAR.

James R Wright, High Commissioner for Canada

The High Commissioner drew the conference to a close, concluding that great challenges lie ahead. The international community must affirm its continuing support for Afghanistan, but so too must the Government of Afghanistan take decisive, measureable steps to deliver governance, tackle corruption and provide basic services and economic opportunities to the Afghan people.

The High Commissioner emphasized that the 2 billion dollars in aid and 3000 Canadian soldiers and civilians in operation in Afghanistan are tangible demonstrations of Canada's commitment. He stated that Canada's goal is clear; it is to leave an Afghanistan that is better governed, more secure and more prosperous.

Laurent Saillard, Director of the Afghan Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)

Laurent Saillard closed the conference with a speech laying out the expectations of Afghan and international civil society in the context of the London Conference.

There exists within Afghanistan at present a high level of distrust, corruption and impunity, as well as an absence of the rule of law, of accountability, and unequal access to resources and basic social services. There is a lack of job opportunities, extreme poverty and a lack of hope. Civil Society expects the London Conference to produce a road map which ensures that mechanisms are put in place to measure progress, identify foreseeable setbacks and analyse the reasons behind failures. The people of Afghanistan are disillusioned with conferences where the outcomes remain mere

declarations and expressions of good intentions, rather than tangible attempts to unpick the practicalities and painful detail with a view to learning lessons that can be transmitted to future practice. In that regard civil society has an intellectual input and a critical role to play.

Afghans paid approx 1.7 billion Euros in bribes last year. Transparency International lists Afghanistan as the second most corrupt country in the world. However, only 20% of funds spent in Afghanistan are channeled through the government. Consequently, the international community is also to blame for the rampant corruption that exists in the country. The international community cannot continue to pump billions into Afghanistan and yet deny responsibility for the ways in which that money is used.

There is a need to reevaluate the relationship between the two parties and between international actors themselves. Conflicting visions, a lack of coordination, obscure political agendas, irresponsible decision making and priority given to quick impact rather than long term objectives have paved the road to the situation that the country is now in.

It is time for the contributing nations to draw lessons from the past mistakes. Bringing in more troops, more civilians and allocating more funds is not necessarily the right answer. The focus of attention should shift to the quality of what is being done and to understanding the impact of our actions.

The strategy of the international community continues to focus primarily on a military objectives. The increasing militarization of aid is of serious concern. This year, despite concerted advocacy efforts by civil society to end such practices, the funds for the Commander's Emergency Response Program has doubled from 570 million dollars to 1.2 billion US dollars. This is money that US commanders will be able to spend on development projects without consultation with the Government of Afghanistan, the UN or with other civilian channels for development support.

International civil society expects our own governments to evaluate the impact of their strategies in Afghanistan in light of criticism from their partners. It expects our ambassadors to concentrate on understanding whether their tax payers money is wisely spent, rather than spending time ensuring that the contributions of their countries is acknowledged in the press. There should no longer be politicians, special envoys or officials who are not aware of the reality on the ground. Government officials should no longer be able to talk of 'unavoidable human losses', attributing them to collateral damage without flinching. There can no longer be cases of private security companies dehumanising Afghans, or denying life saving medical care to insurgents in contravention of Geneva Conventions.

Finally, considering the number of mistakes made on repeated occasions in Afghanistan, civil society has to come together across national boundaries to find ways of making their governments more accountable for their actions and decisions. Civil society must remember that impunity and accountability have the same meaning irrespective of nationality.