



AFGHANISTAN: BEYOND BONN

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May 2005

Wilton Park Paper

Report based on Wilton Park Conference WPS05/28: 12-14 May 2005 on
"Afghanistan: Beyond Bonn"

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1. Introduction

With parliamentary and provincial elections in Afghanistan in September marking a major step in implementing the provisions of the Bonn Agreement, what framework is appropriate for the next stages of international cooperation with Afghanistan in reconstruction and development? What role should the United Nations (UN) play? What are the priority tasks? Members of the Afghan Government, UN, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), European Union (EU) and representatives of international financial institutions, policy makers from donor governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) met at Wilton Park between 12 and 14 May to address these and other questions. The conference was sponsored by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Bonn process: lessons learned and future challenges

The Bonn Agreement launched a process of international cooperation to assist Afghanistan that many feel is extraordinary and unique, for the range of international actors involved and the degree of military and civilian cooperation. Much has been achieved in implementing Bonn's provisions, particularly on the political agenda. This is largely attributed to the timetable set for each stage of the process; no time frame, nor clear benchmarks, were accorded to Bonn's economic aims. The UN, through the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) has played a very significant role, gaining the confidence of the Afghan people; it is widely regarded as the most legitimate force in Afghanistan. Its involvement and expertise is needed in Afghanistan's future development, particularly in promoting capacity building.

Afghanistan faces some critical inter-connected challenges, for which the continued assistance of the international community will be needed. These include:

- **Security:** despite the successful Presidential elections, the level of incidents or attacks remains the same as in 2004, and there is concern at what is described as 'general lawlessness'. The challenge of narcotics threatens to negate all Afghanistan's achievements. The quality and quantity of security needs to be improved. It is imperative to take further action in disarmament, especially of illegally armed groups.
- **Statebuilding:** including at the provincial level, where the state is too often viewed as absent, corrupt or incompetent, producing a backlash against the central government, there is a need to invest in all components to provide for the rule of law (judiciary, police, public administration, etc).
- **Economic development:** Afghanistan needs to implement a coordinated strategy, both to restructure its economy and to achieve economic growth, which should be broad-based and 'pro-poor'; an enabling environment, to attract business investment and entrepreneurship, needs to be created.

- Recreating the country's social fabric and providing social justice: land disputes remain the single-most important cause of tension; many refugees have yet to return; there has been no rehabilitation of victims; national unity is fragile, with ethnic and tribal divisions apparent; illiteracy must be tackled and the status of women improved.

Many are concerned that, following the intensive international effort of the last three years, the attention of the international community will shift and lead to a downscaling of aid, which some Afghans already believe does not meet their needs. To sustain a long-term focus on Afghanistan there is a need to educate publics abroad by communicating that rebuilding Afghanistan is in their national interest, and a commitment to regional and global security, rather than an act of charity.

A new arrangement between Afghanistan and the international community to address the current challenges should: include timetable, benchmarks and be outcome-(rather than process-) oriented; be based on sustainability, for example taking account that future elections, or other activities, will inevitably not benefit indefinitely from the financial support their arrangements currently enjoy; incorporate the accountability of the international community and the Afghan Government, with both committing clearly to what specific action they will take to reach objectives; and be Afghan-driven, with the Afghan Government deciding on priorities and external assistance being channeled through the national budget. Only in this way can Afghan popular support be maintained, which has been integral to the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, and popular expectations be addressed.

Parliamentary and provincial elections: what needs to be done?

Afghans remain enthusiastic about participating in the parliamentary elections, and appear to have accepted a number of controversial decisions such as the absence of a new census, the election delay and the method of voting, as well as the postponement of local elections, all of which could have challenged the legitimacy of the elections before the poll takes place. September's elections present a greater challenge than last year's Presidential vote for a number of reasons, which include:

- Security: there are differences of view on whether threats of terrorist disruption of the elections have diminished, but general agreement that local intimidation of candidates and voters has increased and presents a serious problem.
- Choice of electoral system: the single non-transferable vote (SNTV) is now the reality. While the reasons for adopting it are understood, and SNTV may appear to have the merit of simplicity, some express concern it will complicate the electoral process because of the size of the ballot paper and related counting procedures. Critics also point to its

shortcomings in ensuring a representative parliament that would be able to hold government accountable. In the event that a candidate cannot take up a seat, the succession would, barring a bye-election, be the person with the second highest number of votes, however small this may have been. SNTV's implications for women are particularly severe: women are unlikely to be elected as the single candidate; if they receive the smallest number of votes, this will affect perceptions of them in their community and further weaken their political role.

- Political parties in Afghanistan are weak, and will take time to develop; the parliament risks becoming a collection of individuals, with no constructive opposition. A disunited and fractious parliament, which under the Constitution holds considerable power, would likely not work effectively with the President and government. Parliamentarians may be subject to strong pressures to adopt populist measures for increasing spending and employment, and could also be easily influenced by the money that drugs barons will spend to bring parliamentarians under their patronage and control. The absence of strong parties with a national programme also militates against women candidates, who could gain greater support through standing as a representative of a political platform.
- A funding gap of \$58 million, approximately one third of the total budget, which UNAMA needs to conduct the forthcoming elections constitutes a major concern.

To address these challenges, the following measures are proposed:

- To maintain security and help counter local intimidation, there should be an increased presence of Afghan military and law enforcement bodies to act as a deterrent; NATO is prepared to assist with security arrangements for the elections. Concerted action should be taken immediately to disarm illegally armed groups. Candidates are already vetted to determine whether they are associated with illegally armed groups; in the time available, vetting to examine their involvement in past human rights violations will likely not be feasible, and the proposal for candidates to declare their commitment to tackle the narcotics threat was not accepted. UNAMA should publicise instances of intimidation, and sanction those responsible.
- In the run up to elections, and subsequently, some suggest there should be significant consultation on electoral and other measures between the government and political parties, so that when the parliament is inaugurated, the ground has been prepared for the government to enjoy majority support. The President will need to engage actively with the parliament, to facilitate the adoption of government policy, although a few suggest he should stand removed from it to preserve the integrity of his role.

- Special measures are needed to promote women's participation as candidates and voters. Adequate security is necessary since women are particularly vulnerable to intimidation. Registration needs to be made accessible to women, and women election officers should be appointed. Increased civic education and information at the provincial level on citizens' rights and responsibilities would encourage women's participation. The Joint Election Management Board (JEMB) should be alert to potential gender discrimination in the electoral process.
- International election observers are seen by some as critical to ensuring the integrity of the Afghan electoral process, The election observers should issue reports on investigations undertaken during the course of pre-voting monitoring, recommending appropriate action to the Afghan authorities.
- To minimise the budget shortfall, all pledges from donors to the electoral process must become commitments without delay.

The international community should provide strong financial and material support to facilitate parliament's functioning post-elections and assist parliamentarians in their new role, especially in meeting the expectations of the electorate in fulfilling their representative function. Measures to be undertaken should include:

- Training, on a large scale, on the role, responsibilities and duties of members of the Wolesi Jirga, including supporting the formation of parliamentary groupings. Parliamentarians need to receive assistance in fulfilling their legislative and oversight functions. They need to be assured of adequate resources and appropriate access to information. In order to hold the government accountable, resources should be provided to parliamentary groups to research, travel, hold hearings and conduct other activities crucial to their role of overseeing the policies and legislative behaviour of the government. Involvement of other parliamentarians in training may be beneficial, together with visits to observe the functioning of other parliaments. The Afghan Government needs to ensure that members of the Wolesi Jirga have access to information, and that individual government departments must be aware that parliamentarians have a right, indeed a responsibility, to scrutinize their activities.
- Creating mechanisms to build links between parliamentarians and their constituents that can be appropriately resourced in a sustainable manner. Improving outreach could include providing office space in the provinces or provincial constituency staff, creating newsletters, encouragement to use media (although few provincial media channel currently exist) and support for travel to and from Kabul.
- Training should be provided to the professional staff of the new parliament, to ensure that parliamentarians have the most qualified support possible when they take up their seats in the new parliament. Assistance in this respect has begun under programmes organized by the United Nations Development Programme and the French Government.

The new parliament is required to ratify previous legislation. To be able to manage this 'backlog', draft parliamentary rules of procedure need to be prepared in advance, so that the parliament starts business as promptly as possible. The new parliament must be able to prioritise and manage its work effectively.

Nomination of candidates for the provincial elections is proceeding more slowly than for the central parliament, particularly with respect to women's participation. To-date, there is no legislation providing for the powers of provincial councils, including their relationship with (appointed) provincial governors, provincial departments of line ministries and both traditional or new forms of local governance or community representation. The Afghan Government should act promptly to legislate in this respect. In addition, consideration needs to be given on how to support provincial councils.

There is concern that the Supreme Court is not in a position to resolve conflicts of power between the executive and legislative, or between parliament and the judiciary. Some suggest that the current draft law fails to clarify the ambiguities and needs revision.

Some suggest that revision of the Constitution may be necessary in the longer-term, for example to harmonise election cycles. Some suggest that the Afghan Government may also consider the introduction of another electoral system in future elections, such as proportional representation.

What are the next steps in state and institution building ?

Critical institutions in Afghanistan are still very weak, at all levels, whatever progress has been made so far. Building state institutions should be a priority of a new international framework for cooperation, particularly those institutions indispensable for the creation of a state based on the rule of law. International assistance is required, but there must be Afghan ownership of the strategy, not just consultation in its preparation, and Afghan commitment to its implementation. Clear benchmarks need to be set, with an accompanying timetable, possibly over a three-year period. There should be transparency in the use of resources, between donors and the Afghan Government, and government and parliament. Popular expectations of a functioning state, able to deliver security, justice and services for the Afghan people, need to be met.

There should be a clear vision of the end state it is aimed to achieve, taking into account sustainability when human and financial resources are limited. For example, could the number of provinces, or districts be reduced? What use should be made of existing traditional mechanisms, including customary law to which most Afghans have access? What is the proper role and capacity of the state, and are there services that could be contracted out, such as health?

The Civil Service Commission needs strengthening, so as to become more transparent and tackle corruption. To depoliticise the civil service, credible appointments procedures need to be introduced. The Afghan Government should consider the urgent establishment of an independent Appointments Review Panel, with powers to examine all public appointments, including provincial governors. A roster of names could be established of persons available for appointment.

Many civil servants need to be re-skilled either for new jobs or to introduce working practices that enable ministries to function without the excessive bureaucracy, and corruption, which are currently major features. Reviewing, and raising, civil service salary levels could also help prevent corruption. Those found responsible for corruption should be sanctioned, including through criminal prosecution. The Ministry of the Interior should be a prime institution for complete overhaul.

Reform of the justice sector is often found to present the most difficult challenge in peacebuilding missions. In Afghanistan, progress is considered to be disappointing. Some feel rebuilding this sector has suffered in particular from insufficient donor coordination. A number of issues require urgent attention, including:

- Afghanistan needs comprehensive strategic planning in the justice sector, which is currently hindered by lack of cooperation and communication between key Afghan institutions – the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court and the Attorney General’s Office. This also affects the effectiveness and capacity of the Judicial Reform Commission (JRC). The recent establishment of the Consultative Group (CG) in the judicial sector should help improve future cooperation. The strategy should include physical infrastructure, including in the provinces, equipment and training.
- Donor countries and NGOs should adjust their programmes of assistance in line with the strategy for judicial sector reform. Unilateral approaches of assessing the needs of the judiciary, including mixing continental and common law systems, and formulating plans need to end.
- The Supreme Court acts as a constitutional court of appeal and as such will play a critical role. Following the parliamentary elections, it should be composed of nine legally-qualified, independent and well-paid members. Some feel that a Judicial Service Commission to decide on judicial appointments could still be usefully established.
- Lack of capacity in the Ministry of Justice’s Legislative Department needs to be remedied to prevent delays in finalizing important legislation. Its staff needs training, equipment and research facilities. Transparency and public consultation on draft legislation should be introduced.
- The draft law on the Organisation and Jurisdiction of Courts contains provisions for the appointment of judges that some feel are not in conformity with international practice of a merit-based approach.

- On-the-job training of judges and prosecutors needs to be assessed and its utility in capacity building determined. There is concern that short part-time courses do not provide the different professional groups with the necessary legal skills to conduct their duties. New training schemes should not be initiated until this review is undertaken.
- Legal education so that new entrants into the profession can meet the needs of the judiciary should be improved through revising university curricula, training teachers of law and greater provision of legal materials.
- Detainees have no access to legal counsel or the facilities necessary to prepare their defence during pre-trial proceedings. Substantial assistance is needed to remedy this.
- Work on the compilation of existing statute laws with indexes needs to be completed. Sets of statute laws need to be published and distributed to all legal institutions, government offices and research facilities, and they should also be available to the public.
- The relationship between customary and ‘formal’ law should be established. Some believe they should be linked; others that customary law does not need to follow ‘formal’ law, although the former needs to reflect international human rights principles.
- Correction and detention centres in the provinces need to be modernized to a level to meet the UN minimum standards.
- Although the United Nations Development Programme has established a fund to cover judicial assistance, some express concern that dispersal of these funds is slow. Larger resources are needed for the justice sector from donor governments.

Some believe the two approaches pursued to-date to training the police also need to be reassessed. Training trainers is undoubtedly beneficial, but takes time. Fast-streaming police training has been inadequate, and police personnel hastily trained in this way require considerable further re-training.

While greater Afghan ownership of security sector reform is needed, many consider that the G8 lead nation concept has generally worked well, although the importance of demonstrating concrete leadership, and making substantial national financial contributions, should be underlined. At the same time, lead nations have neither a monopoly of wisdom, nor sole responsibility for resources.

How to advance human rights and transitional justice?

Re-establishing the rule of law, including respect for human rights and ending impunity, is an essential pre-requisite for going beyond an “illusion of success” in terms of peace and stability in Afghanistan. Much remains to be done in this area but public expectations are high, as evidenced in the recent public consultation conducted by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

The publication of the AIHRC's report on the national consultation, "A Call for Justice", represents an important step as it sends a message to persons responsible for human right violations that the past cannot be brushed aside. Taking action may also have the effect of preventing future violations. In response to the release of the Report, a three-member committee was established on transitional justice, composed of UNAMA, a member of the AIHRC and a representative of the Office of the President. The committee has worked up an initial plan of action, to be examined at a conference in The Hague in June, to implement the Report's recommendations, including: recognition of the victims through commemorative action; building credible and accountable state institutions; further acts of truth-seeking and documentation; promotion of reconciliation; and, in due course, building national capacity to enable eventual punishment of those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Implementing transitional justice measures is highly sensitive for the Afghan Government, since it concerns persons currently in positions of power. Some in government may favour a solution to offer an amnesty to all. Transitional justice comprises various elements and the sequencing of these, based on the capacity to act. Transitional justice has to be careful to avoid being seen as targeting any particular group. Projects for collecting documentation as a record of what has happened in the past are critical to the success of transitional justice measures.

As a first step, vetting, on the basis of transparent and clear criteria, of all public appointments should be introduced. Vetting needs to be conducted in accordance with international standards, including an appeals process, and people should be removed from positions. Although it will likely only affect relatively small numbers of people, it has significant value in establishing accountability. Law enforcement personnel need to take action against ongoing human rights violations, which are insufficiently addressed at present. This may also help prepare the ground for dealing with the violations of the past.

Although there is currently an encouraging momentum in discussion of transitional justice measures, given the acute sensitivity of this issue it is clear that the Afghan Government will need immense international support to be in a position to act. Some question whether the international community gives sufficient priority to human rights issues, in the light of the recent decision to discontinue the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan at the UN Commission on Human Rights as well as other developments. How far is the international community prepared to go in providing the Afghan Government with support?

Making local government work: centre-province relations

Many believe that subnational government currently constitutes a problem. Given the scale of the problem and the upcoming provincial council elections, as well as the large sums of money now becoming available at provincial level, provincial structures should be accorded priority over development of district or lower level structures. At present, provinces have few 'on-budget' resources: decisions are made in Kabul, and the provincial departments of line ministries are expected to implement these decisions. Greater powers will confer greater legitimacy at the provincial level. In provinces predominantly inhabited by minority ethnic groups, if there is a perception, as is currently held, that they are being marginalized in the power structures in the post-election period, centre-province relations may deteriorate.

The Afghan Government and donors should commit to the establishment of one coordinating mechanism at the provincial level, with timelines attached to its development in the post-Bonn international coordination framework. Provincial and lower-level structures should be sustainable, and engage with existing formal and informal structures.

Resource flows from central government to provinces (and below) should be transparent. Provincial structures, while keeping in mind local specificities, need to orient their own planning to the national framework. Greater emphasis should be given to development of the private sector at provincial level.

Attention should be given to appointing competent and qualified governors, and other senior provincial officials, and training should be provided for a cadre of provincial staff more generally.

Reform of the Ministry of the Interior would also facilitate the development of provincial government and administration.

How to mainstream gender?

While the position of some women in Afghanistan, politically and culturally, has improved since the Bonn Agreement, they remain severely disadvantaged in all respects. Afghanistan's new Constitution provides that "the citizens of Afghanistan - whether man or woman - have equal rights and duties before the law", concerted action needs to be taken to give effect to these rights. Women's empowerment is critical to the development of the country, and they can play a highly effective role in local communities in peace-building. Given the sensitivity of the issue of women's rights in a deeply conservative society, Afghan women need to set and lead the agenda; it should not be seen as one imposed by the international community. There should be strong international support for Afghan initiatives.

The immediate priority is for more women to be appointed to decision-making positions. In addition to the impact they can have on the formulation of policy and its implementation, women in leadership positions can provide an example for others to emulate. The Afghan civil service should focus on diversity in its recruitment.

The international community should work through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which has a presence in all provinces. Internationally-funded programmes should include targets for the participation of women in their projects. Development programmes, including the National Development Plan, should be assessed to determine whether women receive proportionate benefit from them.

The experience of other countries shows that providing microcredit can be extremely successful in advancing women's economic and social roles in their community since it allows women control over resources. Such schemes should be introduced urgently in Afghanistan.

Education for all girls is crucial. Women also need equal opportunities to benefit from international scholarships.

In the forthcoming parliamentary elections, some of the larger parties have women candidates in their ranks. The international community should urgently undertake training for these women prior to the elections. Assurance of a secret ballot is vital for women's participation in the elections. While all newly-elected members of parliament will need financial support to fulfill their role (transport expenses, etc), this is particularly important for women, most of whom have no independent financial means.

The networking of women's organizations has been a source of strength in many countries in advancing women's rights. International women's organizations need to give greater support to Afghan women's groups. Diaspora women could also play a role in this respect.

What are the challenges in developing the economy and the private sector?

Afghanistan's economy faces formidable structural problems; pervasive and deep poverty and inadequate capacity to rectify this. Afghanistan needs to restructure its economy in addition to seeking economic growth. The National Development Strategy (NDS), which is currently being prepared with input from various ministries, will provide the tool to prioritise action and facilitate further discussion with the donor community. It will also provide information for the Afghan public. There is an urgency to promulgate the outline vision of the NDS before the parliamentary elections.

There is need for greater coordination between the Afghan Government and the international community, both before and after the adoption of the NDS. Currently, approximately two-thirds of the Afghan national budget is provided by external assistance, which is outside the control of the Afghan authorities. The international community should maintain its level of assistance to Afghanistan. More resources should, however, be channeled through the Afghan Government, providing greater accountability and transparency to the Afghan people. The donors' conference to be held in London in late 2005 or early 2006 will afford the opportunity for further consideration of this.

Security is essential for economic development and investment. Developing the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police into effective forces is crucial. A secure environment also requires a society based on the rule of law: there will be no new investment without a legal framework and a credible, transparent justice system in place to ensure it is enforced and fairly administered.

A number of issues require priority attention, including:

- Mobilizing domestic revenue: implementation is key; action must be taken to prevent the diversion of revenue, for example at the provincial level, and the imposition of illicit levies which hamper the private sector. High level leadership is needed for tax administration reforms, including the customs structure and income tax, where the focus should be on the main revenue sources and larger tax-payers, moving over time toward a more broad-based consumption tax. The informal economy should be brought into the mainstream.
- Prompt adoption of pending legislation to provide an enabling environment for foreign direct investment: some 15 laws have been prioritized by the international and business community, and while progress has been made in recent months, pending legislation on the banking and budget laws, other laws need to be adopted on minerals and hydrocarbons, telecommunications, procurement, business organization, private investment, etc.
- Resolution of land disputes: efforts underway to regularize land records and titles need to be accelerated; a special court or arbitration panel needs to be given responsibility for adjudicating competing claims in major metropolitan areas (and similar mechanisms available in rural areas). The Afghan Government needs to remove land holdings from individual ministries and create a transparent mechanism, probably within the Ministry of Finance, for its disposition.
- 'Let business do business' by removing government bureaucracy; overstuffed ministries invite corruption and should be greatly downsized, leading to simplified procedures for transactions such as registering property. State enterprises should be privatized, and the proceeds thus gained be used to compensate displaced employees.

- Building a basic and financially sustainable infrastructure, including roads, power and water supply, which is crucial to attracting investment. The construction industry is currently booming and needs to be sustained.
- To attract investment, the human capital deficit needs to be tackled, first and foremost by focusing on primary and secondary education to give all children basic literacy skills; vocational training programmes should follow as a second priority, creating skilled workers who would be much more cost-effective than using expatriate labour, or who could also have skills for working abroad resulting in significant remittances returning to Afghanistan.
- Growth should be pro-poor and a social safety net needs to be established, which could draw on the experience of the National Solidarity Programme: job creation cannot be left entirely to a market economy; a better understanding needs to be gained of non-farm rural livelihoods, including mechanisms for greater involvement of local communities in development planning.
- Pro-active procurement practices need to be pursued: for example, it could make a significant impact on the local economy if NATO forces were to buy locally whenever possible.

How to address the human skills deficit?

Views differ on whether Afghanistan faces a grim human capital situation, or whether resourceful Afghans will 'win through'. But a comprehensive approach to developing human capital is needed rather than dealing with it on a project-wise basis as has been the practice to-date. There is a need to provide for the different training requirements of current and future generations. International support for a manpower study is suggested, looking at the labour available, the possible requirements over the next five to 10 years, supply and demand, and labour market rigidities.

In the public sector, well-trained administrators and managers are in short supply. All government ministries need to become 'centers of learning', imparting skills and providing incentives for productivity to overcome corruption. Early retirement could be offered to improve efficiency. Salary levels in the public sector need to be addressed, as the most talented public employees often move to more lucrative posts in the private sector.

All contracts should be required to have provision for training and skills transfer. When employing consultants, these should be 'twinned' with Afghan counterparts for these purposes.

Primary education needs to be extended and improved, taking account of distance learning and the need to educate a 'lost generation'. Full use needs to be made of indigenous knowledge. Women could be encouraged to develop a significant role in education. The particular training needs of disadvantaged groups, including women, need to be addressed.

While tertiary education is a less immediate priority, universities should be reformed so that graduates leave with employment skills; scholarships abroad should be awarded on the basis of merit, and there should be a requirement to return to Afghanistan following this education. New institutes should be established for specialist training in management and public administration. More vocational training should be provided, especially in rural areas.

What are the security challenges ahead?

Security and the delivery of justice are essential preconditions for further economic development in Afghanistan, including the protection of human and women's rights. While the presidential elections were an operational defeat for the Taliban and Al Qaeda, it is premature to believe terrorist challenges have been overcome. The major threats Afghanistan now faces are largely internal: countering narcotics, which endangers the entire fabric of the state, corruption, the struggle to extend the writ of government and the rule of law into the provinces and to provide access to justice for all citizens.

While there has been substantial progress in disarming recognized Afghan militia forces since the Afghan New Beginnings Programme began in October 2003, vast stock piles of degenerating arms and ammunition remain in urgent need of safe disposal; this is a task beyond the capacity of the Afghan authorities and requires further assistance from the international community.

An estimated 2,000 illegal armed groups (IAG) currently operate throughout the country, heavily engaged in the narcotics trade, and intimidating local communities. Without action against these groups, the counter-narcotics strategy will fail. These groups also pose an immediate threat to the parliamentary elections, as well as in the longer-term to good governance. Urgent action needs to be taken to tackle IAGs before the parliamentary elections. The Afghan Government has initiated a plan to disarm these groups, using force if necessary. There will be no direct rewards for compliance; but compliance will be encouraged by the refocusing of existing reconstruction projects on those communities who can have an influence upon IAGs. The Afghan Government should implement this plan as a matter of priority.

Planning for the continued expansion of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), through the establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), is well advanced: having completed deployment in the north (stage 1), ISAF has moved into the west (stage 2) and will subsequently expand

to the south (stage 3). Deployment in the south represents a very big step, and is likely to prove more difficult than previous phases. Counter-narcotics will be an immediate issue. Operating norms for PRTs in the south will be different, and they will need freedom of action. For NATO's strategy to succeed its member states must commit the right forces, and incoming forces must be able to replicate the Coalition's capabilities as an effective counter-insurgency force. It is vital they are unlimited by national caveats and are invested with robust rules of engagement. NATO's mission in Afghanistan is sufficiently broad, but there is a need for a new mandate. Will NATO forces be able to respond to circumstances and provide a local protection force? NATO also needs reserves to operate throughout the country, and the process of sourcing this is currently underway. NATO member states need to come forward with offers. The last stage of expansion will be the 're-flagging' of forces in the east. The timing of expansion is very much determined by the availability of forces. A coordination mechanism with the Coalition forces needs to be created. Expansion will also bring NATO forces into an emerging role in relation to the Afghan National Army (ANA), and other indigenous forces, and consideration needs to be given to this.

There is some difference of view on the effectiveness of PRTs, and the lessons learned to-date, and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) has commissioned a study of this. Do they enhance or displace Afghan capacity at the provincial level? How will they play an innovative role in institution building? Many believe PRTs have been a successful element in the transitional plan to link security and development. They require close cooperation with the provincial governor, and if there is no competent governor in post, the PRT cannot operate properly. What is their protection role: while the PRT presence in the north has consensual relations with the local power structure, it did not respond when NGOs were attacked in early May? Military components are under military command structures, while civilian components are under the control of the capitals from where they originate. Some greater degree of coalescence between the military and civilian elements may be beneficial. Some suggest the military component should merge with the civilian unit thus bolstering the provincial structures for the period of their operation. On the basis of the SHAPE study, a handbook for PRTs will be circulated, providing information on best practice and lessons learned, which will be particularly useful with ISAF's expansion to more difficult terrain.

Emphasis has rightly been accorded to building the capability of the ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP), a task that will take several years. Some question the long-term fiscal sustainability of the national security forces, when international assistance is no longer covering the costs. There may also be sequencing issues. While it may be necessary to create a 70,000-strong ANA at the present time, could it become more important in the longer-term to have a larger police force? The National Security Strategy, which is currently being developed in conjunction with all security line ministries, Combined Forces

Command – Afghanistan, and ISAF, will need to be closely coordinated with the security sector reform strategy.

The Afghan Government's Taliban reconciliation initiative aims to reintegrate those neither implicated in war crimes nor involved in leading current resistance, a complex and sensitive issue. It offers a major strategic opportunity to undermine support for insurgency, and improve security. It may also prove effective in building a more cooperative long-term relationship between the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Afghanistan is part of an unstable region. The Afghan Government seeks a long-term military commitment as a guarantee of its security, which is not aimed at any of its neighbours. Afghan security can only be developed with support from neighbouring countries, in cooperating to eliminate the use of proxies that threaten Afghan security. The regional dimension to Afghanistan's security can be enhanced by greater regional economic cooperation, from which may develop, in the longer-term, regional security arrangements.

In the current fragile security situation, international and national NGOs are feeling increasingly vulnerable. With much implementation of development programmes throughout the country conducted through NGOs, they are concerned for the sustainability of their work. Recruitment of staff is becoming increasingly difficult. They need assurance from the Afghan Government that they will be fully included in the future framework envisaged with the international community, and that their security needs will be adequately taken into account.

Countering the narcotics industry

Afghanistan is the largest opium producer in the world. Opium production constitutes a huge threat to the stability, reconstruction and legal economy of the country, undermining the achievements of the Bonn Agreement, impeding the work of state-building and causing social problems through debt entrapment and drug abuse.

The Afghan Government has launched an eight-pillar Counter Narcotics Implementation Plan. This comprises: public information; institution-building; drug law enforcement; criminal justice; eradication; alternative livelihoods; drug demand reduction; and regional cooperation. The plan represents a welcome long-term strategy, although strict implementation remains key to obtaining sustainable results. Figures indicating a recent decline in cultivation may represent tactical progress rather than permanent change.

Enforcing the law, through arresting traffickers and removing from office those found to be involved in the drugs trade, should be a priority action. Provincial governors or others in government benefiting from the proceeds of the drugs trade, who impede measures to counter it, should be dismissed and not simply

moved to another position. Such measures would cut off much of the funding currently used by illegally armed groups. Interdiction has not raised the farm price of opium, and should be pursued more vigorously. Strong leadership and political support will be required from the President and the Afghan Government in taking action against the central figures in drug trafficking.

The capacity needs of government institutions at both the central and provincial levels should be fully addressed. The newly-created Ministry of Counter Narcotics has limited capacity to do its job in Kabul, and negligible capacity to deliver in the provinces. In addition to securing the political commitment at provincial level to countering narcotics, developing the capacity of provincial government is crucial. Little has been done to-date in this respect. Effective, accountable government structures are needed, with efficient coordination. PRTs may help in supporting new structures, and some suggest they could play a role in coordinating action on eradication.

Different strategies may be needed in different provinces. In some provinces, poppy has only recently begun to be grown, and strong action should be taken immediately to counter this. In areas where poppy has traditionally been grown, some argue there should be measures for progressive reduction over time rather than total eradication, allowing alternative livelihoods to take root. Otherwise, there is a serious risk of depopulation of these areas. Countering narcotics policy also needs to be better understood and gain wider popular Afghan support; making action more palliative would help in this respect.

The alternative livelihoods programme needs to create pro-poor and sustainable rural enterprise, both agricultural and non-farm. Although some activities need to show quick and visible impact, longer-term areas of support should include rural infrastructure development, micro-finance and other forms of credit, and improving farmers' access to agricultural inputs and markets. Representative structures should be created at village level to enable local voices to be heard in shaping the alternative livelihoods programme. Counter-narcotics and national development strategies should be closely linked.

More effective regional cooperation should be encouraged, for example through the sharing of intelligence about drug stock piles, increased border cooperation and implementing commitments made in the framework of the Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration on Counter Narcotics.

Greater resources need to be committed to counter narcotics programmes, including the creation of alternative livelihoods. The Counter Narcotics Trust Fund, provides a mechanism for this.

Counter narcotics measures should be a prominent component in the future framework for international assistance to Afghanistan. To do so would communicate a powerful message to the Afghan people about the importance of

effective action. It could also help ensure future successful action by the inclusion of timetabling and benchmarks.

Developing effective regional cooperation

Afghanistan is keen to take forward the Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration adopted in Kabul in 2002. It sees itself as a central 'land bridge', even if this vision is not fully shared by others in the region, with Afghanistan's reconstruction acting as a motor for developing further regional cooperation. As a next step, Afghanistan envisages hosting a meeting later this year with neighbouring states, to examine existing agreements and locate where the responsibility for pursuing specific initiatives lies, with Afghanistan or its neighbours, and to identify the needs, for example in energy or transport, to be met by increased economic cooperation. In preparation for this meeting, consideration needs to be given to which countries to include; there is also an awareness that several regional cooperation mechanisms already exist and the object is not to create a new structure.

Concentrating on economic cooperation should not, however, mean the regional dimension of security is overlooked. Security is central to Afghanistan's economic development. It also needs to be dealt with in a regional context, given the history of interference in Afghanistan, Afghanistan's geographical location and the shared ethnicity of Afghanistan's population with neighbouring states. NATO's commitment to partnership with Afghanistan is a strong signal to neighbouring states. At the same time, NATO is also assisting other countries of the region with border security, customs police, and inter-operability of forces, all of which are essential to countering the narcotics trade, which must also be dealt with through a fully regional approach.

While multilateral arrangements are often necessary for obtaining mutual understanding for a larger vision, bilateral agreements focusing on specific opportunities should have greater potential for Afghanistan. Sectors where greater gains can be made include developing transport infrastructure for transit trade; energy; water resources; and labour.

Transport infrastructure and the trade routes it provides, are vital elements in Afghanistan's regional role. Its highways are part of a regional network linking Central Asia to the Gulf and South Asia, Europe and the Middle East to South Asia and China to the Gulf. Two priorities for development are north-south corridors to ports in Pakistan and Iran. Transit agreements are the best short-term arrangements, but Afghanistan needs to remove a number of obstacles to be able to develop transit routes. Principal among these are time-consuming and prohibitively-expensive logistics costs: freight handling, border crossings and transit formalities, warehouse and storage costs, as well as arbitrary decisions and ad hoc regulations at provincial level. Air transit could become a source of

revenue for Afghanistan if better control management of Afghan airspace can be established.

Some express guarded optimism that the Iran-Turkmenistan-Pakistan gas pipeline may be viable. Afghanistan needs to decide on its power supply strategy and initiate discussion with neighbours on this. It should commission feasibility studies, with the countries concerned, on promising transactions and then establish technical working groups to pursue them further.

Discussions could begin with Iran and Pakistan on establishing modalities for cooperation for key river systems, recognizing the long lead-in time for building dams.

Labour migration is an important economic activity and has served as a safety net for Afghans. Afghanistan needs to reach agreements with Iran and Pakistan to protect the interests of migrant workers and provide them with labour migrant status.

The future framework for international cooperation with Afghanistan

There is strong support for a new framework or compact, post-Bonn, for international cooperation with Afghanistan. While maintaining Afghanistan's security, internal and external, remains integral to Afghanistan's development, the new compact should focus on state-building, especially at subnational level, economic and private sector development, justice sector reform, counter-narcotics and regional economic cooperation. In all these areas, account should be taken of sustainability, capacity building, gender and the regional dimension. Solid relationships have been established during the last three years with the Afghan Government and international community -- military, civilians and NGOs -- working together. The new compact should, however, constitute a qualitative advance in coordination, for which UNAMA should be responsible. It should also represent a new stage in the Afghan Government's relations with the international community, based on the principle of Afghan ownership of a "Kabul process".

The new compact should be an energizing document, with clear benchmarks and timelines. Objectives could be mapped out over a period of three years, for example, or for the duration of the President's term of office, although this should not imply a time-limited overall commitment to Afghanistan by the international community. Applying timelines will strengthen the hand of the President and Afghan Government, and will also help shape Afghans' expectations of the international community. It will facilitate the process of obtaining resources with the approval of national parliaments in donor countries. The compact should enshrine specific commitments by the international community and by the Afghan Government, providing for two-way accountability and transparency. Economic development is more difficult to timetable; it is often more complex to anticipate

the pace of economic delivery; it could be addressed in phases. The Afghan Government should assume responsibility for delivery in the economic sphere.

The compact should be kept as short and simple as possible. More detailed information, for example outlining concrete proposals for developing subnational government or judicial sector reform, could be contained in annexes integral to the compact. The compact should provide for a high-level monitoring system, to examine compliance with commitments, anticipate problems and propose corrective action. The UN could act as the convenor for the monitoring system, which should provide for the Afghan Cabinet to meet with counterparts from donor countries.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the Afghan Government should start to prepare the new compact without delay. There is strong support for the compact to be agreed by early September 2005, and approved by the UN Security Council. It would be presented to the new Afghan Parliament when it assembles for confirmation. The Afghan Government and UNAMA should take measures to build popular support for the compact, including engaging opposition political forces. The compact should be readily understood by public opinion, both in Afghanistan and in the partner countries, so that it represents the continued common endeavour of the Afghan people and the international community to build a secure, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

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