

# UNAMA

## United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

### Transcript

<http://unama.unmissions.org>

#### PRESS CONFERENCE (near verbatim transcript)

**Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan**

**Kabul – 25 January 2012**

First of all, I would like to thank you very much for coming to this first press conference of myself as the new head of UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) and the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I didn't want to postpone this press conference for longer as it is appropriate for me to introduce myself to you. So, this is the main reason why we have this meeting today. I will not read my CV. I think that you can read my CV elsewhere. But, of course, if there are questions about my past, I am more than happy to respond. I have arrived in Afghanistan, in Kabul, approximately a week ago, so quite an experience behind me – one week of meetings and talking to a number of interlocutors here in the country, first of all, to my Afghan counterparts, but, of course, I am talking to representatives of the international community because if you would like to be a good partner of Afghanistan and to work in the closest possible partnership with the authorities of Afghanistan and with the civil society of Afghanistan, I must understand in what way the international community could support this partnership.

You know what my mandate is, the mandate of UNAMA is. You can find it on our website. So, I will not read once again the different points of the mandate, but I would like nevertheless to highlight what the Secretary-General gave us as his basic instructions at this point of time and what kinds of priorities we have to follow. So, I will definitely promote and implement the whole complexity of my mandate but with the focus on how to help link security and development.

Second, to promote and assist an Afghan-led inclusive reconciliation process based on dialogue and consensus including through different efforts from the regional perspective. And thirdly, to promote rule of law, good governance, strong institutions and in particular with a specific focus to promote human rights, in particular the rights of women and children.

I was honoured by being received by His Excellency the President less than twenty-four hours after my arrival in the country. It was a good, substantive meeting and I was happy that it was a good one and that we discussed a number of points relevant for development in the country and the implementation of my mandate. I have already managed to several meetings with different representatives of the authorities of the country including some Ministers, but also the Speaker of the Upper House, the Senate, and the head of Afghanistan Independent Human Right Commission. I will continue with my meetings in a rather accelerated pace in the coming weeks to be able to meet representatives of different political forces and civil society in the country. And of course, I am meeting and will be meeting my international partners. I met representatives

of the diplomatic community here collectively and I am in the process of meeting them individually and of course I talked to other international agencies including to representatives of different UN agencies, funds and programmes and also later on it will be national and international NGOs and other partners. Very soon, I will engage also with the regional partners. I intend to start my visits to the notably neighbouring countries of Afghanistan because this is important also for the implementation of my mandate. At the end of my short exposé, I would like to confirm that I am very happy to be here. This is really, in a way, the best mission possible because of the responsibilities coming with this mission of the United Nations, UNAMA, during this very responsible and crucial period in the life of the country.

This is, as you know, better than me is the transition period when foreign troops will be gradually handing over responsibility for security to our Afghan partners and will be leaving the country. This is the period when Afghanistan assumes more and more sovereign responsibility over its economic and social development, again not without the support of international partners but still more and more that is in the hands of sovereign Afghanistan. This is the period when Afghanistan intends to reinforce functioning, sustainable, credible, democratic institutions building on all the achievements of the past ten years. And again, the international community including the United Nations are here to help. This is the period when Afghanistan will start preparing its next election in 2014 and again it's the matter of the people, political forces here in the country. Technically, the international community is here to help strengthen election-related institutions. This is finally the period that will set the environment for the subsequent years of hopefully peaceful and stable, economically and socially viable development of the country for the period after 2014. My mission here is to help the authorities and civil society of the country in all this and in the closest possible partnership and this is how I intend to act. Thank you very much. *Tashakor.*

**Ariana TV [translated from Dari]:** First of all, I would like to welcome you and congratulate you on your new assignment. My question is that your predecessor Mr. de Mistura also had the same type of meetings with us and also talked about his mission and plans he was going to implement. But after accomplishing his mission we witness that the poverty, the insecurity and the corruption still exist and that the UN did not play the role it should have. And now in this phase that Afghanistan is going towards talks with the opposition I would like to know what is your position and the mission that you have to do with regards to talks and limiting your intervention in such talks and what kinds of hopes you can give to the people of Afghanistan?

**Ján Kubiš:** Well, first of all thank you for welcoming me here. Secondly it is natural that every new head of the mission is coming to address the society through the media. And this is also what I will be doing also in my meetings with different representatives of the civil society so not only talking through the press, but also talking with you and hopefully you will deliver my messages and not your messages to the civil society and to the society as a whole. And the new head of the mission is coming with a certain vision and a certain perspective and telling how, I in this case, would like to work with all of you for the benefit of Afghanistan and its people. And yes the programme must be ambitious and it is based on the mandate. And yes in many areas this is for much longer period than the time of each individual head of mission is here in Afghanistan. If you look at the situation of rule of law, good governance including anti-corruption measures, first of all this is as everything else for Afghanistan. This is the primary responsibility of the country, of the institutions, of the political forces. It is these institutions that should deliver. But our role is to help, is to support. So, this is in response why sometimes we might have a feeling as you indicated that not everything was achieved. First of all, it is for decades. Secondly, it is a shared responsibility. And I would also add that there was also progress; there has been progress in the past ten years, visible progress in spite of all the

deficiencies, gaps and problems. Our task is to see how to help the authorities of the country and the civil society of the country in promoting further this track as a way of development of how to move forward the country into the better situation in these areas as well.

As for the second part of your question about the peace process, again I believe that after many many problems and in spite of still existing many problems and instances of fighting and terrorist acts on the territory of Afghanistan, something started ten years ago and people of the country have supported these kinds of processes. It is an unfinished business. War is still going on, and people are tired of war. They would like to live normal lives as everywhere else. And I think that from that perspective there is a support for steps that would bring more stability and eventually will establish overall peace in the country.

What is important and I will repeat it all the time that it is and should be an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process, because it is about the country and the people of the country. And it can be a successful Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process if it is based on wide participation, on representative participation, not only of political forces but eventually of civil society because it is for the people of the country. That no major relevant party is excluded from that process and is by and large built on the achievements of the past ten years. You know better what are different conditions established by the authorities of the country for this process, I will not repeat them. But once again it must be an inclusive process based on consensus, where also eventually civil society has its place. And within this Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process and I do not see any other chance for it to succeed if it is not Afghan-led and Afghan-owned could eventually bring peace and stability to the country.

**Pajhwok Afghan News [translated from Pashto]:** I also take this opportunity to welcome you to your new assignment. My question is again on the second part of your mission which is the peace process. And given the complex political situation where the decisions are being made in the US, I would like to know how you can find your way into that situation. Based on which agenda you would like to intervene in such a process if you have any strategy, if you have any agenda to elaborate let us know about it.

**Ján Kubiš:** Once again, thank you for welcoming me. I beg to disagree with your assumption that the decisions are being made in the United States because the key decisions are being made here in Afghanistan. It can concern all the areas. There are different occasions when Afghan authorities [...] *inaudible* but again political forces of Afghanistan and civil society had a chance to express opinions, in a way that was instrumental in shaping up the position of both the country and the international community as far as, for example, the peace process is concerned.

I will just mention two or three instances: the [Loya] Jirga that took place at the end of the last year, the inauguration of the parliamentary session a couple of days ago, the Bonn Conference with the conclusions where the roles of the authorities of the country was very prominent and the outcome has the full backing of the international community, and the recent discussions of Mr. President with the Special Envoy of the United States Mr. Grossman, including the visits of Mr. President to a number of key partners of Afghanistan for the future. And he, as you know, has now embarked on his trip to a number of the countries be it in the neighbourhood in Turkmenistan and then Italy, France and the United Kingdom.

And our role, my role, is obvious, to support this Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process in any way, first of all, requested by Afghanistan, Afghanistan in a wider sense. And again as one of the examples of our engagement is our support to the work of the High Peace Council.

**Guardian:** You mentioned the linking of security and development as one of your priorities, figures from ISAF over the last couple of years they say show that security situation is improving, the thing is that from UN over same period appears deterioration in security with high number of civilian casualties, violence spreading to areas previously relatively peaceful. I realise that you only been here a week and you consider your objective is always to help Afghans achieve a secure future, but I just need your impression right now of the security situation and is it deteriorating?

**Ján Kubiš:** It is obvious to everyone that the security situation is still volatile. For instance, fighting is still going on. Unfortunately suicide and terrorist attacks are part of the life here. What is tragic and sad is that unfortunately suicide attacks are targeting indiscriminately civilians, including children and women. Approximately a week from now we will issue a new annual report speaking about what is the situation with regards to the protection of civilians. This is one of our mandate tasks and we will speak in more details about the situation according to our assessment. What I would like to say is that it is not about statistics and figures because sometimes methodology is different and the criteria are different. How we measure certain situations how others measure certain situations. What is more important from my perspective is that all this we do and others do and they are describing the security situation and what is happening now notably to the civilian population, whether this is prompting all of us to change the situation, to take measures that would work against these kind of situations and trends and this is the intention. So it is not necessarily about statistics, it is about whether we by doing this can influence situation for the better and can give arguments to those who would like to see more security, stability and peace for this country to work for it.

**BBC Pashto [translated from Pashto]:** UNAMA in 2002 and 2003 had a very strong stake in the political arena in Afghanistan but in recent years, UNAMA has been sidelined from those decision making positions, your agenda and objectives sound good, do you think it would be possible to achieve your goals and objectives from such a relatively sidelined position?

**Ján Kubiš:** Thank you very much, excuse me if interpret your question not in the sense that you put it, simply I am not sure. I will not comment on your basic assumption not to blame speaking about the past. What I can say for the period I will be here it is that my work will be in support of Afghanistan. I am not a viceroy of Afghanistan. I am representing the whole international community, including Afghanistan, so you will find me in that support role. Naturally based on my mandate, naturally based on principles, values, obligations of Afghanistan that should guide Afghanistan in its life and the government of Afghanistan in discharging its responsibilities towards the citizens of Afghanistan, and here we will be clear, vocal, transparent and good partner of Afghanistan as I said working on the basis of principles values and commitment.

**Associated Press:** Everybody has been talking about how the peace process has to be Afghan-led. What evidence do you have that it is Afghan-led, and if it isn't, how do we get to that point?

**Ján Kubiš:** I would say one example of such evidence is the quiet discussion that is now so present in the whole society as far as peace process is concerned. Political forces are discussing it. The Parliament is discussing it. Civil society discusses it at all levels not only at the top level but in the provinces in the societies there are different discussions, perhaps contacts, when people are trying to understand what we can do to support this.

Second piece of evidence, I would say, is the increasingly deep engagement of both Mr. President but other political forces in a very deep, substantive dialogue of some of the key

partners and parties that are engaged in this process. Again, I would refer you to the visit of Mr. Grossman here and all the statements coming both from the Office of the President but also from different political forces on this. There is a dialogue that is not only linked to one strain, one line of discussions but increasingly the authorities of the country are saying this is our process – must and will be – our process. And this is being accepted by all international parties. I cannot read in any other way the position expressed among others, and perhaps first of all by different representatives of the United States.

**Wall Street Journal:** I'm just curious how exactly you plan to play a role in the upcoming presidential elections. President Karzai supposedly said in Bonn that he doesn't want anyone in the international community to play a role. Secondly, it really tarnished and set-back UN's relationship with Afghanistan when the UN was seen as meddling unfairly in the 2009 elections and Karzai has basically not trusted the international community since those elections.

**Ján Kubiš:** Once again, the main point of departure, this is Afghanistan and these are Afghan elections. These must be credible, representative and democratic for the sake of Afghanistan and its people. And we as the international community will support everything and anything that could help the country organise and conduct credible, representative and democratic elections. We will discuss with the authorities of the country, and I will discuss, what could be the expected and welcomed engagement of the international community in this process. But I have no doubt that, for example, our activities that would lead to strengthening the respective institutions and processes that divert them for the credible Afghan-owned elections and Afghan-managed elections would be something that would be welcomed by the authorities of the country.

No doubt we will be back to this issue of elections in the period that I will work in the country and we will have a chance to discuss it in more details.

I would like to thank you very much for your participation and your questions. I apologise that we had only one hour. But I hope that this will be a regular kind of meeting. I am definitely ready to do so with very good regularity. Later on, I will be definitely ready also to engage individually as normal, it's normal journalistic practice. Not everyone is interested in only getting the lines shared with everyone else. But it will come later because today I don't have the time. I'm sorry. I'm looking forward to reading what I actually said today in your dispatches. [Laughter] Be sure that I very much like to work with you and the doors are open.