

Königswinter, 30 November 2001

PRESS BRIEFING BY HOUMAYOUN JAREER, HEAD OF THE CYPRUS GROUP DELEGATION

Following is a near-verbatim transcript of the English interpretation of today's briefing at 1 p.m. Bonn time by Mr Houmayoun Jareer, Head of the Cyprus group delegation:

In the name of God, the almighty, I am very happy to be here with you again and I would like to give you some information about the conference, which we are taking part in, and to give you our position towards the problems which are discussed. We are sure that this conference will end soon, with resolutions, which will be to the benefit of the Afghan nation.

As far as the group of the Cyprus process is concerned, we have done our utmost, and very sincerely, to achieve results, which would serve the national interests of the Afghan people. Until now we had all bilateral and trilateral discussions with the groups, and today there was a meeting of the group of eight, two representatives of each of the groups here, to start to gather the results of the bilateral discussions and to bring them on a common denominator, and we hope that very soon we will have the draft of the agreement, which will be passed here in these discussions.

This group of eight started its work this morning at 10 a.m. and continued until 12, and my impression is that the progress is very positive and you will have the results by tomorrow. The committee will continue its work today in the afternoon and will bring the points, which are agreed upon, to their definitive text. I can mention to you specifically that in regard of the agenda, which was proposed by the United Nations, all the groups agreed to it.

When we come to the details, today in discussion we understood that there are still some different ideas about the details and we are working now to bring these details towards a common denominator, and we hope that very soon we will have a definitive agreement, which our people are hoping to hear very soon.

I can assure you that all the participant groups are sincerely, and very hard, trying to resolve the differences and come to a result, which would be in the national interest of Afghanistan and for the benefit of our people.

Now I am at your disposal, if there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Question: There are three questions: first, is there agreement on the number of members of the Supreme Council, and if so how many? Second, what is the number of the members of the interim administration? Third, the dignitary named Haji Qadir has left already the conference, has he left the conference because of differences only among their group, or because of differences with all groups?

Answer: In regard of the number of member of these organs, it is true that there have been differences in the viewpoints, but we tried in these days to bring the views closer to each other, and we have reached an agreement but I would request your allowance not to be pushed to now give any information, which is going to be given to you tomorrow together with all groups.

Haji Qadir is one of the very important personalities in Afghanistan. He is the leader of the Shura, of the council, of the eastern provinces of Afghanistan, and, contrary to what you said, he is not a member of the Rome group, but a member of the Islamic Alliance. He has left the conference not because of differences between himself and other groups; other groups had good contacts and relations with him. The reason why he left the conference we don't know in detail, it might be some difficulties between the group of the Islamic Alliance, but as much as I can tell you, Haji Qadir is accepting the spirit of this conference, and he told me personally when he was leaving the conference, that he would agree and support all that was decided by this conference.

Question: I understood that there is an agreement already that the former King Zahir Shah would be the leader of the interim administration. But do you think that the youth in Afghanistan have any idea what role the King can play for the future of Afghanistan, because he's over 80, if I understand very well.

Answer: To answer your question I would say that there is no previous decision, or decision which was taken previous to this conference about any matter. And the United Nations has called this conference and given the Afghans the opportunity to discuss all the matters among each other, and the results you will hear tomorrow. So there is no point in stressing the rumours.

Question: Two questions: You told us that all the four groups agree on the UN agenda but there are still some differences on details. Could you please give us some hint about these details, which are the points still being discussed. Second question: we've been under the impression here that maybe the two major delegations, the Rome group and the United Front, were leading the talks on the Petersberg, and that maybe the two other delegations were under pressure to give up ground in order to satisfy the two major players. Could you comment on this?

Answer: With regard to your first question, as I mentioned earlier, on the principle of establishing a Supreme Council and an interim administration there is agreement between all the group. But in the details there are differences, for example as I mentioned also in answering the earlier question, there are differences in the composition and the numbers which will be participated either in Supreme Council or in the interim administration. And also, one other major point, which is under discussion, is the question of the security in Kabul. Every group has its own position and we are trying, as I mentioned - the impression from this group of eight session is that we can breach these differences and come to an agreement so that you can hear the results of this tomorrow.

In regard to your second question, it is not so that here are important and not important or less important groups, but we are all four groups here on equal footing by the invitation of the United Nations and every one of the groups has only one vote by the last agreement so we are as equal as others are in this gathering. The second thing is that all the groups who participated here tried earnestly to reach an agreement in the bilateral context. As the group of Cyprus has good contact with members of different groups, we had a constructive role, a very active role, in bridging the differences between the different groups and we were successful in that point and our role here was an active and constructive one.

Question: (Start inaudible) ... like to see for Kabul? A UN force, a mixed western international force or an Afghan force?

Answer: Your question is very important because as far as Cyprus is concerned, we think that the security of Kabul is one of the most important points which have to be resolved in this conference. The four groups agree on the basis, on this principle, that the security of Kabul shall be left (... break in tape ...).

The principle is agreed by all groups. There were discussions about the mechanism how to reach this goal, and in these discussions we could get closer so that we hope by tomorrow you will have the result of that as well.

Question: (Start inaudible): ... international force or do you want an Arab or Islamic force, as the Cyprus group, please?

Answer: If you want to know exactly the opinion of the Cyprus Group, we think that United Nations must decide about a security force for Kabul.

Question: First of all, why don't you change your names - you are here Cyprus Group, Rome Group and so on, and this wouldn't give a good impression for the Afghan nation once they want to vote for this or the other group. Why you don't put your names, the way of the political issue? The second question is that Haji Qadir has left the meeting because he thought that the Pashtuns are not represented enough in this conference, whereas there are so many members, eight or nine members they said, in the Rome group from the Pashtuns, there are Pashtun members in the group from Peshawar, there are also Pashtuns I would say in your group, there are also four Pashtuns in the Northern Alliance group. So why he felt discomfort with this composition and left the meeting?

Answer: Our answer is that first of all it is too late now to change our name, and the second question is – that is that gentleman's opinion, and if someone is going to answer it, it is Haji Qadir and not us.

Question: Mr Jareer, would you agree in continuing conversations in Kabul as Mr Qanooni proposed and deal the security question, in case you want to reach an agreement in Bonn.

Answer: As I mentioned earlier, for us the security of Kabul is very important, is the basic issue, which we shall agree upon here in Bonn.

My impression from today's session of the group of eight, eight people I mean, is that we are very close to reaching an agreement on that issue.

Question: Mr Jareer, did you speak in the conference about the war which the United States is leading in Afghanistan, this is the first question? And the second, there is some impression that the United States is using this conference to continue the war against terrorists and probably to attack Iraq very soon.

Answer: There is no pressure whatsoever in this conference. We are Afghans gathered here together to find a solution or the situation in Afghanistan. How we can resolve the next future period of our country. And we only discuss the matters which concern this issue. That is forming an interim administration and bringing about a good security possibility for the people in order to put them in a position to be able to decide freely about their future, for self determination and future. About the second part of your question that America is going to use this conference for fulfilling other purposes, I can tell you, that I disagree with you totally. This is a conference about Afghanistan and it has nothing to do with whatever else America wants to do. This is a conference about Afghanistan.

Question: The question was that you are talking only about the security of Kabul, and what would happen to the security of other towns in Afghanistan? Would it be looked after by the United Nations, or would this group of four decide about that as well?

Answer: This will be the last question which I would answer because there is another press conference afterwards. So, as far as Cyprus Process is concerned, we are not only worried about the security of Kabul but also worried about the security of other parts of Afghanistan as well. Although we have no exact information about what has happened recently in Mazar-i-Sharif, we condemn these sort of things which happen. The same way we don't agree with what happened in (Samangan) and also in Kunduz, and also the situation in the eastern part of Afghanistan is not quite satisfactory and in the same way in Kandahar also there are some problems in this way, but we think that once this Interim Administration, which would be acceptable to all Afghan people, can take office in Kabul, then they can – with the help of the United Nations – can look after security in other parts of the country as well. And we hope that soon we can be in a position that Afghanistan is safe and peaceful. Thank you.

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