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## CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

## Rebuilding Afghanistan: Peace and Stability

Petersberg, 2 December 2002

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(Translation from German)

Ladies and Gentlemen

Here in Bonn on the Petersberg history was indeed written. And without exaggeration one can say that here the fate of the Afghan nation has changed for the better, and you will allow me today to say that I am somewhat proud to have the honour being your host once again.

Under the leadership of the United Nations the representatives of the Afghan ethnic groups collected here at the different times have achieved no less than what was most important for the suffering population of their countries, hope and a realistic perspective for a better life in freedom and in peace.

Over twenty years of civil war, the rule of terror of the warlords and finally the brutal dictatorship of the Taliban not only destabilised Afghanistan but also neighbouring countries. In the end, the country was desolate and destroyed, isolated and excluded from the rest of the world and of any participation in global prosperity.

A population suppressed, in poverty and in fear had to watch helplessly how their country became a favourite haven of international terrorists who used the country as a base for terrible crimes on innocent people all over the world. These crimes were planned and ordered there.

Here at the Petersberg, you were able to draw a line under this time of terror. The successful end of the conference enabled Afghanistan to return to the international community of nations. For a year the country has enjoyed the rule of an internationally respected leadership, and dear Mr. President Karzai, this is last but not least, your personal achievement. After difficult negotiations, it was here that the foundations were laid for a multi-ethnic government of national reconciliation. This success, ladies and gentlemen, was possible only because every one was ready to make painful compromises, and these compromises will also be necessary in the future.

As a German, I can only emphasise what a great gift it is to be given a chance to return to the family of nations and last year, I think you grasped that opportunity. Now, what matters is to turn this chance into a viable and enduring perspective. Distrust and power struggles among

Afghans will only harm the peace process and thus will harm the opportunities that Afghanistan has in shaping this one world of ours.

We should never forget that the freedom which has been opening up for Afghans since the fall of the Taliban regime needs to be acquired. Once might even say fought for, every day anew.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like once again to give my personal thanks to Mr. President Karzai for the commitment, which he has shown in striving for his country's unity.

Together with the international community, the representatives of Afghanistan of last year set out a clear timetable, and as laid down, the Loya Jirga met in June last year, and since October there has been a Constitution Commission to elaborate a Draft Constitution. I am confident, and I think you all share my confidence that you will manage to write a Constitution guaranteeing an independent judiciary, equality for all groups of the population and all religious communities. But also, the participation of women in the country's political life just as envisaged in the Petersberg Agreement.

One year ago, all parties committed themselves to respecting human rights and this is the very key for ending violence and therefore also for ending misery. Tolerance and respect vis-à-vis people of different beliefs and ideas are the most important building stone for the urgent reconstruction of the country. In this reconstruction, the principle should exist which we call the peace dividend. Without peace, no economic development, but economic development both serves and promotes peace.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Last year's conference had been preceded by an extensive military operation. Without the international coalition against terrorism, Afghanistan would probably still be suffering under the dictatorship of the Taliban. Regrettably, the military conflict is still not over. We know that giving peace to the country, creating security and reconstructing Afghanistan will be long-term tasks, demanding patience but also enduring sustainable commitment from us all. However, I am convinced that in the end, the legitimate Afghan government with the support of the international community will also be able to endure.

In the course of the past year, impressive achievements were made, particularly in the field of education. Far more children than initially expected, particularly girls, could finally exercise their human right to school education and this progress too, needs to be maintained and even extended. The Afghan government must resolutely oppose those forces attempting once more to ban women from universities and schools, or would attempt by other means to recreate some of the Taliban conditions. Our Afghan partners can continue to rely on our solidarity and on our help in this conflict.

My government, just as the other donor countries represented here has made available significant funds for reconstruction purposes and we will continue to do so in the future. We remain committed to Afghanistan. However, international help cannot supplement what the

Afghan nation can do on its own and according to the Karzai government that is not intended either.

We can and wish to provide support, however for the future of Afghanistan, it is not New York or Washington or Berlin, not even this Petersberg here which will be crucial. What will be essential is how the Afghan population will master its own destiny

The international community, it is becoming clear again today, believes in a good future for Afghanistan and it trusts that the responsible forces of Afghanistan will prove their great potential and their goodwill for the benefit of their country.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today's meeting for which I wish all of us, courage, wisdom and success should mark another major step on this path.

Thank you very much for your attention.