

**FINAL TEXT
AS DELIVERED**

**STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
DELIVERED BY THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN
TO THE 2002 BONN TALKS ON AFGHANISTAN**

Petersberg, 2 December 2002

Last year in this very room we heard a voice that came to us from an audio-recording from the valleys of Afghanistan. The voice was that of His Excellency President Karzai. Another voice was from (Foreign Minister Abdullah) Abdullah who was also participating (from a distance). It is an honour and a pleasure to be sitting next to them and others in this room who were here last year.

I wish, first of all, to express my most sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Germany, and in particular to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and to Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer, for taking the initiative to convene this important meeting one year after the signing of the Bonn agreement.

This gathering is a symbol of Afghanistan's achievement. The agreement signed by the Afghan parties a year ago today was a hopeful but uncertain beginning – a commitment to end the war in Afghanistan and embark upon a process that would lead, in the words of that agreement, to the “establishment of a broad-based, gender sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government.” Whether these hopeful words would be translated into a new reality on the ground was not clear one year ago. Whether the terrorist groups that had operated for so long in Afghanistan, and that had contributed to the tragedy of Afghanistan's war, would be defeated was not clear one year ago. Whether the institutions called for by the Bonn Agreement would take root was not clear either. Nor was it clear that the necessary level of support from the international community, and donor nations in particular would be forthcoming.

In many areas, the situation is now much clearer, justifying the optimism felt at the signing of the Bonn Agreement. I am particularly grateful for the strong support of the international community to Afghanistan. I refer not only to the very generous assistance pledged to Afghanistan at the Tokyo conference in January, but also to the deployment and support of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul. This force has just been extended for one year, which is another sign of the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

The main milestones of the process—the establishment of the Interim Administration last December, the holding of the Loya Jirga in June, the establishment of the Transitional Administration also in June, and the formation of various Commissions—were reached mostly on schedule. Many other achievements buttress

those stipulated in the Bonn Agreement: three million children returned to school - of which more than one million are girls; 1.7 million refugees returned to their homeland, and reconstruction has begun on the national road system. International assistance and Afghan leadership have come together in these and many other initiatives, reaffirming the promise made in Bonn last year for a better, safer and more just future for Afghanistan.

We also see in this event today another symbol, that of the strong compact that has developed between Afghanistan and the international community at large. Indeed, before and after the Emergency Loya Jirga, the Afghan authorities, neighbouring states, donor countries and other interested member states have come together repeatedly in Kabul, New York, Washington, Tokyo, Geneva, Paris, Berlin and many other places to inform each other, discuss needs, design projects, fine-tune cooperation, and reaffirm their sense of joint responsibility for the success of the daunting undertaking that is the reconstruction of Afghanistan. This is not only a positive development for rebuilding the country: it is also a critical factor for the maintenance and consolidation of peace itself. Let us not forget that, for decades, violence in Afghanistan has also been caused and fueled by the clash on its soil of foreign interests, rivalries and ideologies. Peace in Afghanistan requires, therefore, not only that the Afghans choose cooperation over die-hard habits of confrontation, but is also demands the same from the international community. The intention of Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries to sign a declaration of good neighbourly relations is an especially welcome signal of this spirit of cooperation.

Against the backdrop of the painful legacy of a prolonged war, the past twelve months stand as a positive, hopeful achievement. The reconstruction of the country is a work in progress in the most diverse fields from the creation of a new currency to the launching of scores of new publications, from the training of the police to the reform of the school curriculum, from the design of the comprehensive development plan to the drafting of a new constitution. These achievements were made possible, above all, by the powerful aspiration of Afghans to put conflict behind them and give their country a fresh start. Indeed, the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, the gradual strengthening of the government institutions, the work of the Human Rights Commission and that of the Constitutional Drafting Commission, have demonstrated in different ways the strong desire of Afghans from all walks of life to come together to restore peace and reshape their country.

This popular longing for peace, this patient determination to rebuild the nation are undoubtedly the principle asset for Afghanistan's renewal. Insecurity is its most dangerous enemy. Whether caused by the attacks of extremists, by factional rivalries, abuses of power or common banditry, insecurity and lawlessness undermine the people's confidence in the peace process, hamper economic activities, limit reconstruction assistance, threaten the exercise of the most basic human rights and the main objectives of the Bonn process. We therefore fully support the priority that President Karzai attaches to the restoration of security. We fully endorse the strong appeal he has repeatedly made to factional leaders across the country to cooperate with the central government in the establishment of the rule of law. We share his view that the factional armies, militias and

armed groups that have re-emerged must now be phased out and replaced by a national police and a national army dedicated to the service and protection of the population. We are therefore encouraged by the recent decisions of the Transitional Administration concerning the creation of the new Afghan army. Indeed, we are convinced that hardly any project could contribute more to rebuilding the Afghan state, to divisions inherited from the civil war and restoring popular confidence in the government than the creation of truly national security forces.

The implementation of this project will be difficult. Like other endeavors under the Bonn process, its success will require political will and sustained effort on the part of the Afghan authorities. It will also require further involvement and tighter coordination by the international community.

As we enter the second year of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, Afghanistan and the international community do so with the benefit of twelve months of hard work and dedication to the fulfillment of its promises. The past twelve months have provided us with a clearer sense of the great opportunities – and also the great difficulties – that lie along the way. The real tests of commitment lie ahead. Demobilizing militias, broadening the central government's authority across the country, drawing customs revenues to the treasury, preparing a constitution, building the rule of law and increasing respect for human rights, this will be real indications of a broader allegiance to a democratic and stable Afghanistan.

We find strength in the knowledge that the Afghan people are strongly and overwhelmingly behind the goal of the Bonn process. But we are also keenly aware that, both inside and outside of Afghanistan, there are and will continue to be spoilers eager to fuel ethnic, religious and political divisions to re-gain or preserve power, influence and wealth. And above of all, as we brace for the challenges of the next twelve months, we are encouraged by the strong ties of solidarity that have come to bind the Afghans and international community in the fulfillment of the peace agenda.

The events of the past year have earned us all the right to remain optimistic. Along with that right, of course, comes the responsibility of all of us, Afghans and their international partners alike, to continue to support the Bonn process. We must not fall prey either to undue optimism or to undue pessimism. Rather, we must maintain a steady determination to see this task through till the end. I look forward to the conclusions of this meeting, and I am sure they will help the United Nations as it continues its work in Afghanistan. The gains achieved so far have truly been the result of a collective effort – by the Afghans themselves, by Governments, by NGOs, and by the United Nations. Let us all continue working in this spirit to achieve lasting peace and stability for the people of Afghanistan.