

Summary of Remarks by Afghan President Hamid Karzai

National Military Academy of Afghanistan Graduation Ceremony in Kabul, Afghanistan

March 22, 2011

In addition to President Karzai, cabinet ministers, prominent political personalities, foreign diplomats, and representatives of NATO forces in Afghanistan also attended the event.

Addressing the gathering, Karzai stressed that the Afghan people would support the presence of the coalition forces in Afghanistan provided they put an end to civilian casualties, arbitrary house searches and that the parallel structures, like private security firms, Provincial Reconstruction Teams and irresponsible militia groups are dissolved. He said: "The Afghan people may support the international community's presence in Afghanistan, but safeguarding the Afghans' lives, ending civilian casualties, fundamentally strengthening the government and the dissolution of parallel structures and activities are the basic conditions for the continuation of relations between us, America and NATO."

He went on to say that strategic relations between Afghanistan, NATO and the United States of America was of great importance for Afghanistan and that soon a grand assembly, or Loya Jirga, will be held in Afghanistan to discuss strategic relations between Afghanistan and America. He also added that the continuation of cooperation between Afghanistan and America is linked with the success of the transition process and the amount of international aid to governance building process in the country. He said: "On the basis of our national interests, the continuation of our cooperation and friendship with America is considered a key pillar of our foreign and security policy. Today talks are under way on strategic relations between the two countries. A traditional Loya Jirga will be soon convened on the objectives and prospects for strategic relations. The government will take measures in this regard, in view of national interests of the country and on the basis of Loya Jirga's instructions and after full observance of legal process. It should be clear that future cooperation between Afghanistan, America and NATO should have links with the success of the transition process and the nature and amount of their aid in the governance building process."

He once again emphasized that the war on terror would not produce results in the Afghan villages unless civilian casualties end and said: "Victory over terrorism can be ensured only by protecting and guaranteeing the lives and honor of the victims of terrorism. There is no any other option. Therefore, I stress once again that this war is not in the villages of Afghanistan, [but] the hideouts, havens and factors of terrorism should be fought."

Karzai also said America and NATO are responsible for fully training and equipping the Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

Karzai added: "I know that we are still away from the target, and I also believe that the international community will continue to cooperate and assist the Afghans in other forms. However, changes will certainly be brought to this cooperation and assistance. In addition to accomplishing the transition

process, the US and NATO responsibility will be limited to training and equipping the Afghan forces and providing financial assistance."

The Afghan president said that it was tough enough for the Afghan government to take over responsibility for providing good governance and ensuring security as foreign countries still continued to interfere in Afghanistan.

"Under the current circumstances, we know that it is difficult to take over full responsibility for providing governance, ensuring security and implementing reconstruction as on the one hand, the country has been affected by 30 years of violence and misery, and on the other hand, subversive activities and interference continue in the country. We also know that the Afghan people will no longer want others to carry out responsibility for defending their country. Therefore, we reached an agreement with the world on transferring responsibilities to the Afghans. The transition process will be implemented as part of the transition program. We will begin the transition process in some parts of the country by the end of Saratan [22 June]. We will accomplish the process across the country by the end of 1393," he said.

Karzai also said that the transition process includes many fields. "Transition means defending the country, ensuring security and implementing development projects. It also means the Afghans will carry out all affairs such as ensuring security, implementing reconstruction projects and taking over responsibility for providing governance in all zones and meeting the patriotic Afghans' wish and demands."

Karzai also announced the names of provinces and cities where security will be handed over to the Afghan security forces from NATO troops in mid June this year. He said: "Afghanistan will take over complete responsibility for security in the following areas from Saratan [22 June] of the current year. The responsibility for security of Kabul except for its Surobi district, Panjsher Province, Bamiyan Province, Herat city except for its districts, Lashkar Gah city, the capital of Helmand Province, Mazar-e Sharif, the capital of Balkh Province and Mehtarlam, the capital of Laghman Province. This transition process will expand from the center of provinces to the districts."

The president also made it clear that the transition of security to the Afghan forces depends on the full cooperation of the international community and the West. "Assessment of the security handover of some other provinces and cities of Afghanistan is under way, and the handover of security of these provinces to the Afghan government will also start soon as part of the second phase of the transition. The successful completion of the transition process undoubtedly depends on the implementation of mutual commitments made at the Kabul Conference," Karzai said.

Karzai said that the UN must make its activities transparent and report on the money it is spending in Afghanistan. "Commitments were made at the Kabul Conference on spending the international aid through the Afghan government and the mechanism on its spending, and this must be implemented by the donor countries. The UN organizations and bodies based in Afghanistan should operate under a single umbrella based on agreements reached between us and the UN. The UN organizations and agencies mean that various UN organizations are operating in Afghanistan at the moment and

Afghanistan is not clearly informed about it. Their spending and nature of activities are questionable for us. We have started talks with the UN. We hope that we will reach an agreement on this soon, God willing, I mean during the current year," Karzai said.

The president also said that the Provincial Reconstruction Teams run by the NATO forces in Afghanistan must change their nature of activities and support the transition of security to the Afghan government instead. "To guarantee lasting economic social growth in Afghanistan, the international community must help Afghanistan in implementing some major national projects and programs which have infrastructural importance. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams or PRTs must turn into aid organizations to help the transition process. The transition commission will be instructed to present to the cabinet a specific proposal on this," Karzai said, assuring the international community that the Afghan government would also launch a series of programs to strengthen good governance. "The necessary proposals and schemes should be presented to the cabinet for the improvement of good governance which is the task of the Afghan people. In cooperation with the relevant government organizations, these proposals and schemes should be prepared across the country."