



Remarks at Afghanistan Donors' Conference

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Paris, France
June 12, 2008

SECRETARY RICE: (In progress.) -- for your dedication and sacrifice in helping the people of Afghanistan.

I think we would all have to agree that Afghanistan has made tremendous progress since the Taliban was removed from power. We only have to look back now at a concrete and democratic constitution, successful presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005, and more that are planned for 2009 and 2010. There is a nascent and emerging local governance structure, there is a stable Afghan currency, a strong and growing national army that is poised to take over security in Kabul, and vast improvement in access to healthcare and education for all Afghans.

These achievements are remarkable for any place, but particularly for one that was a safe haven for terrorists just a few years ago and that had been through so many years of civil war and discord before that. And I think what this illustrates is that when you have a popular will to progress among a very tough and dedicated people, the Afghan people, a dedicated government and steadfast help from the international community, a lot can be done.

Now the Afghan Government is proposing a five-year development plan -- a strategy for development -- and we are here to support that plan with our money and with our expertise. It's still fragile, of course, in Afghanistan because they face determined enemies, they face illicit drug trade, food insecurity, and of course, insurgent activity. But the same success is going to depend on the collaborative efforts of the international community to back an Afghan-led development plan that connects the government to every level of the Afghan people.

The United States today, as First Lady Laura Bush said earlier, is committing, over the next two years, a total of \$10.2 billion to reconstruction and security assistance in Afghanistan. We look forward to congressional approval of the final \$7.1 billion of that commitment. But let me say that Americans are committed to Afghanistan on both sides of the aisle, and we look very much forward to being able to fulfill the commitment that we have made to date.

The upcoming 2009/2010 elections are the next measure of Afghanistan's democratic progress. And our pledge includes \$200 million for election support, and we ask that others support the Afghans in these very important elections. We must continue to commit to increasing the effectiveness and coherence of our assistance, while ensuring that it reaches the Afghans and addresses their most urgent needs. This means successfully fighting corruption, improving accountability, and it means Afghan ownership of development. We strongly urge the Afghan Government to intensify its commitment to these goals.

Today marks a time to reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the people of Afghanistan. We're building here on the successful NATO conference at Bucharest, which committed to Afghanistan's long term security. I want you to be sure that the United States looks forward to continuing to work with all of our partners on this issue, and that the United States of America will be committed to Afghanistan for as long as it takes and well beyond for the development of a prosperous, democratic, and free Afghanistan.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)
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