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Remarks by Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on the renewal of the mandate for UNAMA and the situation in Somalia, at the Security Council stakeout, March 20, 2008

Ambassador Khalilzad: Good morning. First I want to wish Afghans, Iranians, Kurds of Iraq, the Tadjic all a happy new year and a happy Nowruz.

Second, as you know the Security Council voted unanimously to renew the mandates of UNAMA in Afghanistan and we very much welcome this development. We believe Afghanistan's development is important for not only the Afghan's but for the region and for the world given the challenges of extremism and terror that the world faces. And the fact that this region of the world from Pakistan to Morocco geopolitically now is the defining challenge of our time and what happens in Afghanistan and the surrounding areas greatly impact the entire region.

This mandate emphasizes and prioritizes some important issues. One of the good things about Afghanistan is that so many countries are involved there in support of the Afghan people. The current mandate that was just approved prioritizes that coordination of that in a national effort – the civilian side of the effort will be led by the United Nations Special Representative Mr. Kai Eide. That he would have the lead in bringing together the internationals who are involved there and then coordinate internationals with the Afghans. Given the complexity of the kind of conflict that is taking place in Afghanistan you need also coordination between the military and the civilian efforts to be successful. And therefore there is an emphasis in the renewed mandate on coordination with ISAF and NATO and the international civilian effort and again Mr. Kai Eide will be a link. We believe that this more sharply focused prioritized mandate is appropriate for the current circumstances in Afghanistan and believe that the military-civilian coordination that I referred to will be further focused on in the upcoming NATO summit that will take place in early April in Romania. With that I'll be happy to take your questions.

I wanted to say one other thing. That today we have an event to focus on one of the elements for success in Afghanistan, the rule of law. And the U.S. mission will be hosting a meeting bringing people together from public and private sector in Dag Hammarskjold early this afternoon around one o'clock. Thank you.

Reporter: Ambassador, to what extent and in what ways do you believe the lack of coordination really gets at the heart of what's – what are the reason why there hasn't been greater progress in Afghanistan over these last few years? And secondly, how much confidence do you really have that UNAMA is up to it? To doing what you hope to do – to really sort of turn the thing around or really sort of jump start it – get it moving in the right direction - more than it has been?

Ambassador Khalilzad: A lot of different steps are needed to deal with the challenges of Afghanistan,

although there have been great successes but there is also great challenges that remain. And certainly one of the key aspects for doing as well as one can is to make the best use of the efforts that are being made. And as I said there are hundreds of NGOs, many countries, many organizations, active on the civilian side, making requests and demands on the Afghan government, assisting the Afghan government and there are duplications, there is not a best necessarily use of the efforts made. So the Afghans agree, those who've observed the situation in Afghanistan agree, that the civilian effort needs to be better orchestrated, better organized internationally, and then between the internationals and the Afghans. And similarly there is a better need for coordination between the civilian and the military side. We think it is an important step, a positive step that will help. But we also of course need effort by the Afghan government to deal with the challenges – greater political cooperation among the forces that made this new Afghanistan. But I think this is a step in the right direction and I believe that Mr. Kai Eide has got the capability and the experience to be able to make a positive contribution but we will have to wait and see but I think what we've done today is positive.

Reporter: Ambassador, could you clarify an important point of how much authority this gives the mission to coordinate or help coordinate the military efforts?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, of course the military has its own chain of command. The issue is as I mentioned that in this type of conflict which is not your classical war of force on force, defeating a conventional adversary, its dealing in part with insurgency. And when you clear an area, for example, of the insurgents - terrorists, there is a need for follow on civilian action in terms of rule of law, in terms of economic and humanitarian activities, in terms of extending the authority of the state. These activities need to be better coordinated and the more coordinated the better not only between the internationals and the Afghans, between the – both the military, with the military. We have therefore said that international UN effort needs to be effectively present in different parts of the country is one of the points of emphasis in this new more sharply focused mandate.

Reporter: Mr. Ambassador, speaking of coordination, how much coordination was there between today's meeting and your panel this afternoon with Vice President Cheney's visit – unannounced visit today?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well the Vice President of course was scheduled to go there some time ago. He stopped over in Iraq as well. You know, we have visitors going to Afghanistan and that region all the time. Today is, as I said, the Afghan New Year and it's good that there is this resolution extending the mandate and there is this event that we have. But a lot of different players involved – I don't know whether everyone focused on making sure that everything takes place today but it is an important day for Afghanistan.

Reporter: Mr. Ambassador, in your New York Time's Op-Ed piece the term sort of "new deal" for Afghanistan is referred to which calls to mind a historical image of a sort of almost disastrous situation that needs radical change and intervention to improve it. I wondered if you could expand on that? And then a second question is do you think – the Security Council now is discussion Somalia, don't you think it's time maybe that the UN sent peacekeeping troops there?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, on the title of the piece in today's New York Times it was not mine, we don't write titles. Those of you with experience – so, I feel your pain today. But on the other hand, the purpose of the piece was to explain what we're going to do today here to the New York Time's readers. A sharpened focus for the mandate, greater emphasis on the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and talking about coordination of the civilian effort, coordination between the civilian and the military, and a number of specific items to be focused on. On Somalia, of course it is of great concern what's going on there, both on the ground and in the waters off the coast of Somalia. We are

looking at what we can do as the Security Council to be as helpful as we can and to do what is prudent. There are some options that have been proposed by the Secretariat, we're going to examine those. We do believe it is appropriate to consider enhanced UN presence in Somalia, to consider under what scenarios one might do more in terms of a peacekeeping mission. And also to support the African forces that are there, although we believe that's best done through voluntary contribution and other kinds of help to the forces that are there. We are – this is an issue that certainly the United States has been focused on, along with other colleagues that believe it's important and worthy of more attention. Thank you.

Reporter: How close are we to the point of deploying a peacekeeping force to Somalia?

Ambassador Khalilzad: Well, a peacekeeping force we are not close to deploying peacekeeping forces but we are looking at a variety of options. As I said, the political presence of the UN, what you could do in terms of maritime activities, what you could do in terms of strengthening AMISOM and considering under what circumstances one might do peacekeeping. Thank you very much.