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Ambassador Khalilzad on Afghanistan's New Deal**Success of special representative to Afghanistan will depend on U.N. mandate**

The following op-ed by Zalmay Khalilzad, the United States permanent representative to the United Nations, first appeared in the *New York Times* March 20, 2008, and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

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Afghanistan's New Deal
By Zalmay Khalilzad

Ban Ki-moon, secretary general of the United Nations, has appointed a seasoned Norwegian diplomat, Kai Eide, as his special representative to Afghanistan. Mr. Eide's success will depend not only on his skills, but also on the friends of Afghanistan at the United Nations providing him with the proper mission, mandate and resources.

The most important task for the new special representative is to form a trusting, collaborative relationship with President Hamid Karzai, enabling them to agree on Afghanistan's key challenges and on how aid money and military assistance can best be used. Today in New York, the Security Council is scheduled to extend the mandate of the United Nations' Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for another year — the perfect chance to provide a clear set of priorities.

This resolution rightly gives Mr. Eide the powers to directly coordinate all of the support provided by international donors. As things stand, more than 30 national embassies and bilateral development agencies, several United Nations agencies, four development banks and international financial institutions, and about 2,000 nongovernmental organizations and contractors are involved in rebuilding in Afghanistan.

However, because of a lack of coordination among these donors, reconstruction resources often fail to arrive in a timely way after areas have been cleared of the enemy. Hundreds of projects are undertaken by allies and nongovernmental groups without coordination with the Afghan government, leading to cases of "ghost" schools or health clinics that are built but sit idle because they cannot be staffed or equipped.

Ministries are often hamstrung by having to comply with the varying procurement and accounting rules of dozens of foreign agencies, many of which are not consistent with Afghan law. This puts the international community at cross purposes with our goal of helping Afghanistan build coherent national systems for education, health and other services.

There is only one way to end the confusion: the United Nations must take on the primary coordination role, and donors must show a willingness to be coordinated. The new resolution allows this to happen in a number of ways.

First, Mr. Eide will need to oversee the coordination of civilian assistance with military efforts of the two military organizations operating in Afghanistan, NATO and the International Security Assistance Force. While it's promising that those two organizations are meeting in Bucharest, Romania, next month to discuss better integrating their efforts, success against the insurgency will require efforts to ensure that military actions to secure areas from the enemy are coordinated with civilian efforts to establish good governance and economic development.

Second, Mr. Eide must coordinate the efforts of the international community to support the Afghanistan Compact, a five-year plan agreed upon in 2006 by the

government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community that requires Afghan leaders to take steps in reform and institution-building in exchange for commitments of sustained support. The United Nations must have a stronger role in overseeing the increasing capacity of Afghan ministries and their anti-corruption efforts.

Third, the new United Nations special representative should help the leaders and people of key donor countries understand achievements and challenges. This is the only way that the friends of Afghanistan can fully appreciate the return on their investments.

Last, Mr. Eide will have a mandate to engage Afghanistan's neighbors to help stabilize the country. In the aftermath of 9/11, regional powers came together to support the so-called Bonn agreement, which enabled Afghans to freely choose their own government. Reclaiming the spirit of Bonn must be a priority.




The United States is fully behind the United Nations in the mission. Afghanistan is important not only because it was the origin of the attacks of 9/11 but also because it is the keystone of the geopolitical stability of Central and South Asia. Moreover, success in Afghanistan will be a major step in helping to create security, stability and progress in the broader Middle East, which is the defining challenge of our time.

(Zalmay Khalilzad is the United States permanent representative to the United Nations.)

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