

UNAMA**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Transcript<http://unama.unmissions.org>**TRANSCRIPT****Press encounter with the United Nations Secretary-General's
Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš**

(near verbatim; edited for clarity)

Herat – Wednesday, 28 May 2014

Ján Kubiš: Goodafternoon and thank you very much for coming. This is a very short press stakeout and I would like to make a short statement.

First of all, this is not the first time that I am visiting Herat, but I find this visit very timely, notably because of the importance of the province and the city of Herat for all the transition processes that are going on in the country.

Together, with my deputies and other colleagues, we are visiting different parts of the country to get first-hand impressions of how different provinces are preparing for the run-off of the presidential elections.

That's why I was very happy that this afternoon I was able to meet with the Provincial Governor, the two heads of the elections commissions – the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) – and the Chief of Police.

And, of course, we discussed issues such as how to provide a secure environment for the elections, it's a major question, but also how to learn from the lessons of the first round and certain deficiencies and imperfections, so as to make sure that when people go to vote – and I hope that people will go to vote – that their valid votes will all be counted and all the fraudulent votes will be disqualified.

But, notably, with the Governor, we discussed our future cooperation and partnership – between the United Nations and the province, the authorities and the people of the province – for many years into the future.

And given the fact that by the end of 2016, all the international forces will leave the country, and with that, perhaps we will see less exposure of the international community here, I wanted to deliver one message: the United Nations is here to stay, and we would like to use this as an

opportunity to be of even more support and assistance to the people of Afghanistan for the years to come. This brought us back to the basics. For this, we need good, quality elections. We need a new government that will come based on the votes of the people and that will represent the majority of the people in the country. Therefore, it is important to conduct the run-off in the best possible way and in the most secure environment – in such a way that it will give a chance to the majority of the people to come and vote. And I would like to encourage the people to use this opportunity to shape the future of the country and come and vote in the run-off of the Presidential elections.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Voice of America [translated from Dari]: First of all, I would like to welcome you to Herat province. I have two questions. The first question is regarding the list that the IEC has given to the President regarding the interference of certain government officials in the electoral process in favour of certain candidates. I would like to know whether you support the position of the Commission. If you do not support the position of the Commission, would that mean that the Government will not react like in the past?

Secondly, there are rumours that the second round of the election will be more divided across ethnic lines, and there is a concern that if a President is elected on the basis of ethnicity, then Afghanistan will slide back into chaos. How concerned are you about this prospect? And, if you are concerned, what is your approach? How do you suggest tackling this issue so that we will be able to elect a President on the basis of merit and his programme, and not on the basis of ethnicity?

Ján Kubiš: On the first question, definitely, we support accountability. In case there are violations of the laws of the country, then we expect the respective organs of the country to take action, and, of course, it must be based on investigations. But, nevertheless, we do support accountability – that's why we refer to the complaints that were lodged by the Commissions, and we also welcome that those [people] that perhaps didn't work according to the laws, those who were staff members of the two commissions and committed violations, will not be part of the commissions' staff for the run-off. We consider this to be right.

In regard to the elections and the two candidates, people in Afghanistan expect the vote to be fair, that they would have a chance to vote and that the new President, the new leadership of the country, will be selected in a fair vote, based on merit and based on the programme that each of the candidates will present to the people.

We notice that both campaigns, both candidates, now are getting support from other top-level personalities from different ethnic groups in the country, so we are seeing that in each camp you have representatives – as a Vice President, for example, but also strong supporters that are representing every ethnic group of the country.

Secondly, we expect that the candidates will engage in a respectful campaign and that they will not use the ethnic card or any other divisive card in the campaign.

Thirdly, we expect that the candidates will urge their supporters not to commit fraud in their names, because it's the people – supporters of the candidates – that are committing fraud, not the institutions. It's the supporters. That's why the candidates should urge their supporters not to

commit fraud in their names. That would, in a way, harm their legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Of course, we expect that the two election bodies, the two commissions [the IEC and IECC] – to improve their performance for the run-off. They should learn lessons from the first round and they should introduce improvements that would address certain deficiencies that appeared in the first round.

That's perhaps the best guarantee that, altogether, the elections will bring to power a new government with the highest degree of acceptance across ethnic lines, with the highest support of the people, and with the acceptance and understanding that people had a chance to vote and their valid votes were counted and invalid votes were discarded.

1TV [translated from Dari]: Given the fact that the UN has a monitoring role not just here in Afghanistan, but across the world – we previously heard from the UN that there were some people in the electoral process and in government positions who were involved in war crimes. I would like to know what the position of the UN is in regard to dealing with such war criminals. Secondly, you mentioned the first round of the elections as being transparent and better elections, but we still see the presence of the war criminals in the first round.

Ján Kubiš: I would definitely say that the only bodies that have the right to put a label of 'war criminal' on someone are the courts. So, I would refrain from going too far in certain statements. It's true, and this is also the expectation of the people – and, if I am not wrong, of the candidates – that eventually the country will look back and will engage in transitional justice because this is what could eventually heal the wounds of these decades of conflict.

The second part of my response is 'trust the people.' This is for the people of Afghanistan and they spoke already in the first round. They put to the second round two Presidential candidates that they considered trustworthy, that they considered perhaps the best ones to compete in the final round for the top position, that they considered the best representatives of themselves and of Afghanistan. So, trust the people.

Ariana News [translated from Dari]: Given the mission of UNAMA, which has been here for 10 years and has been supporting Afghanistan in providing good governance and in other areas, I would like to know what kind of changes have you seen as the UN Special Representative in Afghanistan, and what do you expect from the new government? That it will improve the situation more after the elections?

Ján Kubiš: First of all, I think that I can return the question to you – I believe that you should be able to see the major changes in the past decade. If you look around, and even if I look around from the time of my first visit here approximately two years ago, I see positive changes in the province.

From the nationwide perspective, I think that the best manifestation and proof of the changes is what the people said on the 5th of April when they came out and voted.

First of all, they came and decided to vote. So they showed trust in democracy. They rejected violence. They said very clearly: 'we would like to use political means to elect our new government.' This is a major change – peaceful political means to put in place a new government. This is, in a way, proof of change in the society here.

They also very clearly said: 'no return to the past, no return to certain approaches and ideologies' that were – and you witnessed them -- present here in past decades.

Maybe the third message is that while they want to build on the achievements of the past decade, they would also like to see change, and a very major change that would address bad practices of the past – like corruption, but also a lack of security, lack of development, lack of justice, and a lack of jobs, especially for young people. From that perspective, both candidates that are competing for the top post are, in a way, representing this mandate that the people would like to give to the new leader of the country. That's why it's so important that the candidates and their supporters deliver this change through a fair process of elections, without fraud and falsification. Otherwise, they will let down the people that have put them into this second round run-off.