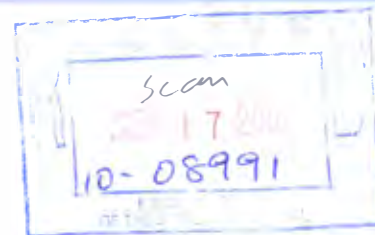


Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN
17 SEP 2010



Note to Mr. Nambiar

AFGHANISTAN: UPDATE ON PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Please find attached a note on the parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, to be held on 18 September 2010. DPKO was consulted in preparing this note. You may wish to consider submitting this update to the attention of the Secretary-General.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Lynn Pascoe'.

B. Lynn Pascoe
17 September 2010

cc: Mr. Le Roy
Mr. Khare



Note to Mr. Pascoe

AFGHANISTAN: UPDATE ON PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

1. The operational preparations for the parliamentary elections on 18 September 2010 remain on track but not without concerns, in particular with respect to security. The number of incidents affecting the Independent Election Commission (IEC) has increased over the last two days. Most seriously, two IEC polling staff were killed by unknown assailants in a northern province, and two candidates have been kidnapped in the east and west. There have been a number of kidnappings of IEC officials and attacks on IEC convoys, more so than last year at this time, along with numerous instances of intimidation. While national and international security forces are prepared, violence is expected to increase over the next days. At the same time, it should be noted that there have not been any major and complex attacks such as the two suicide bombings in Kabul shortly before the election in 2009.

2. The IEC has been steadfast in refusing to increase the number of polling stations beyond those it published on 18 August 2010, as a measure to prevent fraud. Furthermore, the number of scheduled stations is decreasing: the IEC is having problems opening some of them because of poor security. The closure of additional polling stations will particularly affect remote and restive parts of the largely Pashtun east of the country.

3. Opening only those stations where security can be guaranteed is an important anti-fraud measure but carries the risk of disenfranchisement, real and perceived, particularly if one or another ethnic group believes that the reduced number of stations affects its chance to be represented in parliament. In theory, this could only happen in provinces with a mixed ethnic population (such as Ghazni, Wardak, Faryab, Baghlan and Kunduz), and events there will require close monitoring. In particular, any pattern of Pashtun disenfranchisement and reduced representation that may emerge from the combined effects of fewer stations, poor security and fraud should be carefully watched. But even in homogenous provinces there may be local friction and unrest between tribes if candidates' traditional areas of support are affected by the closing of stations (this may occur in provinces like Paktika, Nangarhar, Laghman and Nuristan).

5. International media have discussed the potential for fraud, and the issue of "fake" voter registration cards has also received wide attention in the local media (particularly the allegation that they were produced in neighbouring countries). Nevertheless, the reporting has not reached the intensity seen in 2009. While a media focus on fraud is inevitable, I still consider it unlikely that last year's pattern and tone of reporting will be repeated.

6. Nevertheless, real or perceived fraud, even localized fraud, remains an issue that will require close monitoring by the Afghan institutions and the UN. For one, a few votes can make the difference between winners and losers in this electoral system, and small-

scale fraud can affect outcomes. Again, this would be of particular concern in ethnically mixed provinces. At the same time, even more localized fraud can discredit participants, disenchant voters and create space for anti-government elements. As may be expected, the Taliban issued a statement on 16 September calling on Afghans to boycott the election, and have vowed to disrupt the process.

7. While preliminary results are expected to be released on a staggered basis starting 22 September, final results are not expected before 30 October. This takes into account the time needed to transport and enter results into the national tally center in Kabul, and to investigate and adjudicate complaints and challenges to the preliminary results. During this time, patience will be required on the part of candidates and voters, and the Afghan electoral institutions and the UN must remain vigilant.



Craig Jenness
17 September 2010

cc: Mr. Fernandez-Taranco
Mr. Heitmann
Mr. Weisbrod-Weber

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Craig Jenness
17 September 2010

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