

(DPA)

ACTION N.H.
COPY UN



Note to the Secretary-General

(Through Mr. Lynn Pascoe)

MANDATE PERIOD OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (BHUTTO)

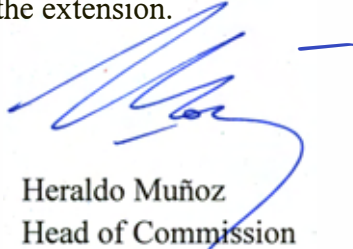
23/11/0

1. This note is regarding the Commission of Inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. I recall our informal conversation last month when you asked whether the Commission needed more time to complete its work, and offered to support such an extension if necessary. I now write to request your support for an extension of three months of the Commission's mandate from 31 December 2009 to 31 March 2010.
2. My fellow Commissioners and I believe that such an extension is necessary for two reasons. First, the worsening security situation in Pakistan caused us, on the advice of DSS, to cancel a visit there in November, and has prevented our staff from returning to the country since September. We and staff now plan to travel to Pakistan in mid-December, but the timing of the visit would make it difficult, if not impossible, to complete a report in the appointed time period before 31 December. The second factor that has prompted our request for an extension is related to the success the Commission has had in gathering information. Because of the substantial amount of information provided to the Commission by the Pakistani people and authorities, and the sensitive nature of the inquiry, the Commissioners have decided that more time should be taken in analysis and report drafting to ensure that appropriate care and sensitivity be applied.
3. There would be two specific benefits of such an extension. Given the security situation, more time would allow the Commission to mitigate the impact of possible further security-related delays. In addition, the final report drafting process could be more systematic and allow for an extensive and dedicated fact-checking exercise that would assist us to avoid errors that could raise questions about the accuracy and integrity of the report.
4. Our Pakistani interlocutors, notably the Minister of the Interior who is our counterpart in Pakistan, have --without prompting-- expressed support for an eventual extension of the Commission's mandate. We trust that the Security Council would not object to such an extension, and would be willing to consult with interested Members to seek their support.
5. Finance will not be a significant issue regarding an extension. The Commission has been frugal and has under-spent its budget. It would be possible to finance fully a three-month extension within the budget set out and with the funds already provided.



Next steps

6. If you agree to this request for extension, the Commission staff will work with DPA to:
 - a. Draft letters from you to the President of the Security Council and the President of Pakistan, respectively, informing them of your decision;
 - b. Consult with interested Members of the Security Council;
 - c. Prepare a budget and work plan for the period of the extension;
 - d. Prepare media materials to explain the extension.



Heraldo Muñoz
Head of Commission
Commission of Inquiry (Bhutto)
23 November 2009