

Bonn Conference on Afghanistan, 5 December 2011

Address by Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister of  
Foreign Affairs (Norway)

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Mr President, Excellencies, ladies and  
gentlemen,

Let me thank the Government of Germany and  
the city of Bonn for hosting the conference.  
Let me also congratulate you, President Karzai,  
with chairing the conference. Your leadership  
today is a strong symbol of Afghan ownership -  
today and tomorrow.

I would also like to congratulate  
Afghanistan for the decision last week to take  
responsibility for security in more parts of  
your country. Today, half of the Afghan  
population lives in areas secured by Afghan  
forces. This is a historical achievement in  
line with our shared political ambitions.

This means that we can continue to reduce the international military presence. Norway is part of this ongoing transition. We will be reducing our military forces in a process to be completed by 2014.

Mr President, let me briefly make five points in this respect.

First, the transition process is not the end of our engagement. Norway's partnership with Afghanistan will remain strong, also beyond 2014.

Second, partnership demands that Afghanistan also does its part. Your government must intensify the fight against corruption and ensure good governance, at all levels. Credible democratic institutions must be established, throughout the country. This is all about earning the trust of your people.

Third, you have our full support in reaching a political solution to the conflict. However, a sustainable solution - a durable solution - can only be reached if all parties to the conflict are included. Arms must be

replaced with politics. Words must take the place of weapons.

Fourth, a sustainable solution must respect the Afghan constitution. We all know the red lines for a political agreement. An important one is women's rights. Yesterday I met with a network of Afghan women, as I have done on my visits to Afghanistan. They are worried. They are concerned about the peace process and the influence of the Taliban. They shared with me their core positions on a political solution.

Women have to participate in determining Afghanistan's future - in politics and all sectors of society - as in all other countries. Basic universal human rights, including the right to education, must be respected.

I assured these women that Norway will support their efforts. This will be one of Norway's main priorities. We will support them in gaining increased access to the ongoing reconciliation efforts - which includes bringing the women into dialogue with the Taliban. Difficult but decisive.

Fifth and finally, regional cooperation is essential to ensure stability - not just in Afghanistan, but in all neighbouring countries. Norway will continue to work closely with Afghanistan also in bringing this process of regional cooperation to a success.

Thank you, Mr President.