

Talking Points:

Talking with Taliban – the issue of “Reconciliation and Re-integration”

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With the Name of Allah (SWT)

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants Ladies and Gentlemen!

We have been struggling for the past eight years together with our International partners to achieve the common goal of stabilizing Afghanistan. We made enormous progress on several fronts .However, the goal of protecting the people and preventing the spread of extremism that use violence and terror as a tool for achieving their objectives and address the problem of sanctuaries of Taliban largely failed.

There were several factors, among them lack of strategic focus, inconsistency, ignorance and denial of the existence of terrorist groups in the region for a long time played in the hand of Taliban and their supporters at the cost of many innocent lives both in Afghanistan and Pakistan including the loss of lives of those service men and women who serve in Afghanistan.

Apart from this, past experience also shows, we cannot achieve success in counter insurgency only with military means unless we address the broader issues of sanctuaries, governance, poverty and putting the protection of people at the center of our civil – military strategy and build confidence at all levels, so that the population could feel secure not only physically but, also from a broader perspective of human security.

Those who had the chance to discuss the issue of peace and reconciliation with elements of insurgency or leaders of disenfranchise communities confirms the

need to address the following three questions they often raise as the first step towards confidence building.

1. Whether the Afghan Government and the international community will be in a position to provide security and protection to those who join with peace process against Al –Qaedah and other extremist groups?
2. Whether those who join with peace process will be given amnesty and protected against the actions of Afghan and international security forces?
3. If they join, whether they will be able to support their families and whether the government and the international community will delivery on their promises for sustainable re-integration that is socially, politically and economically just.

Based on ground realities and analysis of key challenges we face today; in his inauguration speech, H.E President Karzai declared that Peace and National Reconciliation would be one of the Afghan Government's top priorities.

We recognize that not all insurgents are ideologically motivated. Many of them are pushed to join the insurgency by grievances, lack of employment opportunities and the ability to feed their families and injustices still others are manipulated by external forces.

As President Karzai set out, our goal to protect our people from the threat of violence, both organized and random, that deny us the opportunity to live in dignity and peace, so the disenfranchised and upset communities and individuals can help us build our country instead of destroying it.

The government is promoting a strategy with twin Pillars; **first** strengthening of our security and civilian institutions and, **second** creating the enabling political and psychological conditions for enduring peace. We therefore, intend to use all such means that could help to reach a just peace.

The Afghan public, as recent polls have shown, both expect and trust us to move on both fronts. We, therefore, have a strong foundation of public support for moving forward.

Any analysis of quality and affordability brings us to our starting point: enhancing capability is one of the two mechanisms for dealing with the threat. The other is a politics of engagement, where we draw on our rich culture of mediation and arbitration to find a solution to our differences. Therefore, our firm commitment both to reconciliation with those elements of the insurgency that is willing to embrace dialogue and eventually substitute ballots for bullets.

The majority of the Taliban, it must be clear, are not Al Qaeda, and as Afghans, we must find ways to include them in the fabric of our society, economy and polity. We should also launch a major effort on reintegration. Our stance on the need for reconciliation is a reflection on the national consensus in our country. All of us within the rich political spectrum in the country are agreed that force alone is not going to bring peace.

Building on this foundation, therefore, requires the next logical step, which is to create a framework for a just and lasting peace. The agenda that we have been spelling out draws the right balance between conducting a just war, and arriving at a just peace.

We have no hesitation defending our nation and our country against threats from individuals and organizations who want to use our soil as the killing field of our citizens and our allies. On the other hand, all Afghans who accept our common heritage and are agreed that we cannot become refugees or be living as displaced people in our own country, must come together to find a solution. If politics is the art of the possible, then we must strive to make a just peace possible.

Without a sanctuary in the territory of our neighbors, we would have been forced to reconcile much more quickly. Dealing with the regional dimension of the challenge is therefore essential to peace.

Our efforts under the framework will focus on two levels a) at the political and, b) at the operational and tactical levels.

In contrast with the perception of some, our plan for peace, reconciliation and reintegration by no way will undermine the rights of our people, women and children. This program is simply the hope of our nation, if succeed as we expect

this program will save our women from the threats of violence and our children from the trap of extremism.

This program will focus on de-radicalization in order to promote the culture of tolerance and co-existence.

Parallel to our policy and program development, we have been working hard to achieve international and regional backing for our Peace and Reintegration efforts. What we see is an emerging consensus of support. As evidenced regionally by Tokyo and the Istanbul conferences; among the GCC states, our Islamic brothers: as evidenced by the Abu Dhabi conference; and discussions with Saudi Arabia and by the wider international community: as evidenced in London Conference

This policy was broadly endorsed by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board on January 20, 2010. The proposal to set up a Trust fund in support of peace and reintegration has been agreed in principle between the government and donor community. This TF will be established under the government lead but jointly managed to ensure full transparency and accountability. The TF will enable the donors to channel their resources through one of the two windows foreseen in the TF.

The government is finalizing the structure to lead the program in an effective manner and the details will be announced soon while we are making preparation for a grand traditional Peace Jirgah to build the national consensus and provide opportunity for wider participation of all Afghans.

We do believe that investing in peace might generate much greater results and will save more lives both Afghans and those service men and women serving in Afghanistan to help us in the stability operation. Stability in Afghanistan is in fact in the interest of all our neighboring countries

We cannot succeed unless we focus on efforts at both political and tactical levels. At the same time we have to consolidate the efforts at local, national and regional levels.

The consolidation of peace needs wider engagement and support to our communities. In the mean time the local government will play key role in leading this program at provincial and district levels.

The reintegration efforts will be closely connected with National Programs (National program of Agriculture, NSP, APPF, Social Out Reach etc) Such investment will generate immediate results in creating more jobs for those who join with peace process and their respected communities as well as long term development impact.

Partnering with the communities is a key principle of this program. We are not paying cash to fighters to stop fighting. We are mobilizing communities, enabling them to bring stability and security back to their lives through the peaceful return and reintegration of individuals, groups and leaders into Afghan society.

Extending our hand to our upset brothers for peace and our efforts to accelerate the building of Afghan National security capabilities and institutions to take more responsibilities while continuing our efforts to expand space and protection to the population against the threat of extremist are the practicality of the twin pillars of our policy we promote to reach a just peace.

Thanks