



Reconstruction of Afghanistan

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Remarks at Working Session at the State Department
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SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you, Al, and good morning, everyone. And I, too, want to join in welcoming you all here and thanking you for coming at such short notice.

Answering the call of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1378, we have come together today to demonstrate our commitment to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, and to the future of its 25 million people. President Bush, Secretary O'Neill and I wish to express our gratitude to the Government of Japan and Mrs. Ogata, Prime Minister Koizumi's Special Representative for Afghan Assistance, for co-hosting this conference. And I wish to thank all of you, the senior representatives of foreign finance and development ministries of key partner countries and international institutions for traveling all the way to Washington on such short notice.



Events on the ground are moving swiftly. My government and our coalition partners are pleased to report that the Taliban is in retreat in most of the country. The very ones who harbored Usama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist network now search in vain for someone to harbor them. As the Taliban's grip on power is broken in more and more parts of the country, the long-suffering people of Afghanistan are taking their future into their own hands once again. Yet we all know that will also take a long, concerted effort by all of us to ensure that the people of Afghanistan have their feet set firmly on the path to recovery, stability and development.

All of us know that the international community must be prepared to sustain a reconstruction program that will take many, many years. This must be a global effort involving East Asia, Europe, the Americas, the Islamic world, and countries of the region. And we must achieve seamless connections between reconstruction and relief and development efforts.

The vast majority of the Afghan people awaken hungry, cold and sick every morning. An entire generation of Afghans have never known peace, never known a full stomach, never known a decent education, never known what freedom is all about.

The United States and our coalition partners, the United Nations and others, all of us in the international community, are moving quickly to provide lifesaving humanitarian supplies. Withdrawals of Taliban forces have opened up more and more regions of Afghanistan to international relief efforts. The American people are proud that the United States has long been the leading humanitarian donor to Afghanistan. And in October, President Bush announced an additional allocation of \$320 million specifically to help Afghan refugees -- Afghan refugees that are located in neighboring countries and the displaced persons within Afghanistan itself.

The international community's vital humanitarian work clearly must continue and gain pace as the Taliban retreats and the winter gets ever closer. The time has already arrived, however, to look beyond just immediate humanitarian needs to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country. We must seek and seize opportunities to begin reconstruction as areas of the country are freed from Taliban control. We cannot wait; we must act as fast as we can. We must act as soon as possible.

At the same time, the international community will be unable to carry out reconstruction on the scale that is needed until there is an Afghan partner. This requires the emergence of an interim political authority. Such an authority must lead to a broad-based government that represents all the people of the country, people of every ethnic background and region, women as well as men. Indeed, in all of our efforts, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, we must ensure that women play prominent roles as planners, as implementers and as beneficiaries.

In order to survive through the years of fear and misery, the women and men of Afghanistan drew deeply on their courage, their ingenuity, their skill and, above all, on their faith. With our close cooperation and the disciplined management of the assistance we provide, we can help the Afghan people draw on those same strengths to recover and to thrive in a 21st century world.

Success, of course, ultimately depends on the will of the people of Afghanistan and their legitimate representatives to build a free society with free markets and a stable, drug-free environment in which political and economic freedom and activity can flourish.

We have called you here together today not for a pledging conference. We do not yet know how much money and other forms of rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance will be needed from the international community. The security situation in Afghanistan does not yet allow a comprehensive needs assessment. But we are confident that such an evaluation can and should be made soon.

Our meeting today is a crucial start, the start of a long process, one that must grow to include many other countries than those represented here, and many other organizations that will have important contributions to make as we go forward. It is imperative that we begin today to address in a systematic way the many practical issues of transition and reconstruction that lie ahead.

One important step would be to organize a steering group to help focus our efforts at the policy level, encourage contributions and give overall guidance. The steering group would collaborate closely with the Afghan support group's work on humanitarian relief. We hope that the steering group would convene in the month ahead. It would take into account the meeting next week in Islamabad of representatives from the World Bank, the UN Development Program, and the Asian Development Bank. As soon as it is feasible, we would also envision forming an implementation group, which would focus on operational matters, such as coordinating reconstruction programs in the field. It will be especially important in the first weeks and months of this program to put all these pieces in place so we can make sure we have an immediate, visible impact on people's lives.

For the first time in decades, the people of Afghanistan have reason to hope for themselves and for their children. Together, we can make that hope tangible and real. That is exactly what rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance is all about: Turning hope into a powerful force that shapes a better future for the Afghan people, their region and our world.

We have a noble task before us. President Bush is totally committed to this task. He has said from the very beginning we will go after Usama bin Laden, we will go after

al-Qaida. If the Taliban regime does not understand the crimes that they are committing as well, we will go after them. But when al-Qaida is gone, when the Taliban regime has passed into history, as the President said, we then have an enormous obligation -- not only the United States, but the whole international community -- an enormous obligation to not leave the Afghan people in the lurch, to not walk away as has been done in the past. We are committed to doing just that, as the President said, to help them find hope and to make that hope a reality.

I now have the great honor of yielding the floor to an old friend, Mrs. Ogata, in and of herself a powerful force for good in the world, as well as an invaluable source of wisdom on the interrelationships between relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Mrs. Ogata, you have our deepest admiration and rapt attention.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MINISTER OGATA: Secretary Powell, Secretary O'Neill, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for being here and thank you very much for the opportunity that I have been given.

Afghanistan is at a crossroads. The capital, Kabul, is in the hands of the Northern Alliance and the Special Representative of the Secretary General and his UN colleagues already have flown into the city to help establish a transitioning governing body and to engage in assistance activities inside the country. After 22 years, Afghanistan could be on the verge of peace. But it could still face a prolonged period of fragmentation with moving pockets of insecurity.

Today, we gather to discuss for the first time as an international community the issue of the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It is to focus our thoughts on the future vision of the country, pledge our readiness to provide effective and sustained support, and to give hope to the Afghan people.

The Japanese people and government have taken great interest in the situation in Afghanistan and the Prime Minister personally has asked me to represent him. I would say that Japan has a record of supporting Afghan people in their efforts to help repatriation and reintegration of refugees, to demine the heavily infested areas within the country, and to promote dialogue among different Afghan parties for political reconciliation.

In this context, it has proposed over the years to host a conference in Tokyo for the peace and reconstruction of Afghanistan. It is a pleasure, therefore, for Japan to co-chair this meeting as a further step to realize its longstanding commitment, together with the United States and other like-minded countries.

Before proceeding, however, I wish to recall the terrorist attacks of September 11th in New York and in Washington, and to extend again our sympathies to the innocent victims. I should also like to emphasize that the threat of terrorism has not been overcome. The international community must continue to fight for its eradication. One lesson we have learned is that we should not allow the continued existence of a failed or a destitute country that could turn into a hotbed of terrorism.

Allow me to say a few words about my own involvement. The Afghans have been the largest group of refugees in the world, and the people of Afghanistan have been suffering from war and deprivation over the decades. As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for 10 years, I was directly exposed to their voices of grief. Just last year, I made an extensive visit through Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran and tried my very best to mobilize international support. I'm afraid my efforts fell on deaf ears.

The international community was too indifferent towards the Afghans. And I believe the time has now come to learn of our past failures.

First, the present developments in Afghanistan have significantly enhanced the urgency and the possibility to extend humanitarian assistance. While continuing assistance to the refugee hosting neighboring countries, the humanitarian assistance activities should move quickly inside Afghanistan. The emergent needs of the returning refugees and displaced persons, as well as affected civilians are huge, whether in food, shelter, water or health. The efforts of the humanitarian agencies should be given strong support by the donor states, notably by the Afghan Support Group, which will be meeting very soon. The security of the humanitarian workers should receive priority attention, as the situation in Afghanistan is far from safe or stable.

Second, the transitional phase from humanitarian assistance activities to reconstruction is a priority issue that should receive the full attention of this meeting. Reconstruction will certainly require significant financial resources and technical skills from the international community. The roads are bad, and I've experienced that. The housing is poor. Health and education facilities are virtually nonexistent. But what I wish to emphasize is the focus on the reintegration and community development activities as the rallying point for the transition and, as such, should be addressed by both the humanitarian and the reconstruction agencies.

Both should hold people building as their action point. The humanitarian agencies have a cadre of local staff, local NGOs and local professionals who could contribute to the rebuilding of the Afghan society. The development agencies have access to the technical and professional Afghan expertise scattered all over the world and particularly in the neighboring countries. Together, they will provide the necessary Afghan men and women who will be the mainstay of Afghan society at the local, provincial and national levels. In this connection, I wish to underscore the importance of introducing Afghan women to positions of leadership as well as of providing them with necessary educational and training opportunities. They have been deprived for far too long and they have a great deal to offer.

In closing, I wish to concur with the statement of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Brahimi, when he clearly stated at the Security Council last week that reconstruction of Afghanistan will be the "key to bringing peace and stability to that country and is at the heart of the political transition." Thank you very much. (Applause.)

I would like to call on Secretary O'Neill.

SECRETARY O'NEILL: It is a pleasure to be here with Secretary Powell and Madam Ogata to welcome you to this conference, which is of great importance. The facts that we confront in Afghanistan stagger the imagination, with an annual average income of less than \$200 per person, in a place where one out of every six children die before their first birthday, in a place where two-thirds of the people are not literate, and where only 13 percent of the population has access to water and even that 13 percent is at risk for the water they do have.

We face as a world a daunting challenge, a challenge that represents the facts of decades of mismanagement and worse. And I think it calls out for those of us who care about economic development and standards of living to demonstrate that, in fact, we can produce in a rapid process a humanitarian aid that directly addresses the issue of starvation and malnutrition, that provides safe and secure water supplies and warm clothing and blankets. And those efforts have already begun with the shipments of thousands of tons of supplies. But the humanitarian effort will be and must be stepped up. And, together, we must plan that as the first line of activity for and with the people of Afghanistan.

In the intermediate term, our challenge is to help the Afghans create the basis for a stable society, a disciplined rule of law, with enforceable contracts, the basic institutions of a civilized society. Schools need to be built and rebuilt. Hospitals need to be provided, so that the elements of decent living can be created in Afghanistan and done quickly after these decades of neglect. Food security needs to be assured.

And then we need to work with the Afghans to move beyond the beginning stages of democracy and representation with everyone having representation, to create the basis for a sustainable, growing economy, so that the people are able to generate their own basic services and not be a dependency of the world but a thriving economic place of their own making and to see them sustain it will be the real reward.

This necessarily needs to include all Afghans and it is heartbreaking to see the degree to which women have been intentionally suppressed over these recent years. So there is an immediate thing that we can do to give voice to the unfairness of the treatment that has been provided on a basis of gender and religious belief and ethnic differences. And those of us from around the rest of the world can help to show that it need not be this way, it cannot be this way and it will not be this way.

Our goal is a more peaceful and prosperous world for all the people of all faiths and nationalities. Achieving this goal will require a long-term, sustained commitment from all of us. And this gathering is just the first step in that process in this particular place. Because the need is so clear and compelling, it is my hope that we will demonstrate to the world that not only we care, but we know how to change conditions quickly in a way that make a difference in Afghan life. And Afghanistan can become a demonstration of what the world can do when we join together to bring experience and intelligence of generations to the task.

I wish you well in your formulating activity, and expect to be involved, as we have further conferences, to begin the detailed work of giving meaning and reality to these ideas.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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