



Media Note
Office of the Spokesman
Washington, DC
March 21, 2006

Joint Statement: United States-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership

Following to the text of a US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership joint statement.

Begin Text:

Last May, President Bush and President Karzai jointly announced creation of a [Strategic Partnership between the United States and Afghanistan](#), with the mutual goals of enhancing the long-term security, democracy and prosperity of Afghanistan. To advance these vital goals, the United States and Afghanistan met March 20-21 in Washington. Our discussions underscored that the United States and Afghanistan intend to implement and carry forward our shared vision in tangible ways to address the challenges that lie ahead.

Together we reviewed early progress in implementing the Afghanistan Compact that was agreed between Afghanistan and the international community in London earlier this year. Both delegations affirmed the importance of the long-term U.S. commitment to Afghanistan, the development of revenue sources to make Afghanistan more financially self-sufficient, and agreed on implementing the Border Management Initiative to improve greatly its customs revenue collection. The United States, in coordination with other donors, will assist Afghan authorities in developing tools to improve budget sustainability. The Afghan delegation agreed to adopt international accounting standards for tracking funds disbursed from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

The United States committed to launching the Afghan Building Capacity program to bolster the capabilities of institutions in Afghanistan, including those at both the national and provincial level and indigenous NGOs. This includes programs to enhance the management skills of officials and their capacity to improve the delivery of public services.

Both delegations reaffirmed their commitment to reduce significantly the production and trafficking of narcotics. Afghan authorities will continue widespread operations now underway to eradicate thousands of hectares of opium poppies. The Afghan representatives confirmed intentions to remove and prosecute officials implicated in the narcotics trade. The United States pledged its continued strong support for the counternarcotics effort, including the Alternative Livelihoods programs for farmers and rural workers.

The two delegations had a useful exchange of views on ways to enhance relations between Afghanistan and its neighbors. They agreed on continuing efforts to improve trade and infrastructure links between Afghanistan and Central Asia as a crucial step in stimulating economic growth in the region. The U.S. Administration will work with Congress for the establishment in Afghanistan of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. This program would grant duty-free treatment to selected goods produced jointly in designated areas of Afghanistan. The United States will support Afghanistan's participation in the Central Asian Trade and Investment Framework Agreement.

Both delegations also endorsed the next steps for the Businesses Building Bridges initiative for strengthening the private sector in Afghanistan. This project will enlist top U.S. business leaders who will provide strategic guidance on how to activate private sector development, as well as build partnership and mentoring links with Afghan entrepreneurs. There was consensus on the need for Afghanistan to further adopt business-friendly laws and regulations as an essential step to attract more investments and to undertake reforms in its banking sector.

Beyond reaffirming the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan's security, the delegations agreed to explore the establishment of mechanisms to deepen security cooperation between the two countries, to include the establishment of a Defense Cooperation Forum. The delegations reviewed the roles of the International Security Assistance Force and Coalition in supporting Afghanistan's security. They also discussed roles and missions for the Afghan National Security Forces, with an emphasis on improving their capacity and equipment in order to play an increasingly greater role in Afghanistan's security. Both sides agreed that the United States and Afghanistan will work with NATO to develop partnership programs.

It was agreed that the next formal Partnership meeting will be held in Kabul later this year.

End Text

2006/290

Released on March 21, 2006

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.